

the internationalist n.6

A PUBLICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST PARTY

Winter 2019/2020

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£.4.50, \$.6.00, Euros 5.00

What distinguishes our Party is the political continuity which goes from Marx to Lenin, to the foundation of the Communist Party of Italy (Livorno, 1921); the struggle of the Communist Left against the degeneration of the Third International, against the theory of “socialism in one country”, against the Stalinist counterrevolution; the rejection of the Popular Fronts and the Resistance Blocs; the difficult task of restoring the revolutionary doctrine and organization in close interrelationship with the proletarian class, against all personal and electoral politics.

For the Independence of the Proletarian Class

Under pressure from the economic crisis sweeping the entire world, the half classes are obliged to make a move – these noisy and sometimes violent half classes, scraps of classes (including the working-class aristocracy), that now and again find themselves frightened and angered by the terror of losing the “privileges” and “rights” they had once acquired and slipping, not even so slowly, into the ranks of the proletariat, of those lacking all resources. We have seen them all over the place in the past decade: from the so-called “Arab springs” (initially born out of a proletarian impulse but soon incorporated and paralyzed within petit-bourgeois, national perspectives) to the movement of today’s *gilets jaunes* (office workers, teachers, bank clerks, small traders, small farmers, who can no longer sustain fiscal pressure, state bureaucracy and the rise in taxes on goods and have dragged with them the young people from the *banlieues*, to make use of them later in their clashes with the cops). And so on and so forth. In the total solitude surrounding and suffocating them, abandoned by the institutional unions and political parties, after dozens of illusions and betrayals, in which they were used for the most sinister democratic-parliamentary manoeuvres, a considerable number of proletarians have seen no other way but to allow themselves to be drawn into this swamp, wasting energy, anger and determination. In vain.

They have been “aided” here by all the parasites that have always infested the proletariat: the “masters of thought”, those “nostalgic for the ‘60s and ‘70s”, the “orphans of the anti-fascist Resistance”, the “professional mystifiers”, the “fighters and survivors” and their even more degenerate offspring and grandchildren: to sum up, all those parasites who are always ready to hurl themselves against the proletariat and reprove it for doing or not doing, telling it where it should be going, what it should be doing and how. Since this is a gang that cannot survive unless it sucks blood, they’re immediately ready to flit off, theorizing that these “uprisings” or “rebellions” herald the dawn of a new “sun of the future” and that it is therefore in the interests of the proletarian movement to... converge, merge, put up a “common front”. Far from deluding ourselves or others, we remain firmly on the ground of the class perspective, i. e. preparation for the revolution. Historical experience, confirmed by theory, shows that these people’s “rebellions” and “uprisings”, though a sign of severe social ill-being, are not “the first act in a recovery of class war” and that – alas! – this is still a long way off after the tremendous disruptions by the longest and most devastating counter revolution ever to have hit the communist and working class movement and the proletarian class itself. We openly declare that,

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as to the methods and objectives of the struggle, the path of the proletariat and that of the half classes do not converge but must *diverge*; that the one cannot superimpose itself onto the other; that the communists' task is not to work for them to draw closer, whilst awaiting a revolutionary evolution of petty bourgeois rebellion or, worse still, imagining it changing direction thanks to being miraculously penetrated by "revolutionaries" wearing the uniforms of generals, who assume they can move the masses as they please.

The task of communists is, and will always be, to make a positive criticism of any social movement and propose the communist perspective of work *in contact with our class*, starting out from the as yet rare and fragile economic and defensive battles that spring up here and there and will do so with increasing vigour and scope – economic and defensive battles that are the indispensable training for a return of *proletarian class independence* both in terms of the objectives of the battle

and in terms of organization and prospects¹.

Under pressure from objective conditions, and not only economic ones such as the crises, the devastations, unemployment, war, the collapse of social relations, and thanks to this renewed class independence, which constitutes an authentic *pole or organized reference point*, elements from these battered and beaten half classes will be able to come to us. But they will *only* do so, because they have *truly* abandoned their own path, their identity, their own direction, their habits and their whims! In

1. Let us remember what Lenin wrote in What Has to Be Done?: "Political class conscience can only be brought to the worker from outside, i.e. from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and bosses. The only field where this consciousness can be gained is the field of relations between all classes and sectors and the state and government, the field of reciprocal relations between all classes".

the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* we read: "The lower middle class, the small manufacturer, the shopkeeper, the artisan, the peasant, all these fight against the bourgeoisie, to save from extinction their existence as fractions of the middle class. They are therefore not revolutionary, but conservative. Nay more, they are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history. If by chance, they are revolutionary, they are only so in view of their impending transfer into the proletariat; they thus defend not their present, but their future interests, they desert their own standpoint to place themselves at that of the proletariat." (Chap.1, "Bourgeois and Proletarians"). Highly topical words that should be stamped in our brains.

We work for a strong, powerful and determined return of the "proletarian point of view": and this will only be possible thanks to the hard work of the communist party. This is what is needed, and urgently: not a squalid, popular and counter-revolutionary hotchpotch.

A Brief Summary of Essentials...

- In capitalist society goods are produced: this means that basic human activity is devoted to manufacturing objects destined to be exchanged for money, i.e. sold. The vast mass of the producers lack the means of production (contrary to the craftsman or the small-scale farmer who possess their own tools).
- Since they do not possess their labour, these producers are obliged to sell it and thus it finds itself applied to modern conditions of production: associated work, industrial concentration, advanced production techniques. All economic exchange, the buying and selling of goods and thus of that particular form of commodity that is the labour of the workers, takes place through money.
- Capital is born and develops on the basis of the combined use of these factors. The social class lacking the means of production and obliged to sell its labour is the proletariat. This workforce is a commodity that has the "miraculous" property of producing more wealth than it demands for its sustainment and reproduction (in other words, in an 8-hour working day, in four hours for example, the worker produces the value of his daily wages but continues to work another 4 hours for free, for capital).
- The price of the labour force constitutes the worker's salary. The difference between this salary and the mass of values produced remains the property of the class retaining the means of production, the capitalist class: it is called plusvalue or profit and, once exchanged in turn for new labour and new products of labour (machinery, raw materials, etc.), it becomes capital. Repeated infinitely, this process is the accumulation of capital.

Proletarians pay with their lives the survival of a mode of production that amounts to murder

It's a daily massacre of shocking proportions. Just let's stop and think. How many proletarians die every day, in factories, building yards, in the sweatshops, on the streets and on the seas, in the countryside, in all the countless workplaces of a mode of production that has now become reduced to nothing more than an infernal death machine, an insatiable vampire sucking proletarian blood, as had already been described and decried by Marx and Engels? And how many begin and continue to die day after day, poisoned, gassed, silently corroded on all sides by cancer-inducing agents or exhausted by the physical and psychological pressure of years and decades of an ever-faster pace of work, anguish and desperation? The figures for Europe are monstrous and eloquent: only the revolting cynicism of ignorance or indifference can prevent a chill to the spine before this slaughter, these *mass murders*, for which there is no other name. But what might the figures be for the rest of the world? And the Americas? And Asia and Africa? The numbers can't help but be devastating: *hundreds and hundreds of holocausts!* The mass media of disinformation do not give us these figures: they limit themselves to telling the story, using all the adjectives of sensationalism and pious journalism: a factory exploding, a mine collapsing, a bridge falling, a workshop or building going up in flames – ten, a hundred, a thousand proletarian deaths in one and then, yes, the event is newsworthy. But they are silent about the daily accounts of slaughter – which instead, on reflection, assume horrendously gigantic proportions.

Let us go further, back a little in time over the years and the decades... through the three centuries dominated by the capitalist mode of pro-

duction. And here the very thought is truly devastating: from the Industrial Revolution, with its “factory deaths”, men who – if they were lucky – reached the age of thirty, and mangled women and children right down to today, through the whole epic march of “capitalist progress”. The proletarian-scrunching machinery has never ceased to work, grinding and destroying lives, families, aspirations, illusions – transforming the living flesh of human beings into profits to be tossed into the impersonal mechanism of production for production's sake, competition, greater accumulation, the law of value. As though this were not enough, there have been, and continue to be, the wars. And how many proletarian victims have there been (are there) of economic, strategic and political appetites, of States that are the victims of capital, of nations that obey the law of “kill or be killed”? Victims at the battlefield and victims in the rear-guard, more cannon fodder sent off to the trenches to bayonette or gas one another or shut up like mice in the metropolises as a target for all the most advanced tools of warfare? And the miserable survivors that attempt to escape, wandering from one place to another, at the mercy of hunger, wounds, illness, the most absolute desperation, on tens of thousands of “journeys of hope”; who leave behind the bombed ruins or famine produced by centuries of colonial and imperialist domination, and, if they don't drown or freeze to death first, are unable to find a place where they can at least *survive*, chased from here to there like mangy dogs by political scoundrels doing their best to encourage the obtuse savagery of the petit-bourgeoisie, whose sole reason for living remains their hatred for “the foreigner”? And what is to be said of the proletarians killed in the picket lines, in demonstrations, in

the rebellions sparked off by hunger and exasperation, in the streets of the ghettos, in the countryside of the black market gang-leaders, on the ironclad national borders, victims of the legal or illegal gangs belonging to the State, the defender of capital, or of sub-human individuals emerging from the gutters of a decaying society? Or the sixty thousand *Communards* massacred in Paris at the end of May 1871 by their ferocious class enemy, or the other thousands and tens of thousands of proletarians eliminated by the counter-revolutionary fury that one time after another strikes those generous attempts to “scale the heavens”?

This mode of production exhausted its positive drive at least a century and a half ago, the drive that allowed – *by means of a violent rupture* – the definitive outstripping of the previous mode of production, that of feudalism. And for over a century and a half it has become a deadly killing machine: the vampire which, day after day, sucks the blood of the proletariat in order to remain alive. Against this vampire the crucifix and the garlic are of no use. It has to be killed once and for all, driving a well-sharpened stake deep into its heart: violence against violence. Taking up the fight, increasing it, extending it, radicalizing it, rejecting any illusion of reform and any nationalist divisions, starting out from the slogan “An attack on one is an attack on us all!” Transforming the proletarian numbers (growing constantly, at every economic crisis, at every opening towards war) into *deadly strength and power*. Organizing in order to learn to defend, defend ourselves and then turn to the attack. Finding our indispensable guide for the struggles of today and tomorrow – the revolutionary party, the *international communist party*.

7/8/2018

Migrants: The Stink of Bourgeois Politics

The suffering bodies of migrants fleeing from poverty, war and despair are increasingly bogged down by the rotting marshland of bourgeois politics, the miserable expression of primary needs of survival of a mode of production in the midst of a structural crisis. Over these bodies, the game is played out and once more brings to light the “essence” of such politics: seedy deals with one foreign government or band of adventurers or another to ensure economic and strategic bridgeheads (an example? the relations between Italy and Libya, or Italy and France), barely concealed dynamics of inter-imperialist contrasts with migrants as the bleeding exchange currency (an example? the relations between Germany and Turkey, between the USA and Mexico), squalid cooked deals between nervous bourgeois factions (a field where Italy can boast a long tradition), arm wrestling between one country or another and “Europe”. And first and foremost an ideological media operation (“Italians First”, so as to keep up with “America First”), aiming to stir up an anti-proletarian spirit in broad strata of the disappointed and embittered petit bourgeoisie and labor aristocracy, supported by mafia and fascist ground troops and the progressive fortification of the State-policeman: operations designed to fence in and control class uprisings that might be set off under pressure from a crisis that *no bourgeois government, of whatever political colour*, is capable of solving.

Native proletarians, attracted or confused by the sub-human grunting of those in government or itching to get there or return there, or of those who have always been designated to cook up the indigestible and poisonous dish called “racism” for the newspapers and TV chat studios, should be under no illusions. No illusions: facts and words are used to strike at the weakest proletarian sectors and those most vulnerable to blackmail, *in order to strike at the whole class* – the class that they, the native proletarians, willing or not, are part of, independently of any futile petit-bourgeois aspirations and the obstinate illusion of having “guarantees”. Division amongst the rank and file of the proletarian class is the preventive weapon that serves perfectly for present and future repression by Capital and its State: *everyone* will be put in chains by intensified exploitation and struck at as soon as they dare to raise their heads.

As for the “finer souls”, those who are nurtured by “nostalgic fantasies of the universal brotherhood of peoples, the federal republic of Europe and enduring world peace” (Engels in the “*Neue Rheinische Zeitung*” of 15/2/1849), we can only repeat what has been said and written so many times: their complaints and pious desires, increasingly impregnated with incense and blessed by popes, bishops and street priests, do no more than make the stinking marshes more liquid and all-pervasive. Not unless they can abandon the inertia they have been vegetating in for decades and take sides with a *class battle* against the institutions that represent and defend the ruling class, will they – the “finer souls” – be able to redeem their objective complicity with these repulsive bourgeois politics, an objective complicity that has marked them up to now: “The antagonisms that are released by the relations of bourgeois society must be confronted by fighting them; they cannot be eliminated by means of the imagination” (Marx in the “*Neue Rheinische Zeitung*” of 29/6/1848). But we strongly doubt that the “finer souls” are capable of understanding all this and acting as a consequence.

Our position has always been clear and we challenge anyone to deny it, as we see before our very eyes today’s obscene reality, anticipating what is in store for tomorrow. The migratory flows are the product of capitalism’s unequal development, first of colonial and then of imperialist penetration in vast areas of the globe, of the structural economic crisis dragging on for decades, of the wars for economic and strategic predominance by the imperialist thieves from east and west and from north and south, and thus of the growing misery and ever-faster proletarianization of enormous masses of people. For these masses, we claim total freedom of movement, without the obligation of *papiers*, permits, etc; we work for the rebirth of territorial organisms of struggle and defence, open to all proletarians, employed or not, men and women, independently of their origins, language or religion; we proclaim in words, in deeds and in facts the open battle both against the State, which is the stick used by national capital, and against feeble, democratic anti-racism and anti-fascism, which we counter with the theory and practice of internationalism and the urgent need to strengthen and establish the roots of the revolutionary party.

Summer 2019

Proletarians of all countries, unite!

The “Migrants’ Caravan” Before the US Democratic Wall

Immigration to the USA: considerations and figures

The migratory movements of entire populations are a constant factor in history but the capitalist mode of production has a specific manner of determining migratory flows of people: in its need to survive, the ruling bourgeois class attempts to control their dynamics, according to the needs of national capital. The increasingly virulent economic crises cause the breakdown of dynamic social balances, forming authentic tectonic phenomena: this produces immense movements of masses of people fleeing poverty, war, devastation, drought and hunger... The media, at the service of the existing order, speak of the “Biblical dimensions” of these migratory phenomena, presenting us with heartrending images, scenes of “primitive barbarianism” - a threat to western civilization and democracy! And this is happening at a moment when the borders between nations are being overstepped in the spread of the world market. Capital’s tendency to conquer markets does in fact bind the movement of masses of goods with that of masses of salaried or emarginated workers, overstepping national borders and clashing with the national population. Every national bourgeoisie must necessarily have available a centralized state organization and an army capable of defending it but at the same time must support the drive of its own capital and goods across borders. And so the greatest possible freedom of movement for its own capital and goods is enforced, whilst protectionism is preached against capitals and goods from abroad.

The “migrant problem”, the arrival of millions of people with no remaining resources is not confined to Europe alone but affects the United States and other imperialist cities, as well, adding to the internal migration

of masses of urbanized and proletarianized country folk, as is happening in China¹.

Clamorous events have thus taken place at the border between the USA and Mexico, generating a dramatic situation – movements of proletarians abandoning their homes and their past, without identity, flags or passports, the victims of a crumbling world with an urgent need to escape from poverty and an inhuman existence and ready to overcome any barriers. The migratory movement from Latin America to the USA has represented a phenomenon of great social relevance, since the *latinos* have always been used to provide for the USA’s need to valorize its capital². Capital needs a low-cost labour-force commodity, but only enough of it to serve the demands of production, without annoying problems

of surplus and social tension. This proves to be a recurring need if we look at the first migratory waves at the end of the 1800s, when disconsolate American politician affirmed: “We were expecting strong arms but hungry mouths arrived, too!”³

The “immigration issue” was one of the most important points in President Trump’s election campaign, with his “America first”, so much so that it proved to be the most effective argument with the middle class and the “white working class”, decreeing the success of the...super-real-estate agent. Who has on several occasions promised political action to contrast immigration, particularly from Central and South America – action that has taken concrete shape in continuing to build the wall, whose first steel panels had already been laid decades before⁴. “Irregular” immigration to the USA

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1. People living in a country different to the one they were born in number around 244 million, according to the latest report from the International Organization for Migration (data updated to 2015), which means 3.3% of the world population: in practice one person in 30 has changed country. In 1990, there were around 153 million of them, or 2.9% of the world population (fewer than one person out of 40), whilst in 2000 there were 173 million, rising to 220 million in 2010. To this figure, the number of people migrating within the same country should be added, estimated at 740 million in 2009. All in all, there were almost one billion migrants. The continents that host most migrants are Europe and Asia, with 75 million, followed by North America, which has taken in 54 million. As to percentages of the population of entire continents, things are different here: in Oceania, migrants constitute 21% of the population; in North America 15%; in Europe 10%. It is significant that, in 2017, 2/3 of these migrants lived in only twenty countries: the highest number (50 million) are to be found in the USA, followed by Saudi Arabia, Germany and Russia, each hosting around 12 million. Great Britain follows with 9 million.

2. On immigration from Mexico and the condition of immigrants with Latino origins, exploited mainly in California, see our long study entitled “The Chicano proletariat: a revolutionary potential to defend.” Il programma comunista, nos. 1, 2, 3/1978.

3. In the decade between 1880 and 1920 around 23 and a half million people arrived in the United States from all over the world.

4 Building was first started on the “barrier” along the US-Mexican border in 1994 but it was not until the Secure Fence Act of 2006 (under Bush Senior’s presidency) that the project was really defined and developed. In 2018, 376 migrants died trying to enter the United States illegally (214 men, 20 women and 4 children, who add to the 138 victims it has not yet been possible to identify). The balance is updated to 21 December (figures from the International Organization for Migration’s Missing Migrant Project). In the last three years of the Obama administration the figure increased constantly: from the 307 deaths in 2014 to 396 in 2016, with a three-year growth rate of 28%; over the four years the figures did not yield: 1417 people did not survive whilst crossing the border. Amongst the recognized victims, most are men: in 2017 241 males died and in four years the figure rose to 663, 47.6% of the total; 64 women died trying to cross the US-Mexico border and 16 children. There is a large number of unrecognized victims: 47.6% of the dead migrants dreaming of America (Source: United Nations).

sees a considerable affluence from Mexico, touching on 52%, corresponding to around 5.8 million people in 2014 alone. Nonetheless, due consideration should be given to the fact that the number of resourceless people from Asia, from other countries in Central America and from sub-Saharan Africa has increased, with a leap in numbers from 325 thousand in 2009 to 5.3 million in 2016. In more general terms, the migratory peak reached its highest point in 2012, with over 12 million people. All in all, in 2016 migrants accounted for 26% of the total population with as many as 43.6 million foreigners resident on US soil and, more specifically, distributed in states like California (with over 2.3 million “irregulars”), Texas, Florida, the state of New York and New Jersey.

On the evening of Tuesday 8 January, Trump asked Congress for the funding (5.7 billion dollars) necessary to complete the steel wall along the Mexican border, his most important promise in the 2016 election campaign, which – the candidate had guaranteed – would be paid for by Mexico. The speech was announced after the failure to reach an agreement with the Democrats, who now control the House: as is known, the impossibility (for the moment) of reaching an agreement has led to the partial shutdown of the federal government. Around a quarter of federal agencies and public offices were obliged to suspend their work, whilst the President is determined to keep the federal government shut down indeterminately or at least until the Democrats agree to his demand to put the necessary financing for completing the wall back onto the federal balance sheet. To date (mid-January 2019), 800 thousand federal employees continue not to receive salaries.

This is the second longest shutdown in the history of the United States. Trump’s speech defined the situation along the United States’ southern border “an invasion”, referring both to illegal immigration and to the transport of large quantities of drugs into the United States, adding

that migrants who illegally entered the States were responsible for the “brutal and cold-blooded murders” of American citizens. In reality, statistics show that American citizens commit more crimes than irregulars and that most of the criminals who enter the United States do not come in across the southern border but ... by plane!

The “migrant caravan”: a river that is swelling

The “caravan” – as the human river moving towards the United States is now called – started its journey on 12 October from the border city of San Pedro Sula in Honduras, with only 160 migrants. Along the way their numbers grew, to the extent that, once they had arrived at the Mexican border, the group numbered over 8 thousand people, also coming from other countries such as Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Belice and Costa Rica. This immediately alerted media interest, but also that of the U.S. President, more determined than ever to bring the army onto the field to stop the progress of the migrant “threat”, whilst the migrants themselves repeated more than once: “Our destination is the USA.” The stream of disinherited people crossed Guatemala and travelled thousands of kilometres, to arrive a few weeks later in sight of Mexican territory, without heeding the threats of the President of the stars and stripes. And so, on 4 November the caravan reached Mexico: a pause of a few days in a campsite and then they set off once again towards the border crossing nearest to the “American dream”: 800 kilometres! These were families with small children, some still babies, obliged to walk for more than 1600 kilometres to flee from Hon-

duras, the poorest country in central America with a population of only 9 million inhabitants, condemned to a life of deprivation (corruption, drugs, rival criminal gangs – los Marabuntas – complete the idyllic picture of the country). World Bank figures pitilessly describe a hellish situation: over 60% of the population live in conditions that oscillate between poverty and extreme misery, all of them driven to abandon this hellhole in the hope of a better future: perhaps in California, the promised land, the destination in the 1930s – the years of the Great Depression – of the Okies, or white migrants inside the USA, coming from Oklahoma but treated no better by the inhuman mode of production, in a dramatic Odyssey described by John Steinbeck in his novel *The Grapes of Wrath*.

An endless via crucis

The latest updates tell us that the number of migrants who have arrived at the U.S. border has decreased in the meantime to 5000 people: the rest of them have been obliged to seek asylum in Mexico, due to fatigue or illness⁵, yet one more obstacle to be overcome, even though the generosity and solidarity of other proletarians along their path has never been lacking. No-one knows exactly how many children there are in the “caravan” but the number may be very high: perhaps around 2300. In any case, this has not prevented the Pentagon from ranging 5200 fully armed soldiers at the Mexican border, so as to stop “illegal” access onto US territory by these threatening “barbarian hordes”! Whenever they have attempted to cross the border, the migrants have been driven back by tear gas, used without scruple against women, elderly people

follow →

5. Several medical studies tell us that the migrants do not only pay a immediate price on crossing the border, struck down by military bullets or border guards, but also pay a high price in terms of health, even in the long term, by acquiring the wrong food standards compared to their home country. This means that migrants are indeed escaping from hunger or poverty with a low assumption of calories, but once they are in the United States, junk food causes a series of health problems linked to obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes etc.. Moreover, less access to medical care means that what would, in other circumstances, be defined as less serious complaints, tend to become chronic.

and children... This is democracy! Faced with the U.S. threat not to continue giving aid in dollars, the governments of Mexico and the other transit countries reacted by aligning with Trump's nationalist policy: this, however, has not stopped other migrants from setting out from their various countries to copy the first group, which has now become famous. The various local newspapers report (we remind readers that we are writing at the beginning of 2019) that a second caravan of 2000 is moving towards the south of Mexico. Basically, no-one has managed to stop the caravan advancing: not even the brutality of the Mexican government, which has acted even more harshly than that of Guatemala⁶, arresting, identifying and opening files on the migrants and obliging them to reverse their route. But this severe reaction has been to no avail: the caravan first split up and later reunified in the area of Tijuana, although the attempt to pass through the existing wall provoked an angry and merciless intervention by the "forces of law and order": over 500 migrants were arrested, the children taken from their parents and shut into "reception centres", authentic prisons filled with all the violence of a social system that has reached the final stage of decay.

The Mexican border region has become highly dangerous, due to the presence of violent gangs that kidnap, rape and rob, mainly the most helpless of the migrants: families accompanying many children, whose parents or adult guardians have been detained by the police under so-called ICE Arrest (Immigration and Customs Enforcement), i.e. the state of arrest decreed by the frontier police. For all of them, the adventure of immigration has turned into a hell even worse than the one they experienced before setting out.

President Trump has "Twittered" several times to announce that the human wave will be stopped using all possible means, including weapons, and stressing that throwing stones at military checkpoints will be considered on a par with using real bullets; and his Mexican equivalent,

Enrique Peña Nieto, has equalled this, confirming that Mexico will not accept clandestine immigrants either (i.e. those who do not have "legal bases"). In a less aggressive tone but still in defence of bourgeois law and order, the Archbishop of Tijuana has also spoken out, faced with the "apathy of the federal government", with a tearful demand for United Nations support. Mexico City had promised to send Tijuana 20 tons of resources to help the city but of these three quarters were to be used for reinforcing the border and only five tons destined for relief.

The "immigration issue" in Marx and Lenin

Let us leave the area of recent news for a moment and look at the wider context. In a letter to Siegfried Meyer and August Vogt of 9 April 1870 on the "Irish question", Karl Marx mentioned the theme of immigration, obviously including the effects that this movement of proletarians produces at a social and economic level. His analysis is useful for understanding, today as yesterday, the mechanisms governing the bourgeois economy: the industrial reserve army is a necessity for accumulating capital and thus a weapon of bourgeois political strategy, for the purpose of keeping salaries low and placing workers from different countries in competition with one another. Today more than ever, after a decade of crisis, an influx of oxygen is needed for an economy that is increasingly short of breath with the tiny profit margins typical of an over-ripe capitalism like

that of the United States and the majority of western countries.

Let us remember, for example, that in past years an agreement with Mexico City had enabled the foundation of manufacturing industries along the Mexican border⁷ but on American territory, recruiting the necessary labour from neighbouring Mexican proletarians: thus keeping salaries down and thus impoverishing the material conditions for the working class itself on U.S. territory.

The arrival of the "migrant caravan" is an attractive proposition for the whole of America's industrial bourgeoisie but at the same time it disturbs the American proletariat, in particular the working-class aristocracy, which reacts with hostility towards the foreign workers. This division within the proletariat has its origins in the historical predominance of U.S. imperialism: the profit extorted from the foreign proletariat (excess profit) has allowed a few crumbs to be distributed to the native working class, thus placing it in a position of privilege – an identical phenomenon to that found in Marx's analysis on the English working-class aristocracy. The phenomenon occurs in all imperialist countries and the bourgeoisie has understood perfectly how to divide the proletariat and subjugate it to national interests using differences in salaries and material living conditions: for example through policies based on slogans like "America First" or "Prima gli italiani". In this way, the US bourgeoisie ensures that the proletarian class is divided into two hostile camps, "native" proletarians and latinos or, more in general,

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6. The federal government of Mexico withdrew its support and the concession of buses, thus exposing the "caravan" to the attacks of organized crime, which has attempted to extort money or sell them as a work force to the drugs market or prostitution. The migrants have refused to take an alternative route through the state of Oaxaca, because this would have led over a winding, mountainous and more demanding route. The associations that had decided to help were first threatened and then partly boycotted. The relief kits with blankets and clothing, organized along the route, were destroyed or taken away by American rangers and the Mexican border guards, as we pointed out in a previous issue of this newspaper.

7. These were the renowned *maquiladoras*, U.S.-owned companies, mostly dealing in the assembly of semi-finished industrial products, set up along the U.S.-Mexico border under a completely tax-free régime, mercilessly exploiting a workforce that consisted mostly of Central- and South-American proletarians with no resources, often without documents and thus more exposed to blackmail.

immigrant proletarians, competing on opposite sides as enemies.

Marx was writing almost 150 years ago. But it is sufficient to go into a slightly more detailed economic analysis of the present situation to discover revolting parallels between 1870 and 2019. US economic policies have devastated most South American countries, determining the bankruptcy and expropriation of thousands of small-scale producers in Central America and the Caribbean islands⁸. Over a quarter of a century, hundreds of thousands of desperate people have been forced to emigrate and look for work in the United States – a country where, once they have entered the mechanism of capitalist exploitation, they will encounter underpaid jobs, interminable working hours, miserable living conditions... And little solidarity from the American proletariat, which – already exhausted by a serious crisis that doesn't look like improving and, indeed, worsens month by month – tends to have a hostile reaction to those who are perceived as "competitors".

This strategy of division of the proletariat according to its different origins can only be contrasted and overturned under the pressure of the ongoing crisis, as the proletariat of the imperialist countries progressively fall into the same conditions of lack of resources. The action of the ruling ideology serves to conceal the reality of a system based on profit but is only effective as long as the system manages to feed its slaves. In this regard Lenin expressed himself as follows: "There is no doubt that only extreme poverty obliges people to leave their own country and that capitalists exploit immigrant workers in the most dishonest fashion.

But only reactionaries can close their eyes to the progressive significance of this modern migration of peoples. Liberation from the oppression of capital does not come about and cannot come about without further development in capitalism, without the class war on the terrain of capital itself. And it is to this war that capitalism drives the working-class

masses worldwide, breaking the stagnation and backwardness of local life, destroying national barriers and prejudices, joining workers of all countries in the biggest factories and mines of America, Germany, etc."⁹

When we read that "the capitalist system produces its own gravediggers," this is precisely what is meant. The present mode of production cannot help looking for niches where profits can be valorized to the maximum, exploiting the lowest cost labour; nevertheless, by doing so, it creates the conditions (not mechanical or automatic) for the unification of the working class and lays the foundations for the world communist revolution.

Bourgeois propaganda and the reality of the mode of production

Not a day goes by without the bourgeois press spreading abroad slogans on the "sense of duty", on the principles of "defending national borders" from the human tide which, according to some heads of the US government, represent "a deadly threat" to the values of the nation and "citizens' rights". Thus the middle classes are exasperated and the proletarian aristocracy increasingly terrorized by the risk of being thrown in amongst the resourceless rejects of the planet.

As the crises advance, the mirage of a system capable of dispensing well-being to the human species reveals to proletarians its true, inhuman and brutal essence. The work of the ruling ideology is to conserve and mask the extortion of profit: yet despite all efforts, it will only reach its objective if it is able to fill people's stomachs.

And so it is capital itself that obliges the working class to fight, notwithstanding all the charitable propaganda. It is capital itself that reveals to the proletariat the role of the bour-

geois State, Justice and Democracy. And so, when proletarians from different backgrounds come to share the same, growing poverty, they will be able to learn from the fight to acknowledge one another as allies and brothers. Only then, will we finally see the beginning of the end of the current mode of production and all its tragedies.

The illusion of a "communion of interests" within the nation will not be unmasked until the national bourgeoisie has no scruples left about attacking the proletariat. This is when the communist slogan, "proletarians have no homeland to defend, all they have to fight for, is to throw off the chains in which the capitalist system has imprisoned them," will acquire meaning. And then, with the experience and under the guidance of the revolutionary party, proletarians will be able to see that they must respond to bourgeois violence with the violence of class dictatorship.

Millions of disinherited people cross rivers and deserts, face tempestuous seas, cover thousands of kilometres on foot in search of sustenance; capitalism engages them in its labour armies, transforms them into proletarians and throws them into the vortex of exploitation, making them a part of – and tomorrow the key figures of – the historical world movement: obliging them, first spontaneously and then, thanks to the work of the communist party in an organized way, to take the field against their only true, historical enemy, the international bourgeoisie. Only when these conditions are mature, through the events and vicissitudes of the class war, will proletarians be able to recognize their class brothers, rejecting solidarity with their own State and their own bourgeoisie, and set out to attain the new classless society, Communism.

8. Although few newspapers deal with this issue, often superficially, the movement of millions of people also depends on climate change, as well as on purely economic causes: statistic data on rainfall in the region including Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, shows beyond doubt that scarce rainfall, poor harvests and migration are factors that are inextricably bound together. But climate change, as we have often repeated in these pages, is none other than a further consequence of the present, destructive mode of production.

9. Lenin, "Capitalism and Working-class Immigration" *Pravda*, no. 22, 29 October 1913.

“A historical movement going on under our very eyes”

Before and behind the Manifesto of the Communist Party

“the world has long since dreamed of something”

K. Marx to A. Ruge, September 1843

■ Last year, we showed more than once how the two-hundredth anniversary of Karl Marx’s birth had stirred up an authentic overproduction of gigantic idiocies¹. But apart from the anniversary, there is an increasingly widespread interpretation that sees Marx’s work (and Engels’ and in any case the Manifesto of the Communist Party and more in general historical-dialectical materialism) as the individual fruit, more or less acceptable according to the different points of view, of philosophical minds, intellectuals and “thinkers”. To sum up, a “personal vision”, an “interpretation” that at most is to be placed alongside other “interpretations” or – as people say nowadays, banally – “narrations”. The umpteenth demonstration that individualism is an ugly beast, particularly if it is joined to a purely idealistic and unhistorical – substantially counter-revolutionary – approach.

The Manifesto itself puts us on guard. Opening it at Chapter II, entitled “Proletarians and Communists”, we read: “The theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented or discovered by this or that would-be universal re-

former. They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes”.

“An existing class struggle”, therefore. Chapter I already refers to it clearly: “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle”². And it continues thus: “Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes”.

We certainly do not intend to go back over this “history of class struggles”. Let us limit ourselves to the so-called “modern era”, the age of capitalism with its class divisions and thus with its warring classes: because it is this – this long history of struggle – that comes “before and behind” the Manifesto, inspiring it and making it materialistically and historically necessary, thanks to the pens of Marx and Engels.

At the dawn of the bourgeois revolution, the class conflict is already explicit. During the “English civil war” (1642-1651), from within the “New Model Army” organized and guided by Oliver Cromwell and an expression of the rising bourgeoisie, still uncertain and, within certain limits, “inconclusive”, albeit determined to break with the ties and abuses of the feudal régime, a group of “Levellers” singles itself out, a radical movement which, in an “Agreement of the People”, brandishes the slogan of “people’s sovereignty” and “equality before the law”. The “Debates” which were held in August 1647 in a church in Putney, then a village just outside London, brought to light this contrast, this initial blossoming within the wider social conflict of a class clash which opposed the first wailing of the newborn bourgeoisie to the “rabble”. From the “Levellers” movement (which Cromwell finally silenced), an even more radical one was to rise, known as the “True Levellers” or “Diggers” which, in the words of their most famous champion, Gerrard Winstanley, expressed the positions of the common people in cities and above all of the poor and exploited peasants in the countryside – those same peasants who, a little less than three centuries earlier, guided by Wat Tyler and John Ball to the cry of “When Adam delved and Eve span/ Who was then the gentleman?”, had besieged London in vain. The “Diggers” theorized and tried to put into practice a sort of “communism of the land” based on a balance with the forces of nature, organizing “agricultural communes” which, of course, could not fail to be short-

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1. See, in our Italian newspaper *Il programma comunista*, “Piccole grandi miserie dell’ideologia dominante: Chicche da un centenario” (n.3/2018) and “Il bicentenario di Marx. L’invarianza storica del marxismo: noi manteniamo la rotta!” (n.5-6/2018; this last article is also available in our German newspaper *Kommunistisches Programm*, n.2/2018).

2. Idem, p.8. In an 1888 footnote, Engels specified: “history as it has been handed down in written form”, referring to the now abundant ethnographic material brought to light by scholars like Haxthausen, Bachofen and Morgan, proving the existence in various parts of the world of an original classless society, or *primitive communism*: all topics dealt with by Engels himself, in 1884, in *Origin of Family, Private Property, and the State*.

lived. Both the “Levellers” and the “Diggers” revealed an aspiration to social egalitarianism – an aspiration still vague and contradictory in terms of its expressions and its programmes, due to the embryonic state of development of the production and social forces and thus looking more backwards towards a mythical “golden age” which they ended up identifying with a far-off (and totally hypothetical) “English past”³. And in any case, “history of class struggle” it was and is.

Without wishing to go back in detail over the emergence and consolidation of these expressions in a “fourth estate”, which a little at a time found its own voice and action, we can remain in England but take a leap to the following century. It is between April and May 1797 and we find ourselves in the Thames Estuary at a place called Nore, where the powerful English Navy is moored: here, as in the other large naval contingent off the south coast at Spithead, near the Isle of Wight, discontent amongst the sailors has been growing for months due to the awful living and working conditions, the arrogance of the officers, the fines and the recourse to the “cat o’ nine tails”⁴. This is how what came to be known as the “Spithead breeze” started to blow, fuelled by the news arriving from revolutionary France, through the work of the Corresponding Societies and the reading of radical pamphlets by the Anglo-American Thomas Paine (*The Rights of Man*). From Spithead to Nore, the sailors rebel, linking their protests to those gradually progressing on dry land, the expressions of a proletariat still in em-

bryo, but nourished day by day by the enclosures (the forced fencing of common land, which uprooted people from the countryside, gradually transforming them into proletariat) and by the irresistible penetration of capitalism into the countryside and the city. “Sailors’ councils” (how terrible!) are formed by delegates from all the ships, stable contacts are sought with the shoreline population, avant-gardes are dispatched to London, a *cahier de doléances* is drawn up with precise demands: pay rises, limits to the pace of work, the elimination of a series of repressive measures, better food, longer periods of leave on land... Soon the movement reaches beyond “purely” economic claims: in the end the Port of London is blocked, the rebel fleet takes up battle positions, a first red flag is flown, the “Floating Republic” is declared; in the capital the Stock Exchange crashes, the terror of a new “civil war” starts to rise, the spread of the French *sans culottes* virus... At this point the movement begins to lose momentum and come apart: established power manages to take the situation in hand again. The mutineers are surrounded and arrested: the “leaders” are hung, the others severely punished. Nonetheless, the episode of the brief but intense “Floating Republic”, too, enters the annals of “working class history”, of that collective experience which, year after year, decade by decade, is destined to build up – and, in time, to evolve from quantity to quality.

Here we are in 1797, then. In that same year (and it is no coincidence), in France the “Conspiracy of the Equals” erupts: another evi-

dent sign of a *class struggle taking place*. Whilst the 1789 Revolution, the “bourgeois revolution” *par excellence*, runs its course (progressively pushing aside/repressing the *sans culottes* representing the poorer sectors of the French population), increasingly radical political tensions and positions emerge propelled by economic and social factors. From the pages of the newspaper “The People’s Tribune” and through his “Society of the Equals”, Gracchus Babeuf becomes spokesman for these material drives that attempt to move beyond the bourgeois horizon, expressing the desire for justice and equality of artisans, destitute peasants, the exploited “poor” and a proletariat still “suffocated” amidst an indistinct “people” but already fighting vigorously to make its voice heard. The “Conspiracy of the Equals”, which was to be wiped out in the same year, 1797, with the death sentence for Babeuf and other organizers and the expulsion of Filippo Buonarrotti from France, is just one more *expression of a real movement*: its demand for the abolition of private property is already the *materialization* of the “dream of something” (to return to Marx’s expression), fuelled by the living and working conditions of an oppressed class and by the development itself of bourgeois society, with all its increasingly clear contradictions.

It is now the dawn of the 1800s. The fact that this incessant “historical movement taking place under our very eyes” was accompanying, day by day, the affirmation of the new mode of capitalist production and was endeavouring to respond to the social fractures and economic crises it inevitably involved (*and involves*) is made evident by the first proletarian uprisings of the new century: more historical experiences full of fundamentally important lessons for the birth of scientific communism. And this, momentarily, takes us back to Great Britain: momentarily, because in the decades that culminated

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3. It is worth remembering that a “memory” of the common use of land can also be traced in various towns and cities in England in the term “Common”, indicating what remains of the original “common lands”; and that the very first Puritan colonies in the New World had a social structure fundamentally based on the common use and exploitation of the land. Not only: the experiences of the “Levellers” and the “Diggers” did not fail to also be reflected in the internal processes of the “American Revolution” of 1776, with a body of “democratic rebels” arising from within it.

4. It is no coincidence that amongst the fleet’s commanders was the infamous Captain Bligh, who, a decade before, had violently repressed mutiny on the ship he was commanding – the “Bounty”.

in the publication of the *Manifesto*, episodes of social insubordination interweave, on both sides of the Channel, as well as in the rest of the Continent.

In Great Britain, then, where, in the wake of the Levellers' agitation there are repeated episodes of struggles by the "rabble" in the towns and in the countryside. But it is to be mostly in the second half of the 18th century that, particularly in the domestic silk industry in London and its surroundings, hit by a serious crisis and with the widespread arrival of machinery, the silk-weavers, mostly Huguenot immigrants, are to be the leading figures in the harsh and widespread struggles of a movement that already preannounces Luddism (the systematic destruction of machinery). Testimony to this are the many, continuous strikes and the disorder that follow over the decades up to the foundation and activities of the clandestine group known as "Bold Defiance" in the (by then) proletarian neighbourhood of London's East End, attempting to offer the widespread discontent a resistance organization capable of advancing economic and political claims – an organization that was to be wiped out by established power in 1769 using brutal violence and hanging the main agitators.

In those same years Ned Ludd is supposed to have taken action (the reserve is obligatory) – a simple workman who, in a fit of rebellion against his living and working conditions, breaks up a mechanical loom, thus inspiring the broader movement, active mainly in the first few decades of the 19th century, which took his name: Luddism. By now the Industrial Revolution (the process of accelerated development of capitalism which starts to take root in and from Great Britain) is in full swing with its well-known, tremendous social implications. And in its cradle (the smoky metropolises of central England, in Manchester, Salford, Bradford, Birmingham and other cities and towns), "Captain Ludd" appears at work – precisely as, a little later on

in the countryside, a similar "Captain Swing" (or the Welsh "Rebecca's Daughters", whose members, between 1839 and 1843, took action at night dressed as women) acted against the first mechanical threshers – all further personifications of a desperate resistance to the destruction of century-old communities and the now unstoppable proletarianization. We should not forget that in those decades between the two centuries in Great Britain, a series of laws were in force against unionism, and, under the pretext of targeting the residues of feudalism and its corporations, aimed to repress the first workers' uprisings and attempts to gain a stable, national organization. The workers' uprisings thus increasingly take on a political nature: as Luddism inevitably runs its course, conflicts and strikes are more frequent, becoming acute and impacting on entire proletarian communities and often seeing splendidly combative women in their front lines, as well as very young workers, and not infrequently interweaving with the Irish revolutionary movement. Gradually, the claims take on broader and more precise political connotations and the development of this "historical movement" tends to confront political power, its laws and its "forces of law and order".

In 1817 a group of weavers moves towards London equipped with blankets to protect themselves from the cold nights and carrying a long list of demands which are not even taken into consideration by the government: they are to go down in the history of this infant movement of English workers as the Blanketeers. Two years later, in August, comes the "Peterloo massacre", where an enormous and pacific workers' demonstration in Manchester is mercilessly repressed by established power: at least 15 deaths and between 400 and 700 wounded. Whilst Robert Owens' Utopian socialism gathers followers, with the brief community experiment of New Lanark and network of cooperatives and meeting places where political debate can

take place, the class struggles assume connotations more openly opposed to power. Between the end of May and beginning of June 1831, a real insurrection breaks out in Wales: in protest against the low wages and growing unemployment, the miners of the county of Glamorgan take to the streets to the cry of "Bread and cheese!" and "Down with the King!" and occupy cities, towns and villages, achieving perfect organization with road blocks and an efficient network of communications over the territory; soon other sectors of workers join the movement, the rebellion extends to the whole county and, for the second time since the mutiny of Nore, the red flag appears at the head of the workers' banners, as a symbol of the will to rebel and fight; in Merthyr Tydfil, the heart of the region and centre of the real insurrection, for over a week the rebellious workers besiege magistrates, politicians and local businessmen at a meeting in a hotel to decide on a line of action. At this point the government sends in the army and special assault squadrons which, after a series of initial defeats in the field, open fire on the demonstrators, killing over twenty and wounding a hundred; this is followed by arrests, trials, death penalties, long prison sentences and deportation to Australia. Then, in 1834, with the Unlawful Oaths Act (the law passed in 1797, at the time of the sailors' rebellions of Spithead and Nore, and affecting secret societies based on an oath of loyalty) still in force, six of the most charismatic members of the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers, which had long been active around the town of Tolpuddle in Dorset, are arrested, placed on trial and sentenced to deportation to Australia; the "Tolpuddle Martyrs" are remembered in many rebel songs⁵.

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5. E. P. Thompson's, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 1963, 1968, is a must for anyone who wishes to go into greater detail concerning this phase of the English proletariat's history.

Thus, the evolution towards Chartism proceeds. In 1837, the London Working Men's Association prepares a People's Charter, claiming essential "rights" for workers, to be obtained by open battle, organization and recourse to the necessary violence: the fracture between Utopian socialism in the style of Owen and the Chartist movement becomes more evident. In May 1838, the Chart is published and presented in Glasgow: there is now open talk of "complete suffrage", a general strike, international links, armed rebellion in the industrial North... After a Convention witnessing a radicalization of positions, well summed up by the important Manifesto of May 1839, an initial uprising breaks out in Birmingham in July of the same year; in November, two thousand Welsh miners march on Newport: the army retaliates by opening fire and killing 14 rebels; at the beginning of the following year, the trials of some Chartist agitators end with death sentences and many years of imprisonment. Other wide-reaching strikes follow, repeated uprisings to demand bread (the Corn Laws, passed between 1815 and 1846, imposed customs duties on cereals produced abroad, thus raising the price of food at home) and, in August 1842, came the "general strike", also known as Plug Plot Riots: workers in several factories in Lancashire, the heart of the textile industry, came out in protest, pulled out the plugs of the machinery's steam tanks thus blocking production, upturned factories and clashed with the "forces of law and order", receiving support from the miners and numerous other sectors of workers, whilst the strike extended to Yorkshire and other counties: it was to last almost two weeks. Between 1843 and 1844, other important and semi-clandestine Chartist conventions were held: the movement could then count on thousands of determined followers, a lively press consisting of leaflets and newspapers (the most famous: *The Northern Star*, which Marx and

Engels were to write for), and valid organizers; its rank and file grew (not only in terms of quantity), swollen with the numerous Irish immigrants fleeing from poverty and the potato famine, as well as from English oppression. And then, despite the many demonstrations of strength and repeated petitions and mobilizations all over the country, Chartism, too, declined – the practical demonstration of its limits and of the need to come to a higher definition of the political programme, theory and organization (yet still, in 1848, uprisings broke out that were serious enough to convince the authorities to transfer Queen Victoria in a hurry to the Isle of Wight and to mobilize the army, ranging cannons in the streets of Manchester, calling out the cavalry and proclaiming martial law...). More experiences, then, and more precious lessons which were to sediment and become metabolized: the interweaving of economic claims and political claims, the use of organized force to counter the force of established power, the struggles as necessary training for the conquest of political objectives, the progressive manifestation of a class identity

to set against the confused agitation of the "people", the need for a political party, to seize power, to set up the dictatorship of the proletariat as a bridge towards the classless society⁶... In the meantime, let us not forget that in 1842, a few weeks after the strikes, Friedrich Engels came to Manchester and immediately became an *active witness* to what was going on: his *Condition of the Working Class in England*, published in 1844-45, is based on material collected first hand in the proletarian neighbourhoods, as well as on broad documentation taken from a vast press – the work of doctors, reformers, politicians and bourgeois economists, worried about the now evident consequences of the Industrial Revolution and the factory régime. Bonds of friendship and collaboration link Marx and Engels to some of the most clear-thinking Chartist militants, such as Julian Harney and Ernest Jones, who were soon to become passionate supporters of scientific socialism⁷.

But now back to France, where the conditions of the proletariat were no less tragic than in Great Britain. In one

follow →

6. Not by chance, Marx would write, in a letter dated 5 March 1852, to his comrade in battle, Joseph Weydemeyer: "... And now as to myself, no credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society or the struggle between them. Long before me bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this class struggle and bourgeois economists, the economic economy of the classes. What I did that was new was to prove: (1) that the *existence of classes* is only bound up with *particular historical phases in the development of production* (historische Entwicklungsphasen der Production), (2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the *dictatorship of the proletariat*, (3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the *abolition of all classes* and to a *classless society*". Where it is worth-while underlining the verb "to prove"...

7. In his 1885 "On the History of the Communist League", Engels was to recall: "While I was in Manchester, it was tangibly brought home to me that the economic facts, which have so far played no role or only a contemptible one in the writing of history, are, at least in the modern world, a decisive historical force; that they form the basis of the origination of the present-day class antagonisms; that these class antagonisms, in the countries where they have become fully developed, thanks to large-scale industry, hence especially in England, are in their turn the basis of the formation of political parties and of party struggles, and thus of all political history. Marx had not only arrived at the same view, but had already, in the *Deutsche-Französische Jahrbücher* (1844), generalized it to the effect that, speaking generally, it is not the state which conditions and regulates the civil society at all, but civil society which conditions and regulates the state, and, consequently, that policy and its history are to be explained from the economic relations and their development, and not vice versa..." (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/communist-league/1885hist.htm>).

of the many reports describing them, a doctor from Nantes states, as early as 1825, that “for him [the worker], living means not dying”. And whilst it is true that, as a historian of the workers’ movement writes, “between 1830 and 1836, the two countries have reached an unequal degree of development and the evolution of capitalism is far more developed [in Great Britain] than in France”⁸, it is also true that in the latter country a working class still consisting mostly of home artisans and workers, but already with a significant quota of proletarians especially in the textile industry, is not slow in making itself felt: mobilization, attempts to create organisms of mutual aid, strikes, the destruction of machinery⁹... Thus, at the end of July 1830, i.e. just forty years after the French Revolution and its lessons, for three days we see barricades reappear on the streets of Paris. The uprising starts with the printers (the metal type is used as bullets!) but soon it spreads throughout the capital and to the province, becoming an authentic insurrection and involving more or less all sectors. Not only this: there are many episodes in which booksellers open up their warehouses, turning them into arsenals, and the owners of transport firms offer their vehicles to build barricades... In the “Three Glorious Days” contrasting impulses interweave: the proletariat once again drowns in the “people” whilst it is the interests of the bourgeois industrialists and traders to deal a blow to established power, as yet slow in becoming their tool. The historian previously mentioned comments: “Thanks to the working class, the bourgeois industrialists and traders have been able to seize power. The workers expect their due reward. They believe there

is hope of this [...]. In reality nothing has changed for [them]. The bourgeois industrialists and traders will govern freely in the name of Louis Philippe. Ministers Thiers and Guizot will be more hostile towards the people than the men of the restoration [...]. The working classes lack [...] organization, without which no battle can be attempted”¹⁰.

Disappointed (yet another lesson!), the working classes do not back down. A month after the “Three Glorious Days”, the weavers of Rouen take to the streets demanding a reduction in hours and the abolition of the system of fines. The uprising quickly spreads to other places, the workers are charged and repressed violently by the “forces of law and order” but the weavers are again followed by the printers and then the navvies, metalworkers and mechanics, dyers, builders, blacksmiths, milliners and tailors... A circular from the *Préfecture* declared: “In several classes of workers a most disturbing unrest exists. It is becoming urgent to put an end to this state of effervescence.” The voice of the bourgeoisie is always the same!

A little less than one year goes by, punctuated by strikes, demonstrations and more destruction of machinery, and then, at the end of November 1831, the working class of Lyon, headed by the weavers and silk-workers, once more becomes the key figure, to the cry of “Live free and work, or die in the battle!”. The workers, armed and well organized, rebel: they occupy the city, oblige the army to withdraw, appeal to the soldiers to join the rebellion... In only a few days, the authorities regain control of the situation: without a real guide and a real political vision, the

courageous proletarians of Lyon can do no more than suffer the repression and on 3 December, a contingent of 20 thousand soldiers with 150 cannons enters the city.

But the Lyon uprising offers the European proletariat further lessons: in fact, this “state of effervescence” has in no way been placated. While Minister Périer recommends “patience and resignation” to the French proletariat, between 1832 and 1833, albeit amidst inevitable contradictions in its formative phase, a vast network of workers’ associations develops (weavers, gilders, tailors...) claiming higher wages and shorter working hours (up to 18 hours a day!), which, in France as in Great Britain, has to deal with harsh anti-union legislation (“freedom to work” must always be protected!). Influenced by Utopian socialism along the lines of Saint-Simon and Fourier, workers’ production associations arise, some of which even claim state intervention through the State banks: the proletariat still fails to get rid of the unhealthy weight of the other classes in question, which limit or channel its fighting spirit in the direction of reformist solutions destined to fail.

The fighting spirit was constant and generous but we cannot go into all the details of it here. Suffice it to remember the magnificent fighting spirit demonstrated once again between the end of 1833 and beginning of 1834 by the silk-workers of Lyon, once again out on strike – this time a massive and organized turnout, blocking all activity and mobilizing entire communities and working-class neighbourhoods – soon followed, after the creation of a unified Committee of the various workers’ associations against the anti-worker and anti-union legislation, by the proletariat of Paris. In the “six-day battle”, first in Lyon and in Paris immediately afterwards, the cities are placed under siege, there are repeated episodes of solidarity between workers and soldiers, the neighbourhoods in rebel hands distinguish themselves in terms of order and composure (the same was to be true during the Com-

8. Édouard Dolléans, *Storia del movimento operaio*. I: 1830-1871, Sansoni, Firenze 1977, p. 21.

9. It must be remembered that the term “sabotage” comes from *sabot*, French for “clog”: the common wooden clogs were used to block and break up the gears in the first industrial machines.

10. Idem, pp. 32-33. We should remember that the Thiers quoted is the same Thiers who, as Prime Minister, was to order the pitiless massacre of the Paris *communards* in 1871: his was a long career in the pay of bourgeois power.

mune of 1871) and the split between the proletariat and the other classes in question clearly emerges. In the end the repression was to be bloody and pitiless, with Thiers again at work as the butcher and Minister of Home Affairs: Lyon is razed and a witness would write that: “it has been destroyed, and not by the rebels”; in Paris, General Bugeaud instructs the National Guard to “massacre 3000 rebels.” In September 1834, in the lithographic work called “Rue Transnonain” (from the name of the street in Paris where the “forces of law and order” carried out one of their tremendous massacres), the great artist Honoré Daumier was to immortalize for posterity the cruelty of which the ruling class is capable in order to remain in power.

The victims of the “Six Days” of April 1834, just like those who fell in the workers’ battles in England: more of *our anonymous martyrs*.

Faced with the bankruptcy of the various parties and of the political prospects for Utopian socialism, the need increasingly advances to gain class independence through the creation of a party that truly represents proletarian interests, above and beyond sectorial battles and economic claims, however necessary these are. An attempt to respond to this need is made by Louis Auguste Blanqui, who has been active for some time in various clandestine Republican associations and is a member of the group “Friends of the People”, which pursues to some extent the work of Babeuf (it is no coincidence that Filippo Buonarroti is also one of its militants – a real *trait d’union*); Blanqui was already a leading figure in the July revolution of 1830 (the “Three Glorious Days”) and is destined to play a further key role some decades later during the Paris Commune. But his vision of the revolution as a coup by a small group of daring clandestine conspirators, however courageous, could not meet the need for a theory and general practice of revolution, the seizing of power and introduction, through the

dictatorship of the proletariat, of the socialist mode of production. Thus, his attempt at insurrection, in May 1839, supported by the same League of the Just – a forerunner of the League of Communists directed by Marx and Engels – ended in a tragic failure.

In this necessarily rapid and summary overview we cannot forget Germany. “The German people, too, have their revolutionary tradition,” Engels was to write in 1850¹¹, referring to the “peasants’ war”, which broke out in 1525, guided by Thomas Münzer, during which “German peasants and plebeians conceived of ideas and plans that their descendants very often withdraw from in alarm”, giving proof “of a constancy and energy that, in a centralized nation, would have yielded great results” – a war that “is not so remote from the fights we are carrying on at present,” because “the adversaries we must fight against are still mostly the same.” Indeed, the classes and fractions of classes “that proved traitors everywhere, in 1848 and 1849, are already to be found as traitors in 1525, even though at an inferior stage of development”¹².

This was without doubt the great problem of the “historical movement taking place under our very eyes” as regards Germany: the fact that the country was still a constellation of small states and the lack of centralization weakened the development of a proletarian and class movement, as was to be proven by the dynamics of 1848-49 in Germany; at the same time, the balance of power of the classes and the lessons from the counter-revolution that the proletariat and political avant-gardes were to learn would converge into Marx’s and Engels’ analysis, both in terms of the immediate measures that proletarian power would have to adopt (indicated in the *Manifesto*, Chapter II: Proletarians and Communists), and in the battle cry “Permanent revolution!” (from the “Address of the Central Committee to the Communist

League” of 1850): this means the need, in a dual revolution (in which the agenda also includes anti-feudal tasks or – later – anti-colonial ones), for the proletariat, in complete organizational, political and military independence, to support a bourgeois revolution, but with the objective of immediately moving beyond this, removing it from the power seized against the old classes and establishing its own power... But let us not move too far forward: the internal dynamics in the year of the revolution, 1848, might perhaps be the subject of another, useful study. Let us return instead to pre-1848 and to the lessons it teaches the proletariat and that Marx and Engels, *driven by objective factors*, were able to distill into the *Manifesto*.

In the years and months preceding 1848, albeit “only locally” (Engels emphasizes), people’s uprisings developed in the Odenwald, in the Black Forest, Slesia. In the latter region, the heart of a textile industry in the midst of a deep crisis, due also to competition from England, the weavers were again at work: in June 1844 they were to be the key figures in an authentic uprising that would affect numerous towns and be bloodily repressed and remembered in the famous poem by Heinrich Heine (The Song of the Weavers”) and, some fifty years later, in a tragedy by the German playwright Gerhardt Hauptmann, entitled “The Weavers”, as well as in a splendid series of drawings by the German artist Käthe Kollwitz. Engels himself, as German correspondent for the Chartist “Northern Star”, was to narrate the rebellion, emphasizing its simultaneous occurrence with similar uprisings in industrial England and its key role in the pro-

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11. F. Engels, *The Peasant War in Germany*, Chapter I. Notice the date! Only two years after the *Manifesto* and the most widespread “historical movement” with the name “1848”.

12. F. Engels, *Ibid.*

cess of the political growth of the German proletariat. In those same years the diaspora of German workers and militants, struck or pursued by state repression, would lead them to encounter their fellow fighters in France, Belgium, Switzerland and England. Once again Engels, in his “On the History of the Communist League”, would write that “The present-day [1885] international workers’ movement is in substance a direct continuation of the German workers’ movement of that time [1836-1852], which was the *first international workers’ movement* of all time”¹³. The weavers’ rebellion in Slesia thus represents a key moment in the formation of that movement.

It is all too evident that at a political level all this (decade upon decade of economic and social crises, fights, rebellions and insurrection, fleeting victories and ferocious repression, the obstinate will to fight and the harsh lessons of counter-revolution) was to produce keen debate and polemics, clashes and divisions. There would be the “young Hegelians” and then the German petit-bourgeois socialism and “True socialism” with its “philosophical absurdities”, the critical-Utopian socialism of the various Owens, Saint-Simons, Fouriers, Cabets, the conservative socialism of the Proudhons and Weitlings, Bakunin’s anarchy in a nutshell... All limited and distorted expressions of the class struggles taking place in those decades upon decades, of the way in which the vari-

ous classes operate *in the course of history at the time*, and against them the young Marx and Engels were to battle incessantly; alongside them, in constant and fruitful interaction, were other anonymous and forgotten but generous militants (like Wilhelm Wolff, to whose memory Book One of *Capital* would be dedicated), who would then also contribute to founding the International Workers’ Association, or First International, in 1864. And there was to be the unceasing work of the “old mole” embodied in the birth and death of organisms and organizations, clubs and associations, journals and newspapers, in search of a real and convincing theory and historical perspective. And there was to be – this is what interests us – the formation in 1836 of the “League of the Just”, from which, a few years later, after an acute political clash that broke out between Utopian and reactionary socialists and scientific socialists, the Communist League was to emerge. Let us once more give voice to Engels: “Communism among the French and Germans, Chartism among the English, now no longer appeared as something accidental which could just as well not have occurred. These movements now presented themselves as a movement of the modern oppressed class, the proletariat, as the more or less devel-

13. F. Engels, “On the History...”, cit.

14. *Ibid.*

oped forms of its historically necessary struggle against the ruling class, the bourgeoisie; as forms of the class struggle, but distinguished from all earlier class struggles by this one thing, that the present-day oppressed class, the proletariat, cannot achieve its emancipation without at the same time emancipating society as a whole from division into classes and, therefore, from class struggles. And Communism now no longer meant the concoction, by means of the imagination, of an ideal society as perfect as possible, but insight into the nature, the conditions and the consequent general aims of the struggle waged by the proletariat”¹⁴.

As is well known, it was to be this very Communist League that in 1847 would give Marx and Engels the responsibility for drawing up a “manifesto” that would outline the theory and programme of the fight. Decades and decades of conflicts then: not of ideas or personal opinions but of *material social forces* clashing and, in the clash, releasing sparks of consciousness waiting to be gathered, systematically arranged, organized and lastly affirmed and made known, to guide and direct the struggles. It is from all this that the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* emerges: not an individual work, not philosophical lucubrations and concoctions, but the precious distillation of class struggles – of that “historical movement that is taking place before our very eyes.”

The Marxist thesis states in particular that it is not possible for an individual brain to encompass a consciousness of the entire course of history in advance, for two reasons. First of all, because consciousness does not precede, but follows being, i.e. the material conditions that surround the subject of this consciousness; and secondly because all forms of social consciousness emerge - with a certain lag that enables a general determination of this consciousness - from the analogous, parallel circumstances, i.e. economic relations, in which the individuals who (thereby) constitute a social class are placed. These individuals are forced to “act together”

historically long before they can “think together”. The theory that defines this relationship between class conditions and class action and its ultimate goal has nothing in common with a revealed doctrine proclaimed by individuals, i.e. by a specific author or leader, or by the “whole class” conceived of as the gross, momentary sum of a number of individuals in a given country or at a given moment: and it most definitely cannot be deduced from a very bourgeois “consultation” within the class.

(from “The False Resource of Activism”, General Meeting of the Internationalist Communist Party, 1952)

Save the planet... But how?

Climate change, increasing CO2, plastic everywhere, pesticides and herbicides, air and water pollution, deforestation and desertification of increasingly vast areas, the melting glaciers, widespread cementification and mineralization, cities blocked by traffic, additives and poisons of all sorts in the food we eat... Quite right to take action, organize and come out onto the streets to contrast the growing destruction of our environment. And it is quite right for young people, worried about the future, to be in the frontline. But are the methods and objectives appropriate? Above all: is the origin of this increasing destruction really clear to those who take action because they are distressed and above all enraged at the catastrophic prospects so widely presented?

If we fail to understand that at the root of all this stands the capitalist mode of production, dominated by the laws of profit and competition, production for production's sake, the need to accumulate capital to reinvest it in the production of more capital and so on endlessly, if we fail to grasp the infernal mechanism that has dominated us for at least two hundred and fifty years now, we end up by giving in to impotent desperation. Capitalism played a progressive role in freeing humanity from the previous mode of production, feudalism, which, faced with a market that was already more and more worldwide, and by epoch-making technological innovations, was merely a hindrance to human development. But now capitalism, which has made the whole world bow to its laws, has itself become a hindrance, multiplying the destructive elements implicit in the very laws by which it functions (not to speak of the hundreds of wars and armed conflicts in the course of the 1900s, as well as the two world bloodbaths that massacred entire populations and devastated whole areas of the planet, continuing to do so today with increasingly sophisticated means of destruction).

So what is the sense of addressing States, governments and governors, institutions and international organisms,

asking them to intervene, when they are the tools of this mode of production, the representatives and executives of it (and are only too happy for young people to come out onto the streets, as long as they do not question their régime and their power!)? What is the sense of imagining large or small reforms that nonetheless leave the foundations and mechanisms upholding this mode of production intact? *This is not how to save the planet!* The capitalist mode of production will continue, regardless, to try and grind out profits, provoke alarming economic and social crises, spark off increasingly bloody and destructive wars and destroy the planet's resources – not because of Tom, Dick or Harry's wickedness but because this is what its own laws and operational mechanisms oblige it to do.

An activist like Chico Mendes, whom all ecologists regard with admiration, wrote (and how many people have forgotten this today!): *"Environmentalism without the class struggle is just gardening!"* Couldn't be clearer! To the young people coming out on climate strikes and demonstrating against environmental disaster, we communists say: Let the gardening be! Steer towards the class struggle! Locate your real enemies! Fight with us, not to patch up a system that's decaying, poisoned and poisoning, but to get rid of it and finally set up a classless society that will at last take the earth to heart!

Only a revolutionary prospective and preparation, through practice and the political work that our party has developed over decade after decade of open battle against all illusions and disappointments, deceit and betrayal (including the false communism of Stalinist Russia and Maoist China), always side by side with the world proletariat and in support of their fights, despite our scarce resources – only this can save the planet and the human species! Not an easy task but a far more urgent and necessary one – as well as, yes, passionately involving!

27 September 2019

Read "Emergenza climatica o preparazione rivoluzionaria?" in no. 4/2019 of our Italian newspaper "il programma comunista"

Either the proletariat is revolutionary or it is nothing!

(K. Marx)

1919-2019. In memory of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht

15 January 2019 is the hundredth anniversary of the killing of our comrades Rosa and Karl in Berlin. One hundred years have passed since the “preventive bourgeois counter-revolution” conducted by social democracy and its minions rained down on them and on the anonymous masses following them – the first act in the defeat not only of the German, but of the worldwide proletariat. This premeditated and bloody act encouraged a reawakening of political violence in the slumbering bourgeois beast, which had just emerged from the slaughter of the war, and so millions of proletarians were sacrificed. In the following five years, the path was opened up to Stalinism and its mongrel theory of “socialism in a single country”: the failed proletarian revolution in western Europe and the development of capitalism in Russia, the victory of opportunism in the Bolshevik party and the Communist International and lastly the strangling of revolutionary parties throughout the world were the tremendous stages in a counter-revolutionary process that has lasted right up until today.

Today no democratic procession, no tearful funeral anniversary can commemorate Rosa, Karl and the other militants and proletarians who were killed! This can only be done by the revolutionary effort of communists in defence of our future prospects, taking sides clearly and without hesitation: on the one side the “rotting corpse” of reformism and opportunism, on the other the path leading to the dictatorship of the proletariat as an obligatory phase towards the future of our species; on the one side the reformism and nostalgic Stalinism of today and on the other, hard, daily work, so that tomorrow a classless society can be established – Communism.

(What follows is part of a Report given at our Party’s General Meeting of Febr. 12-13, 1972, published in our Italian journal “Il programma comunista”, no. 3, 1972)

From “The tragedy of the first German, post-war proletarian period”

In reports given during previous general meetings, which can unfortunately not be fully documented, an attempt was made to retrace the dramatic historical cycle through which German social democracy - not “German” as such, but a part of international social democracy – carried out the function of “persecutor of the revolutionary proletariat” at the European epicentre of the class war: its majority wing as a direct actor; its independent wing as “aide to the axe-man”, all the more infamous, the more Jesuit and cloaked in orthodox Marxism it appeared. This attempt was not a historiographer’s luxury. It had the objective of drawing from these events the final confirmation

for a thesis that has always guided the Left, both at the head of the PC (Italian Communist Party), as at the heart of the International, in its battle not to give in to the obsession with “working class unity” and, even more urgently, to reveal the faulty tactical manoeuvring carried out under the illusion of winning over to the cause of communism higher numbers than those that the situation created by the end of the first world war was able to mobilize on the ground magnificently prepared by the Bolshevik October, the revolutionary preparation for power exercised by the party of the proletarian dictatorship in the long and tormented process of the civil war, the terror, the despotic in-

tervention in the economy, towards a socialist society.

This thesis, as we have often reminded readers, found its most lucid expression in an article of February 1921 entitled precisely The Function of Social Democracy, the crux of which is contained in this classic excerpt: “Social democracy has a specific function, in the sense that there will probably be a period in western countries, in which social democratic parties will govern, either alone or in collaboration with bourgeois parties. However, this intermezzo, where the proletariat has not been strong enough to avoid it, will not constitute a positive condition, a necessary condition for the advent of revolutionary forms and institutions, but, instead, a deliberate bourgeois attempt to diminish and avert the proletariat’s forces of attack and to defeat it mercilessly under the white (i.e. fascist – ed.) reaction if it has enough remaining energy to dare rebel against the legitimate, humanitarian and civil government of social democracy.”

Exhorting the Italian proletariat to welcome any possible experimentation of a social democratic government – whether of “pure” reformers, whether a coalition between the latter and other explicitly and constitutionally bourgeois parties, as happened many times in Germany from 1999-22 – “as a declaration of war, not as the sign that a truce was opening up in the class war or an attempt at a pacific solution to the problems of revolution,” - the article concluded with a warning directed at the proletariat not of a single country but throughout the world: “This is why we say that revolutionary tactics must be based on international, and not only national, experiences: that the torment of proletarians in Hungary, Finland and other countries must suffice to spare

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[...] the Western proletariat the need to see with its own eyes, to learn at the cost of its own blood, what the function of social democracy means in history: the latter will necessarily take its own path but communists must undertake to bar its progress as swiftly as possible, before it manages to plant the dagger of betrayal into the loins of the proletariat.”

It is in this very spirit and addressing first and foremost young militants distanced by long years from these decisive “experiences”, that we wished to evoke, - documentary proof at hand, blood-soaked documents – the role played by social democracy in dragging the heroic proletariat of Central Europe into the slaughter of the war, only – when the war was over and the “republic of councils” had been set up with a majority of socialists and independents in the government, in those stormy months when the Scheidemanns and the Noskes let loose his military gangs (*Freikorps*) of sinister reaction against the “criminal Spartacists” – to cut off the heads of the avant garde, depriving it of its most battlesome militants, plunging it into disorientation and panic and establishing on the “burnt-out wastelands” in Berlin, Munich, Hamburg and Dresden, Essen and Bremen, the reign of bourgeois social democracy in its operatic, Weimar version. Nonetheless, it failed – and this must be remembered for the glory of the German proletariat – to prevent the hated phantom of communist revolution from raising its head again in the long months and years of fiery battle, as though continuing to draw new energy from the bloodshed.

The story of this “historical function of social democracy” is branded into the events of those times and no revolutionary militant must be allowed to remain unaware of this and ignore the terrible lesson. We are reminded that in the post-war period in this same Central Europe the “October lesson” was magnificently confirmed, unfortunately only an objective confirma-

tion, which did not become part and parcel of the Party’s awareness and a guide to its orientation on the “road to Golgotha” (in the words of Rosa Luxemburg) along which it was condemned by history to march, towards a victory that seemed close at hand but was, instead, terribly far away.

Yet, remembering this historical result and pointing to it as the final balance for all proletarians in any country means completing only half the work we judge necessary for the single world party of the proletariat not only to rise again but to possess right from the start the theoretical and practical weapons indispensable for not coming to its huge task unprepared - a task it will perhaps be called to once again in the very midst of Central Europe and in particular Germany. This means looking at the other side of the coin, not the one marked by the pig-like gruntings of Noske-Scheidemann but the side that bears the heroically sublime likeness of Leibknecht-Luxemburg, in order to understand the other side of the tragedy of the first post-war period in Germany: the alarming delay, in which not only the proletariat but also its political guide found themselves when faced with the advent of the material and objective conditions for an enormous revolutionary uprising, from which the Bolsheviks were the first to expect the October conquests to be saved, and which, instead, suffered tremendous grieving, not even leaving a strong thread of tradition for later generations to hold onto.

What must be recorded – and the task is infinitely more painful and difficult –, not in order to file it away, but to turn it into the flesh and blood of the flesh and blood of revolutionary generations, both present and future, is the balance of the immaturity, the indecision, the loss of direction, of which none of the political forces that merged into the German Communist Party (Spartacus League) at the end of December 1918 and be-

ginning of 1919 was innocent, and which allowed the counter revolution guided by the Social Democrats to rage so furiously even before a revolution had been “carried out” or even “prepared” and “directed”, with the precise intention of preventing it whilst there was still time, suffocating at birth the generous action of a working class ready to fight in the streets and in the squares from the first to the last day of not just one but three months, and put the word “End” to the “madness” of the “rascals Karl and Rosa” as Kautsky put it, shaking his “wise” professorial head – and of the millions of anonymous proletarians who instinctively identified with them.

There was no “German revolution” (as we are so often told – and as recounted by historians incapable of looking beyond the surface): there was a bloody preventive counter revolution, fully justified in the eyes of the ruling class by the volcanic uprisings of the workers in overalls or in military uniform and made urgent by the sensation, all too correct, albeit irrational and not fully aware, that a political guide was lacking for those armed troops – or, if there was one, it was naked and helpless before the blows of its enemy. Of course it would be anti-Marxist to claim to explain a tragedy of these proportions using purely subjective reasons: mainly, it would be ungenerous, in the light of the martyrdom which, in terms of its scope and gravity, probably sees no equal in the history of the workers’ movement. But it is not an explanation we are seeking here: it is rather a painful recognition – the former may be of interest to historians, the latter must serve militants. Even a splendidly prepared direction can fail to achieve its end if not aided by a conjunction of circumstances over which no social force, as such, has any control: what history cannot forgive the parties and their directives, is not to have fallen in an unequal

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fight, but to have fought in the wrong trenches, or at least not completely their own, and thus not to have handed down to posterity the support (we are not saying the “seed”, which smacks of evangelicalism) of a vigorous revival.

Did the passionate homage to the defeated communards stop Marx from drawing from their recognized and criticized mistakes a profitable lesson

for the proletarians called to pick up the flag and carry it on to victory in the future? But so many young people in search of a light in the darkness of the Stalinist counter revolution look to the “failed revolution” of 1919-20 in Berlin, in order to bring to light the negative lessons, brought to a crux by people like Gorter and Pannekoek, their KAPD and their Unionen. And so, an integral part of

our battle for the full re-proposition of revolutionary Marxism is the relentless but most objective criticism of the immediatism, spontaneism, workism, corporatism, “councilism” that were, if not the prime cause, then certainly the external manifestations, the “epiphenomena” and, within these limits, also one of the contributing causes of the “German proletarian tragedy”.

LENIN ON INTERNATIONALISM

If a German under Wilhelm or a Frenchman under Clemenceau says, “It is my right and duty as a socialist to defend my country if it is invaded by an enemy”, he argues not like a socialist, not like an internationalist, not like a revolutionary proletarian, but like a *petty-bourgeois nationalist*. Because this argument ignores the revolutionary class struggle of the workers against capital, it ignores the appraisal of the war as a *whole* from the point of view of the world bourgeoisie and the world proletariat, that is, it ignores internationalism, and all that remains is miserable and narrow-minded nationalism. My country is being wronged, that is all I care about—that is what this argument amounts to, and that is where its petty-bourgeois, nationalist narrow-mindedness lies. [...] The Frenchman, German or Italian who says: “Socialism is opposed to violence against nations, *therefore I* defend myself when my country is invaded”, *betrays* socialism and internationalism, because such a man *sees only* his own “country”, he puts “his own” ... *bourgeoisie* above everything else and does not give a thought to the *international connections* which make the war an imperialist war and his bourgeoisie a link in the chain of imperialist plunder. [...]

The socialist, the revolutionary proletarian, the internationalist, argues differently. He says: “The

character of the war (whether it is reactionary or revolutionary) does not depend on who the attacker was, or in whose country the ‘enemy’ is stationed; it depends on *what class* is waging the war, and on what politics this war is a continuation of. If the war is a reactionary, imperialist war, that is, if it is being waged by two world groups of the imperialist, rapacious, predatory, reactionary bourgeoisie, then every bourgeoisie (even of the smallest country) becomes a participant in the plunder, and my duty as a representative of the revolutionary proletariat is to prepare for the *world proletarian revolution* as the *only* escape from the horrors of a world slaughter. I must argue, not from the point of view of ‘my’ country (for that is the argument of a wretched, stupid, petty-bourgeois nationalist who does not realise that he is only a plaything in the hands of the imperialist bourgeoisie), but from the point of view of my share in the preparation, in the propaganda, and in the acceleration of the world proletarian revolution.”

That is what internationalism means, and that is the duty of the internationalist, the revolutionary worker, the genuine socialist.

Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* (1918)

One Hundred years ago, the Foundation of the Third International (Moscow 2-6 March 1919)

A hundred years after the foundation of the Communist International (CI), we remember once again this extraordinary event, republishing in the following article the “Platform” approved by the 1st Congress on 4 March 1919. The Communist International, or Third International, arose at the initiative of the Bolsheviks, after the dissolution of the Second International, caused by the support given by virtually all the socialist parties to their respective governments (the Italian party adopted the ambiguous formula of “neither support nor sabotage”) at the outbreak of the First World War. The International Congress was held in Moscow from 2 to 6 March 1919 with the objective of sustaining the formation of communist Parties throughout the world and spreading the proletarian revolution internationally. The “Platform”, which we re-publish in this article, reaffirmed the principles of the revolutionary seizing of power, the destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus and its replacement with that of a powerful and centralized proletarian state, starting the gradual process of replacing the capitalist mode of production with the socialist mode. The following “Manifesto to the proletarians of the whole world” (approved on 6 March), recovering connections to a century of proletarian battles, ends with a war cry: “The task of the international communist Party is to destroy this order of things and build in its place the socialist régime [...]. Behind the flag of the workers’ Soviet, the revolutionary fight for power and the dictatorship of the proletariat, behind the flag of the 3rd International, proletarians of the whole world, unite!”

The second Congress of the CI was to be held in St. Petersburg and Moscow, from 19 July to 7 August 1920. In terms of its historical importance, it is a sort of “General Manifesto of Communism”, in which the programme and bases for the organization of the world Party of the Revolution are traced. At the time, the world picture of the economic and social situation and the class war was still dense with revolutionary potential: in fact, 1920 opened with a glorious victory over all the imperialisms and internal and external enemies that had tried to strangle the Soviet Republic. The assembly approved the Statute of the International and the Conditions for admission to the CI, the “21 points”, aiming to found in the West communist parties grounded on discipline, the centralization and organization of working class masses, poor peasants, workers’ unions and the proletarian army. In particular, article 7 foresaw the obligation to make a complete break with reformism and opportunism, point 17 did not grant membership of the CI to those parties that had split from the former social democrats, unless the party’s name was changed to “communist Party” of their respective countries with the added words “Section of the III International”, and article 21, expressly demanded by the communist Left operating in Italy, and present at the Congress, provided for the expulsion from the party of members who did not accept the whole of the International’s theses. This highly important Congress, the peak of the CI’s achievements before its collapse into the hands of advancing Stalinism, discussed and approved theses on parliamentarianism, the union move-

ment and the national and colonial issue and launched the “Appeal to the Proletariat of the Two Americas”.

The third Congress took place in Moscow from 22 June to 12 July 1921, in a phase when the balance of power worldwide had become unfavourable: the general situation had changed radically compared to the previous year; with serious famine and huge strikes affecting the social and economic situation in Russia, the fascist reaction in Italy gaining the upper hand and in Germany, first Kapp’s putsch and then the failure of the so-called “March action”, which revealed the political and social fragility of the KPD. At the same time, as revolutionary action worldwide proved to be ebbing, in the rank and file of the CI concepts of a “Single political Front” and “Workers’ government” started to make their mark, undermining the compact body of principles, tactics and strategy on which it had been founded right from the start, as well as barely concealed criticism of the Livorno (Leghorn) split of the same year, in which the Communist Party of Italy was founded. This was the situation, out of which the crisis of the Third International arose.

The fourth Congress was held in Moscow and St. Petersburg from 5 November to 5 December 1922, in the context of an overall retreat by the proletarian movement in Europe, whilst Russia, on the other hand, was experiencing a phase of economic recovery and emerging from international isolation. On the agenda, priority was again given to the tactics of the “single front”, which by now contemplated the collaboration between

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communist and socialist parties, encouraging the former to “participate in workers’ governments or governments of workers and peasants”. Shortly after the constitution of the Red Unions International, the Congress also took up a position against union splits, considered to seriously weaken the workers: it was rightly considered important for the union organizations to jointly defend the immediate interests of the working class with no ideological divisions. The delegates then dealt mainly with the theme of Italian fascism: some

judged Italian fascism to be a passing phenomenon, confusing it with traditional forms of reaction, others saw in fascism the union of all the forces of counter revolution, others again emphasized the seriousness of the defeat of the workers’ movement due to the Livorno split, too far to the left. The position of the Executive, in particular, was in direct contrast to the positions of the Italian CP (PCd’I), which identified fascism and democracy as two sides of the same coin – that of bourgeois dominion. The fusion of the PCd’I and the PSI (socialist party

of Italy) was then decided: the resolution was unanimously approved, despite the strong disagreement of the Left which, together with the majority of the PCd’I delegates, voted merely out of discipline.

At this point, the story of the Communist International was to take a different route: in a few years, the organism that was to have guided the world revolution became a docile tool of Russian state power and was finally dissolved in 1943, after not meeting for eight years.

Platform of the Communist International approved at the 1st Congress (4th March 1919)

The contradictions of the world capitalist system, nesting at the very heart of it, burst out with tremendous violence in an enormous explosion – the great imperialist world war.

Capitalism attempted to overcome its own anarchist nature by organizing production. Instead of numerous, competing enterprises, powerful capitalist associations were created (unions, consortia, trusts) and banking capital joined industrial capital; the whole life of the economy was dominated by the capitalist financial oligarchy which, through organization grounded on this power, obtained absolute authority. Instead of free competition, monopoly emerged. The individual capitalist became a member of capitalist associations. The senseless anarchy was replaced by organization.

However, to the same extent that the anarchy in individual countries has been replaced by capitalist organization, the contrasts, fighting between competitors, chronic disorder are to be felt in an increasingly acute measure in the economy. The battle between the largest organized State predators necessarily and inevita-

bly led to the monstrous imperialist world war. The greed for profit dragged world capitalism into a battle to win new market outlets, new spheres of action for capital, new sources of raw materials and cheap labour provided by slaves from the colonies. The imperialist States that had shared out the world between them, transforming many millions of proletarians and African, Asian, Australian and American peasants into beasts of burden, sooner or later were forced to reveal the true nature of capitalist anarchy in an immense conflict. And thus the greatest of crimes was committed: the piracy of world war.

Capitalism also made an effort to overcome the contradictions in its social structure. Bourgeois society is a class-based society. Capital in the leading “civilized” States set out to hide the social contradictions. To the detriment of the colonies it was plundering, capital corrupted its salaried slaves, thus creating a common interest between exploiters and exploited, in contrast to the interests of the oppressed colonies - the yellow, black or red peoples - and chained Euro-

pean and American workers to their imperialist “homeland”.

But this method of constant corruption, which generated the patriotism of the working class and its moral subjugation, due to the war, generated its opposite, too. Physical annihilation, total subjugation of the proletariat, monstrous oppression, impoverishment and degeneration, world hunger: this, in the end, is the price of bourgeois society. And this peace has been broken. The imperialist war has changed to civil war.

The new era is here! This is the age of the disintegration of capitalism, its internal dissolution, the age of the communist revolution of the proletariat. The imperialist system is unravelling. Unrest in the colonies, unrest in the smaller nations before being subdued, uprisings of the proletariat, victorious proletarian revolutions in various countries, disintegration of the imperialist armies, the total inability of the ruling classes to direct the destinies of their peoples: this is the present picture throughout the world. The threat of total destruction looms over humanity, whose civilization has been over-

follow →

thrown. Only one force is capable of saving it and this force is the proletariat. The old capitalist “order” no longer exists and can no longer exist. The final result of the capitalist production process is chaos, and this chaos can only be dominated by the greatest production force: the working class. Its task is to create real order – communist order – to break the dominion of capital and make wars impossible. To eliminate the borders between States, to transform the world into a community that works for its own sake, to achieve the brotherhood and emancipation of peoples. To contrast this programme, world capital is sharpening its weapons for the final struggle. Under the protection of the League of Nations and the outpouring of pacifist speeches, it hastens towards the final effort to reassemble the unstuck parts of the capitalist system and direct its energies against the growing proletarian revolution.

This new, monstrous plot of the capitalist classes must be answered by the proletariat with the conquest of political power, the use of this power against the enemy classes and its activation for economic transformation. The final victory of the world proletariat means the beginning of the true history of free humankind.

The seizing of power

The seizing of political power by the proletariat means destroying the political power of the bourgeoisie. The most powerful tool of government the bourgeoisie has, is the state apparatus, with its capitalist army under the command of bourgeois or aristocratic officials, its police and *carabinieri*, its jailers and judges, priests and officials, etc.

The assumption of political power does not mean a mere alternation of the people in the ministries but must imply the destruction of the enemy’s state apparatus, appropriation of the levers of power, the disarm-

ing of the bourgeoisie, of the counter-revolutionary officers, the white guards, the arming of the proletariat, revolutionary soldiers and the workers’ red guards, the destitution of all bourgeois magistrates and the organization of proletarian law-courts, the elimination of the rule of reactionary bureaucracy and the creation of new proletarian administrative organs. The victory of the proletariat lies in the destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus and in the construction of the proletarian state apparatus. Not until it has achieved victory and broken the resistance of the bourgeoisie, can the proletariat place its adversaries in a condition to serve the new order usefully, placing them under communist control and gradually winning them over to the work of constructing communism.

Democracy and dictatorship

The proletarian State – like any State – is an apparatus of constraint, but of the enemies of the working class. Its aim is to break the resistance of the exploiters, who use all possible means in their desperate struggle to suffocate the revolution amidst bloodshed, and make it pointless. The dictatorship of the proletariat, which explicitly places the latter in the highest position in society, is, however, a transitory institution.

In as far as its resistance has been broken, the bourgeoisie will be expropriated and gradually become part of the mass of workers, the dictatorship of the proletariat will disappear, the State will cease to exist and, with it, social classes.

So-called democracy, or bourgeois democracy, is none other than bourgeois dictatorship with a mask on. The highly praised “common will of the people” does not exist, just as the unity of the people does not exist. What really exist are classes with opposing, incompatible wills. But since the bourgeoisie is a small minority, it makes use of these fictions,

this false label of the “will of the people”, using this fine definition to consolidate its class dominion over the working class – to impose the will of its own class. The proletariat, on the contrary, which constitutes the great majority of the population, openly uses class power in its mass organizations, its soviets, to eliminate the privileges of the bourgeoisie and prepare the way for a communist and classless society.

The substance of bourgeois democracy lies in a purely formal acknowledgement of rights and freedoms, which nonetheless remain inaccessible to the working population, proletarians and semi-proletarians lacking material means, whilst the bourgeoisie can use its material resources, its press and other organizations to fool the people and cheat them. On the contrary, the system of the soviets – this new formula of state power – gives the proletariat the chance to achieve its rights and its freedom. The power of the soviets allows the people access to the best buildings, homes, printing works, stores of paper etc. for its press, its meetings, its circles. Only in this way does proletarian democracy really become possible.

In its parliamentary system, bourgeois democracy uses words to give the masses the illusion of participating in State administration. In fact the masses and their organizations are kept at a safe distance from real power and real State administration. In the system of the soviets, mass organizations govern and through them the masses themselves, since the soviets call a growing number of workers to administrate the State: only in this way can the whole of the working-class population be called on to take a practical role in the government of the State. The soviet system is grounded on the organization of the proletarian masses represented by the soviets themselves, by the revolutionary unions, the cooperatives etc..

Bourgeois democracy and the parlia-

follow →

mentary system, with the distinction between legislative power and executive power and the irrevocable nature of parliamentary mandates, make the split between the masses and the State more acute. The soviet system, instead, with the right to annulment, the combination of legislative and executive powers, the soviets considered as labour collectives, binds the masses to the organs of administration. This bond is strengthened by the fact that in the soviets elections do not take place on the basis of artificial territorial distinctions but on the basis of production units. The soviet system thus achieves true proletarian democracy, a democracy that becomes a tool of the proletariat and its inner strength against the bourgeoisie. In this system the choice is to entrust the industrial proletariat, by reason of its better organization and political maturity, with the role of ruling class, under whose hegemony the semi-proletarians and small farmers have the chance to rise progressively. The temporary advantage of the industrial proletariat must be used to save the poorest masses of the rural, petty bourgeoisie from the influence of the great landowners and the bourgeoisie, to organize and educate them to collaborate on the building of communism.

The expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the socialization of the means of production

The dissolution of the capitalist order and capitalist work discipline make it impossible, given the existence of class relations, for production to restart according to its old régime. The workers' struggles for higher wages – even when successful – do not bring the hoped-for improvement in living conditions, since the immediate increase in the cost of consumer commodities makes any success an illusion. The workers' life quality can only be raised in proportion to how

far the proletariat itself – and not the bourgeoisie – governs production. The energetic battle by workers for higher wages in all countries where the situation clearly proves to lack any way out, makes it impossible, by reason of its basic impetus and tendency to become generalized, for there to be any further progress in capitalist production. To boost the economy's production forces, to break as soon as possible the resistance of the bourgeoisie, which prolongs the agony of the old society, generating the danger of the total collapse of economic life, the dictatorship of the proletariat must proceed with the expropriation of the great bourgeoisie and feudal property and make the means of production and exchange the collective property of the proletarian State.

Today communism arises from the ruins of capitalism. History leaves no other possible escape route for humanity. The opportunists, who advance the utopian vindication of the rebirth of the capitalist economy to defer socialization, thus only delay the solution of the problem and arouse the danger of total ruin; the communist revolution, instead, is the best and only way to conserve society's most important force of production – the proletariat – and with it society itself.

The dictatorship of the proletariat implies no division whatsoever of the means of production and exchange; on the contrary, its aim is to organize production in the framework of a unified plan.

The first steps towards the socialization of the entire economy demand: the socialization of all the big banks that now direct production; proletarian power taking possession of all the organs of the capitalist State that oversee economic life; taking possession of all municipalized companies; socialization of the monopolistic production sectors and those that are united in trusts as well as the socialization of all those branches of

industry where the level of concentration and centralization of capital make this technically possible; the socialization of agrarian property and its transformation into agricultural companies managed by society. As regards smaller companies, they should be gradually socialized by the proletariat, according to their importance.

It must be pointed out at this stage, that small properties will not be expropriated at all and that owners who do not exploit the work of others should not be subjected to coercive measures. This is a class that will gradually be drawn into socialist organization by example and practice, when the new order proves to be superior and the class of small farmers and the urban petit bourgeoisie are freed from the economic pressure of usury by extortionist capital and the aristocracy and from the weight of taxation (mainly by State debts being annulled, etc.).

The task of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the economic sphere can only be completed to the extent that the proletariat is able to create centralized organs for directing production and instating its administration by the workers. To these ends, they must necessarily take advantage of their mass organizations, which are most closely linked to the production process.

In the sphere of distribution, the dictatorship of the proletariat must replace trade with the fair distribution of products; the means that are of use for reaching this objective are: socialization of the big commercial enterprises; possession by the proletariat of all the bourgeois organs of distribution, both state and municipal; control of the great consumer cooperatives, whose organization will still have great importance in the transition period; the progressive centralization of all these organisms and their transformation into a single whole governing the rational distribution of products.

In the field of production, as in that of distribution, all qualified technicians and specialists must be made use of, as soon as their political resistance has been overcome and they are able to serve not capitalism but the new production system. The proletariat will not oppress them and, on the contrary, will be the first to give them the opportunity to develop the most intense creative work. The dictatorship of the proletariat will replace the separation of physical and intellectual work, generated by capitalism, with collaboration between both, thus achieving the union of work and science.

With the expropriation of factories, mines, properties, etc. the proletariat must also abolish the exploitation of the population by capitalist owners of real estate, transferring the large residential buildings to local workers' soviets, settle the workers' population in bourgeois houses, etc.

During this period of profound transformation the soviet power must, on the one hand, construct an administrative apparatus that is increasingly centralized, and, on the other, call broader sectors of the workers to manage direct administration.

The path to victory

The revolutionary age demands that the proletariat use systematic battle capable of concentrating all its energy in mass action, right to the extreme, logical consequence: the direct clash, the declaration of war against the bourgeois state machine. All other methods must be subordinated to this objective, for example the revolutionary use of bourgeois parliamentarianism.

The necessary premises for victory in this battle are not only the complete break with the lackeys manipulated by capital and with the persecutors of the communist revolution, whose role today is assumed by the right-wing social democrats, but also a complete break with the "centre" (Kautsky group) which, at the crucial point, abandons the proletariat to flirt with its declared enemies. On the other hand, it is necessary to put together a block with those elements of the revolutionary workers' movement who, although they did not previously belong to the socialist party, now find themselves on the ground of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the form of the power of the soviets, i.e. – for example – with elements close to revolutionary syndicalism.

The advance of the revolutionary movement in all countries, the danger of this revolution becoming suffocated by the capitalist League of Nations, the attempts by the parties that betray socialism to unite (the formation of the yellow International in Berne), to lend their services to Wilson's League and lastly the absolute necessity for the proletariat to coordinate its efforts – all this must lead to the foundation of a truly revolutionary and truly proletarian communist International.

In subordinating the so-called national interests to those of the world revolution, the International will accomplish the reciprocal help for proletarians in different countries, because without this help, whether economic or of any other kind, the proletariat will not be able to organize a new society. On the other hand, in contrast to the yellow, social-patriotic International, the communist

proletarian International will support the exploited peoples of the colonies in their battle against imperialism, to hasten the final collapse of the world imperialist system.

At the start of the war, the capitalist robbers stated they would limit themselves to defending their respective countries. But German imperialism soon showed its true, rapacious nature in its bloody misdeeds in Russia, Ukraine and Finland. In turn, the Allied powers now reveal themselves in the eyes of the more disadvantaged sectors of the population, to be pirates ready to plunder the whole world as the assassins of the proletariat. Together with the German bourgeoisie and the social patriots, with hypocritical words of peace on their lips, they attempt to suffocate the revolution of the European proletariat, using their war machinery and barbaric and stultified colonial troops: the white terror of the bourgeois cannibals has been unspeakable! There have been innumerable victims in the working classes, which have lost their best representatives: Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg.

The proletariat must defend itself at all costs! The communist International calls the proletariat of the entire world to this extreme battle. Weapon against weapon! Strength against strength!

Down with capital's imperialist plot!
Long Live the international Republic of the proletarian soviets!

(from *Manifest, Richtlinien, Beschlüsse des ersten Kongresses. Aufrufe und offene Schreiben des Exekutivkomitees bis zum zweiten Kongress*, Hamburg 1920, pp. 19-29).

Eight Theses Regarding Russia (1953)

1. The economic process taking place in the territories of the Russian Union can essentially be defined as the establishment of a modern form of the capitalist mode of production, using highly modern techniques, in rural, feudal and Asian-oriental countries with a backward economy.
2. The political state, however, has arisen out of a revolution in which feudal power was defeated by forces in which the proletariat played the prime role, followed in second place by the peasantry, whilst a real bourgeoisie is more or less absent. All this has consolidated as a political organ of capitalism, due to the lack of a political revolution in Europe.
3. All the manifestations and superstructures of this régime, though with differences due to time and place, coincide with those of all forms of unbridled, advancing capitalism in its initial lifecycle.
4. The whole of the politics and propaganda of parties in other countries that exalt the Russian régime have become emptied of any revolutionary or class content and represent a set of attitudes that are “romantic”, out of date and without any live impulse in the historical development of the capitalist west.
5. The present, asserted absence of a statistically definable bourgeois class in Russia is not sufficient to contradict the previous theses, being something that was confirmed and forecast by Marxism long before the revolution, added to which the power of modern capitalism is defined by the forms of production and not by national groups of individuals.
6. The management of big industry by the State in no way contradicts the previous (theses), since it takes place on the basis of salaried work and the exchange of commodities at home and abroad, and is a product of modern industrial technology, applied in the same way as in the west as soon as the obstacle of pre-bourgeois property rights ceased in Russia.
7. None of the previous theses is contradicted by the absence of a form of parliamentary democracy, which, wherever it exists, is merely a mask for the dictatorship of Capital and which is out of date, with the tendency to disappear wherever production techniques for new inventions are grounded on general networks and not on independent installations; whilst on the other hand *obvious* dictatorship has been adopted by any newly arising capitalism or one in its adolescent phase.
8. This does not allow us to say that Russian capitalism is “the same thing” as that in any other country, since there is a difference in the phase where capitalism develops production forces and drives their application beyond former geographical limits, completing the overall design of the world socialist revolution, and the phase where it exploits the forces in a merely parasitical way, when they are already way beyond the level that makes it possible to use them to “improve the conditions of live labour”, which can only be done by an economic form no longer founded on salaries, market and money - the characteristics of a *merely socialist* form.

READ OUR INTERNATIONAL PRESS:

il programma comunista
kommunistisches programm
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Not to forget A Page by Engels

■ If the crises have revealed the bourgeoisie's inability to direct modern production forces any longer, the transformation of the great organisms of production and trading into anonymous companies and state property show that the bourgeoisie is not needed to this end. Today, all the social functions of the capitalist are performed by salaried employees. The capitalist has no further social activity apart from pocketing income, receiving dividends and playing the stock exchange, where capitals reciprocally strip one another of their capitals. If the capitalist mode of production began by replacing workers, today it replaces the capitalists and relegates them, in exactly the same way as the workers, to the superfluous members of the population, even if not relegating them immediately to the industrial reserve army.

However, neither the transformation into anonymous companies, nor the transformation into state property cancels the nature of the production forces as capital. In the anonymous companies this nature is evident. And in turn, the modern State is the organizational form that capitalist society has assumed in order to maintain the capitalist mode of production in the face of attacks both by the workers and by individual capitalists. The modern State, whatever its form, is an essentially capitalist machine, a State of capitalists, the ideal capitalist collective. The more it appropriates collective forces, the more it

turns into a capitalist collective, the greater is the number of citizens it exploits. The workers remain wage earners and proletarians. Capitalist relations are not suppressed, but forced to their heights. And having reached the peak, they upturn. The state property of production forces is not the solution to the conflict but holds within it the formal means, the key to the solution.

This solution cannot but consist in the fact that the social nature of modern production forces must be recognized and that, therefore, the mode of production, appropriation and exchange must be arranged in harmony with the social nature of the means of production. And this can only come about on condition that society openly and unflinchingly takes possession of the production forces and that they shake off any management other than its own. Thus the social nature of the means of production and their products, which today turns against the producers themselves, periodically upsetting the mode of production and exchange and imposing itself powerfully and destructively as a mere blind force of nature, is brought to bear by the producers in full awareness and, instead of being a periodic cause of unrest and destruction, turns into the most powerful lever of production itself.

From Friedrich Engels, *AntiDühring* (1877),
Third Section: Socialism, "Theoretical elements"

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Class Memory

Peterloo 1819

The film *Peterloo* by the English director Mike Leigh tells the story of real events that took place in Manchester, the cradle of the industrial revolution, on 16th August 1819: the massacre of workers during a demonstration – known at the time as “the massacre of Peterloo”. In the history of the workers’ movement (and not only in England!), those events – preceded by ever more frequent strikes and demonstrations – come between the fading of “Luddism” (the instinctive sabotage by home workers when the first machines were introduced heralding the beginning of the factory system) and the evolution of these scattered workers’ struggles towards the organized movement that assumed the name “Chartism” (from the “Chart” of claims it formed around), thus, between the opening years of the 1800s and the 1840s – decisive experiences which, together with others on both the economic and the political and philosophical planes, contributed to forming the humus for the establishment of dialectic materialism and communism (*The Condition of the Working Class in England* dates to 1844, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* to 1848). But back to Manchester.

Peterloo does not and did not exist on the map of the city. What did exist then were St. Peter’s Fields, a large, open space in which it was customary to hold rallies and meetings in the open air. On that August day, between 60 and 80 thousand people

gathered there to listen to the most famous agitators of the time: the future Chartist, Mary Fildes, the journalist Richard Carlile, the weaver-poet Samuel Bamford, the radical speaker Henry Hunt... The demonstration had been called to protest against the widespread corruption in Parliament (two centuries have gone by...) and claim universal suffrage and deep, wide-reaching social reform at a time – as has been said – of horrendous living and working conditions, as well as fierce workers’ struggles. The demonstrators came from all over Manchester, from Salford and the towns and villages of a Lancashire at the peak of its industrial revolution: men, women and children. Facing them was an intimidating police and military apparatus: the local police, special agents, hussar regiments and the Royal Mounted Artillery. At one point during Hunt’s speech, after the ritual reading of the Riot Act, the hussars and mounted artillery came into action using extreme violence: the deaths registered came to 15, including a child of two and the mother of seven young children, with between 400 and 700 wounded – figures that in all probability are underestimated. “Merrie Olde England”... There was enormous indignation, fuelled, too, by the fervent reports in the “Guardian” and other important local and national newspapers: the editor of one of them coined the expression “Peterloo”, a sarcastic reference

to the battle of Waterloo four years previously, when the cavalry and the hussars had been leading elements in the British victory over Napoleon’s French armies.

The Prime Minister at the time was the hated Lord Castlereagh, responsible for further repressive action in England and in Ireland, backed up by the equally hated Home Secretary Lord Sidmouth. The rebel poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, who was in Italy at the time, on hearing of the massacre spontaneously wrote a long poem in which he imagined a procession of government members concealed behind hideous, bloody masks: Castlereagh with the “Assassin” mask, Sidmouth with the mask of “Hypocrisy”, followed by “many more Destructions [...] In this ghastly masquerade,/All disguised, even to the eyes,/Like Bishops, lawyers, peers, or spies.” The poem contained a stanza addressing the English people who had been victims of the whims of power for too long: “Rise like Lions after slumber/ In unvanquishable number,/ Shake your chains to earth like dew/ Which in sleep had fallen on you --/ Ye are many -- they are few.”

As for Castlereagh, when he became insane and committed suicide three years later, the poet Byron wrote an explicit epitaph, which read: “Posterity will ne’er survey/ a Nobler grave than this:/ Here lie the bones of Castlereagh:/ Stop, traveller, and piss!” What could be clearer than that...?

Proletarians of all countries, unite!

First May 2019

Drive back the attack by capital! Organize the response of the proletariat!

■ Everywhere in the world our living and working conditions are under attack and the militarization and State control of our lives are taking giant steps forward, with the ideological accompaniment of nationalism, chauvinism, hostility towards the “foreigner”, sexism: in other words division within the proletarian class.

All the bourgeois parties – right as well as “left” – draw up or have drawn up elaborate reforms of the labour market, like the Loi Travail in France, the Jobs Act in Italy, Agenda 2010 in Germany; or they plan harsher measures with the sole objective of making working conditions flexible, putting up pressure on the workers, limiting wages. In a word, increasing our exploitation! All over the world, these parties are also united in agreement in another sense: in strengthening their repressive apparatus to an ever greater extent with consolidation of the state of emergency (for example, in the USA, France, Germany, Turkey, Italy, etc.) and in providing the police and legal bodies with a growing number of special measures for intervention, such as provisional arrest, the use of Tasers, harsher laws. Where the working class is more militant, for example in Italy amongst the – often non-EU – workers exploited in the field of logistics, or where the working conditions prove even more abominable, the battles there are countered by the State with recourse to police violence and judiciary repression. Even widespread “popular” protests, like those by the *gilets jaunes* in France,

showing vague discontent with capitalistic relations and in which wage workers have also taken part, serve the State by providing the ground for experimenting new repressive measures and for exercising power.

At the basis of this increasingly aggressive attack on our living and working conditions is the structural crisis in which capital has found itself since the end of the cycle of accumulation in the second post-war period up until the mid-1970s. The greater exploitation of our labour-force commodity corresponds to capital’s attempt to defeat this crisis, together with other political-economic measures such as the rise in the public debt with investments in public works and military expenditure, as well as more and more extreme policies on finance and interest. That some countries enjoy a better economic situation than others (such as, for example, Germany as opposed to Italy) does not alter the fact that we are still immersed in this crisis, to which capital responds by intensifying attacks on social conditions, as far as the proletarian class will allow. Up until now, attempts to oppose capital have been rare, mostly producing poor results: the working class does not yet possess independent, grass-roots union structures and, on the contrary, is paralyzed by the action of the official, State-linked unions and by democratic ideology.

Through strikes without warning, without time limits and with no regard for the interests of the nation, of the State, of one’s “own” enterprise, leading up to general strikes, our class does, however, possess the necessary strength for exercising pres-

sure on capital and thus opposing its attacks, striking at what it cares most about: profit.

This is why the proletarian class must organize itself collectively in militant, grass-roots organisms for the defence of living and working conditions, through which the practice of the social pact can be broken, opposing all bourgeois institutions, official unions and parties, and pursuing its own interests, forcefully and independently of the “demands” of capital and the nation. These dynamics, however, can only develop through struggle and not by sitting round a negotiating table.

But, in order to pass over to the counter-attack, alongside the rebirth of these proletarian organisms of economic defence, the *political organization of the proletariat* must be at work, representing the historical experience of these same battles and impressing upon them a revolutionary perspective, since the attack by capital can be driven back only to a certain extent at a union level. The deepening capitalist crisis will inevitably lead to increasingly violent attacks, wars, expulsions and devastations. The only perspective for changing anything in this context is a general political counter-attack, the seizing of political power and the battle to set up a classless society. For this perspective, what is needed is the strengthening and worldwide establishment of the guide of the revolutionary process: the International Communist Party.

(leaflet distributed, in various languages, at First May demos)

The “gilets jaunes”: a people’s revolt short of breath, a long wave of people’s illusion

“Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class. The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of Modern Industry; the proletariat is its special and essential product. The lower middle class, the small manufacturer, the shopkeeper, the artisan, the peasant, all these fight against the bourgeoisie, to save from extinction their existence as fractions of the middle class. They are therefore not revolutionary, but conservative. Nay more, they are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history. If by chance, they are revolutionary, they are only so in view of their impending transfer into the proletariat; they thus defend not their present, but their future interests, they desert their own standpoint to place themselves at that of the proletariat”.

The Communist Manifesto (1848)

Today

Great surprise has been caused by the so-called “gilets jaunes movement”, arising in France in mid November, apparently out of nothing, and, reaching its peak at the beginning of December, subsequently losing momentum and potential for mobilization after the Government concessions of 10 December. The most striking “novelty” is represented by the hundreds of thousands of demonstrators blocking the thoroughfares and centres of the coun-

try’s most important cities and succeeding in placing the government and its “forces of law and order” in difficulty.

So let’s take a step backwards and run through the events that have affected French society over the past few years, up to the “sudden” appearance of the *gilets jaunes*, in order to explain how the latter come to be the outcome of a process that is still ongoing. The first stage was the rallying of forces against the Loi Travail, which came into force in August 2016, despite the protests of the previous months: demonstrations organized by the Unions, general strikes, a movement which in March 2016 involved between 390 thousand and 1.2 million workers in street rallies¹, faced with which the French bourgeoisie did not give up at all in terms of repression and the worsening of working conditions. Finally, in spring 2018, came the long and exhausting battle of the railway workers (which we followed and have already written about)², concluding with the workers’ defeat.

What classes came into action

Rather than report the sequence of recent events, which can be found in the bourgeois press, we are interested in grasping their political significance and revolutionary prospects. The “people” is an indistinct mass of individuals, classes and social strata, with contrasting interests. We therefore have to understand which

classes were involved in order to grasp the historical laws underlying the real movement: this is the basic method of scientific communism. Many people have wondered just who the *gilets jaunes* are but few have come up with a clear answer. The most thorough analyses are those that study the economic situation in France and the social position of the demonstrators in the context of the capitalist system of production. Let us read what the Italian Manufacturers’ Association’s daily newspaper (*Il Sole-24 ore*) has to say about this:

“[In France] people at risk of poverty and social exclusion constitute 17.1% of the total, fewer than Germany’s 19% and Italy’s 28.9%. 4.1% of all families have “great difficulty” in making it to the end of the month. This is not Germany’s 2.1%, but nonetheless one of the best figures in Euroland. Moving on to those who have “difficulty” in making it to the end of the month, the figure rises to 14%, just over the average for Euroland, but constantly on the decrease since the 16% in 2013. Where France reveals some signs of stress is when the enquiry broadens to include families that encounter at least “some difficulty”. In this case the percentage (39.7%), though lower than Italy’s 47.8% (the second worst figure in the whole of the European Union), is fairly high, yet in this case too on the decrease (in Italy, instead, it is rising dramatically). In Germany, the percentage comes to 9.5%. [...] in France food prices have risen by 10.4% since 2010, as against the 13.4% of Euroland, rents by 5.6% as against 12.8%, electricity by 10.8% as against the 15.8% of Euroland (and Italy’s +23%). [...] However, the average income in France rose

follow →

1. Cfr. www.lemonde.fr/economie-francaise/article/2016/05/26/huitieme-journee-nationale-d-action-contre-le-projet-de-loi-travail_4926537_1656968.html.

2. Cfr. “Dalla Francia. Lo sciopero dei ferrovieri: cronaca di un’ennesima sconfitta annunciata / From France. The railway workers’ strike: chronicle of the umpteenth pre-announced defeat”, *Il programma comunista*, n. 4/2018. www.partitocomunistainternazionale.org/index.php/it/296-il-programma-comunista-2018/n-04-luglio-agosto-2018/2270-dalla-francia-realta-e-mistificazioni-dello-sciopero-dei-ferrovieri.

by 2.75% yearly between 1999 and 2017, as against 2.36% in Germany and 3.53% in Italy. Half of the French earn less than 22,077 euros a year; in Germany the “middle” point is 21,920 euros, in Italy 16,542 euros.”³.

Curious! At times, when describing certain phenomena, the bourgeoisie seems to be more... materialist than us materialists and, *involuntarily*, applies economic determinism, whilst at the same time telling the fairytale of the “failure of scientific communism”! But let us move on.

Even from this brief analysis, it can be seen that those concerned come from strata of the petit bourgeoisie and working class aristocracy undergoing proletarianization, joined, obviously, in view of the constant onslaughts of the economic crisis, by proletarian sectors, as well as a considerable number of the petit bourgeoisie from the suburbs, the outskirts and small rural centres around big cities, as the Italian “leftist” daily *Il Manifesto* reminds us:

“Nevertheless, poverty is more prevalent in cities than in the countryside: this is particularly true of the city centres, where one inhabitant in five is poor. At the other territorial extreme, isolated municipalities not belonging to an urban area also have a high poverty rate (17%) but these municipalities only account for 4% of the population. However, it is not the poorest of the French population (66% of whom, we should remember, live in the large urban hubs) that don yellow waistcoats, even though it is difficult to give a sociological account of them. In words, what is expressed is the anger of a France of modest incomes, the lower middle classes and the lower classes, which constitute a large portion of the population. 50% of the population has a standard of living rated at between 1,139 and 2,125 euros a month.”⁴.

And so the minimum salary has been spreading constantly since 2010, and, whilst average salaries have

risen over the years, the percentage of workers on a low wage has grown from 6 to 9 per cent of the total number of workers (Eurostat figures).

This is the explosive mixture: stagnation in the standard of living, the increase in the cost of essential spending for a family on a modest income... The increase in petrol prices, passed off as an “environmental measure”, is merely the spark that lights the fire.

But the class composition of the movement is not sufficient for a full understanding of it. We have to understand how these different social components act in their own interests: let us remember that we are talking about the world’s sixth industrial power, with imperialist political activities and a strong and numerous working-class aristocracy. Before the *gilets jaunes* movement, the French government had succeeded in passing the Loi Travail without suffering any serious opposition from the proletariat, thanks to its being hemmed in by the Unions: this gives us a better understanding of how the proletarians involved in the movement acted under the influence of a petit bourgeois ideology.

THE DEMANDS. The popular, heterogeneous and cross-class nature can best be seen when considering the demands advanced, expressed in three different stages, with long lists of proposals, even highly ambitious ones, which, in their confusion, are full of sentiments of patriotism and national harmony. A first “manifesto” with 42 demands was sent to French MPs in mid-November. These are the most “telling” items:

- *Solution to the problem of the homeless. Around 200 thousand people are living on the streets in France*

- *Strictly progressive income tax*
- *Minimum monthly salary SMIC at 1300 euros*
- *Small businesses to be favoured putting an end to the building of large shopping malls and free parking in cities*
- *Large businesses (Macdonalds, Amazon, Carrefours) to pay a lot and small businesses very little*
- *The same pension for everyone; an end to the discrimination of employees (RSI)*
- *The pension system to be socialized with social support for everyone*
- *An end to increases in fuel prices*
- *Minimum pensions at 1200 euros a month*
- *For all persons elected, salaries equal to the average, with a check on reimbursements for transport and the right to paid holidays*
- *All salaries and pensions to be index-linked to inflation*
- *French industry to be defended, relocation to be fought and specific know-how defended*
- *An end to working away from home. All those who work on French territory must be subject to the tax regulations, contracts and national security applying to French citizens, with no possibility of disloyal competition to native workers*
- *Fight for job security to be fought for against fixed-term contracts (CDD) and in favour of open-ended contracts*
- *The implementation of a true policy of integration, so that immigration to France means becoming French, with certified language courses, history and civil education courses.*
- *More resources for justice, the forces of law and order and the army, with overtime to be paid extra*

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3. “Gilet gialli, i numeri dell’economia raccontano un’altra Francia / Gilets jaunes, the figures on the economy tell the story of a different France”, *Il Sole 24 Ore*, 18/12/2018. Figures taken from Eurostat sources.

4. “Stagnazione e spese, l’origine della protesta dei gilet gialli / Stagnation and costs, the origin of the protests by the gilets jaunes”, *Il Manifesto*, 5/12/2018.

These proposals were followed on 6 December, by a 25-point manifesto in the same spirit, called “Proposals for exiting the crisis”: increase in minimum salaries; building of five million units of social housing; exit from the European Union and the euro; campaigns against the big banks, lobbies, pharmaceutical companies; immediate exit from NATO; a stop to migratory flows; an end to “plundering and political or military interference in Africa”.

All these proposals failed to completely involve the demonstrators, least of all those who had expressed passive consent, without taking part in the clashes and roadblocks. The loudly proclaimed online debate with the collection of support remained far inferior to the number of demonstrators out on the streets. The movement’s real strength lay in its ability to block roads and place the forces of law and order in difficulty but without a clear, definite and shared programme. So much so that the concessions of 10 December were sufficient to considerably weaken active participation. The government won thanks to massive, organized policing and concessions to the lowest incomes and pensions: the 1,184 euros net as minimum salary rose to nearly 1,300 and deductions from pensions decreased. Another of Macron’s concessions was to end taxation on overtime: a highly intelligent move that reinforced the chains of salaried slavery, giving temporary satisfaction to the salaried slaves. Lately the government has been airing the prospect of not eliminating property tax.

After the concessions and a considerable reduction in forces out on the streets, the movement went on to demand “direct democracy”, “power to the citizens through the tool of the referendum”.

The nature of the movement is also confirmed by the opinion polls, which speak of 60%-70% of consensus for the *gilets jaunes*, without this translating into actual presence on the streets. The *gilets jaunes* thus speculate on the malcontent and eco-

nomic-social difficulties of employed workers and nonetheless subordinate this to the interests of the nation – making it coincide with the common interests of “good entrepreneurs” and ... “workers who do their duty.”

To sum up, a *people’s silent majority*.

THE METHODS OF THE FIGHT. The modality of mobilization and the use of information technology merely emphasize the fact that means of communication are not only a useful tool for capital but can serve to organize and respond in terms of opposition. Moreover, the tools of communication have made it possible, more easily and more quickly than before, to give voice and substance to the need to overcome the purely individual dimension in which these classes and social strata were bogged down and imprisoned up until now. But *it is not* the tool of communication that determined the phenomenon: *the gilets jaunes arose out of the crisis and material living and working conditions, not out of the internet!* The communications network and IT merely provided a tool: their potential was mostly lost because of the democratic, popular and petit-bourgeois prejudices concerning organization – prejudices that are born out of a lack of confidence in bourgeois politics and the decade-long anti-proletarian work done by the national Unions, which encourage the movement to disown the need for any form of party and stable or structured organization, even if it is only to carry forward their economic claims... only to fall back into the parliamentary illusion and that of referendums and attempt to come up with the umpteenth electoral caravan! For us, on the other hand, the organization must be at one and the same time the objective and the main result of the fight’s progression: in the immediate instance to support economic claims and those for an improvement in living and working conditions; in perspective, to consolidate and direct solid social opposition on a political level.

The popular nature of the movement was also revealed in the absence of methods of proletarian struggle, those as far as possible independent and rooted first and foremost in the territories where people live and work: tendentially long-lasting strikes, determined and widespread picketing, a halt to goods entering or exiting works – in a word, all that is certainly not exhausted in demonstrations and Saturday afternoon clashes. The *gilets jaunes* mainly blocked roads on Saturdays only, thus wishing to demonstrate that it is impossible to live in the French “provinces” without a car: but as a consequence commercial traffic was only blocked on relatively quiet days...

Another aspect to reflect on is the use of violence. Unfortunately, *without any organization*, this, too, gets lost and does not enable any lasting results to be obtained. Yet, the capacity for mobilization and for creating difficulties for the “forces of law and order” may contribute to denting the myth of the bourgeois State’s invincible power: *it’s already a fine result to show that it’s possible to react against the violence of the cops!* The frustrating declamation of the unassailable power of Capital has been compromised and this will, in all events, serve to sustain the morale of the proletariat in the future. In any case, the phenomenon of the petit-bourgeois reaction to proletarianization is not limited to France and France’s example may serve to give courage to those who suffer similar material conditions. But, we repeat: without organization, the movement of the *gilets jaunes* itself is destined to die out without a trace. There is negative proof of this, too: indeed, the State has managed to contain and absorb the rebellion thanks to its greater ability to organize itself and make use of the historical experience matured as a ruling class.

And so today we find ourselves at this point in the trajectory of history: with

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a proletariat influenced by the petit bourgeoisie and the whole weight of a century of counter-revolution weighing on its shoulders like a boulder. Marx wrote, in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852):

“The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language. Thus Luther put on the mask of the Apostle Paul, the Revolution of 1789-1814 draped itself alternately in the guise of the Roman Republic and the

Roman Empire, and the Revolution of 1848 knew nothing better to do than to parody, now 1789, now the revolutionary tradition of 1793-95. In like manner, the beginner who has learned a new language always translates it back into his mother tongue, but he assimilates the spirit of the new language and expresses himself freely in it only when he moves in it without recalling the old and when he forgets his native tongue”⁵.

Today we are a long way from an age of revolutionary crisis and for this reason the weight of tradition makes itself felt even more oppressively. But we communists have always repeated that we cannot wait for pure class recoveries: on the contrary, as well as by its volcanic

nature, any recovery will be characterized by an inevitable mixture of positions, especially due to the inevitable presence in the “movement” of half classes undergoing proletarianization and their “half ideologies”. As a party, we, however, cannot give undifferentiated “leftist”, “proletarian” or “classist” political legitimacy to outbreaks such as that of the *gilets jaunes*: we must, instead, stress and reaffirm the autonomous role of the proletarian movement and work to enable it to make progress and affirm itself in the course of the inevitable present and future struggles.

It will therefore be interesting to see how parties large and small, and movements large and small allow themselves to be dragged into these popular and cross-class rebellions and enthused by them.

5. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch01.htm>.

THE TRAGIC ILLUSION OF THE “LITTLE HOMELANDS”

Faced by the umpteenth massacre of Kurdish people by Turkish imperialism, with the collaboration or connivance of *all* imperialisms, it is impossible to remain indifferent: this is yet another demonstration that the world of capital is a single, enormous, bloody slaughterhouse. But what does it mean “not to remain indifferent”? We communists are not indifferent to what goes on in the slaughterhouse: but we take the side of the proletariat and its immediate and future interests and NOT the side of other classes of whatever nation or “little homeland”, under attack by the latest killer and ready, when events demand it, to turn itself into the killer. It has been this same tragic illusion of managing to build ones’ own independent little homeland within the infernal mechanism that goes by the name of “imperialism” that has marked the desperate destiny of the Kurdish people (just as it continues to mark that of the Palestinian people in a bloodbath that seems to be never-ending). We communists know, and, to the extent our limited forces permit it, never cease to demonstrate to the international proletariat, that capitalism is the war of all against all: aren’t the massacres of the past decades,

two bloody world wars and the hundreds of “little wars” following it sufficient to proclaim it? Aren’t these enormous holocausts of proletarians sufficient to open eyes to a system whose very foundations must be overthrown before its destructive potential (*at all levels*) attains unsustainable heights for humankind? We declare loud and clear: every patriotic, national or nationalistic struggle or perspective means BETRAYAL of the proletariat and must be fought, as an ENEMY is fought. To the Kurdish proletarians, as to the Palestinians and *all* other proletarians forced into the vicious circle of nationalism and patriotism, we say: break the links with your bourgeoisies, break with your illusions of national borders (real or imaginary), break with all the forces that have caged you in with their ideologies and strategies, which only hold in store for you bloodshed and desperation; take the side of your class front and an internationalist perspective. We communists are and will be alongside you in the battle against a mode of production that must be thrown into the trashcan of history, together with its nations and fatherlands, whether large or small.

October-November 2019

Out now: issue no. 2 of *Kommunistisches Programm*

Dear readers,

This is the second issue of our newspaper “*Kommunistisches Programm*”. In the first issue we wrote that after over 30 years of absence from German-speaking areas, our party has resumed its work. In the Berlin section, we worked initially on consolidating internal, theoretical and organizational aspects on the basis of communist left positions, which are none other than the classical positions of revolutionary communism. Subsequently, in 2017, we acquired a public dimension through our first initiatives, the first leaflets, the first issues of our newspaper, etc., with the aim of bringing new visibility to the positions of the communist left and to ourselves as the International Communist Party, and of proceeding with practical work. Then came the first successes, establishing contacts and running interesting public meetings (in this regard, see the article “On Party Life” in this issue).

Obviously, even when moving in a limited context, with a limited number of people (we are not talking of “great masses” here!), dismantling bourgeois ideology, individualism, resignation and passivity is a long and difficult procedure, not a simple task when faced with a period that has lasted for almost a century and in which we have witnessed the Stalinist counter revolution, fascism, the serious betrayal of social democracy (which, 100 years after the “November revolution” is still making its presence felt in all its various aspects) and the more or less total subjection (ideological and organizational) of the proletariat and of a left that aspires to being revolutionary within the State and bourgeois society.

There are many problems we have to face as communists and “disentangling” all the knots is certainly not something that can be done by a single contribution but is, instead, part of our daily political work, to which we have already devoted many texts (see, in this regard, the article “Deniers, improvisers and builders of the revolutionary party” in this issue). What must be contrasted, are models oriented towards forms of “real socialism”, nationalism in all its various aspects (from national “communism” to the tragically ridiculous and ahistorical celebration of national liberation movements), as well as the mere negation of the “national issue”, models oriented towards democracy, antifascism, the popular front and other constellations of bourgeois alliances that have always taken the State as their reference point, instead of the only revolutionary subject, the proletariat, and its actual battles. Where the “social question” is tackled, too often this happens according to the moralist ways of vulgar socialism (“injustice”, “indignation”), usually mixed with an abundant dose of voluntarism and dangerous illusions (especially in the present counter-revolutionary phase); without the

limits of these battles and these union organizations (both grassroots unions and those aligned with the régime) being understood in the general framework.

When speaking of bourgeois ideology, however, we must certainly not forget the most important question of all – that of revolutionary political organization. Can we ever do without a theoretically reinforced organization, compact and authoritative, able to refer to century-old experiences of victories and defeats, revolutionary and counter-revolutionary, and hand them down from one generation to the next, whilst also being equipped with a well-elaborated theoretical base used and tested in the field in its daily work? How can it possibly suffice to be politically active in a self-satisfied leftist manner, taking decisions on the basis of personal inclination, one day attending an anti-fascist demonstration, the next a community supper, one day defending democracy against the “baddies”, the next getting “indignant” about the attacks of capital etc.? And then there are those who limit themselves to union and social battles under the illusion that these can be a substitute for political organization or may spontaneously originate forms of revolutionary organization...

And when someone does seem to be approaching our positions, for example criticizing the State and the nation, or even referring to the Communist Left, this approach generally remains fundamentally superficial, individualist and devoid of prospects, so without any real consequences (from this point of view it is irrelevant if the result is a homage to activism or academics!). Getting beyond bourgeois ideology is not something that is postulated on a theoretical level alone, but also at a practical and organizational level, and it therefore coincides with the eminently real issue of a revolutionary split. For the majority of us, taking this step coherently implies a long process, which often passes through the most diverse of deviations – reformism, anti-fascism, Trotskyism, Stalinism, contexts of the extra-parliamentary left, etc. – up to the point where it actually becomes possible to overcome the several mistakes made.

This difficult task accompanies our daily work and we shall continue along this path at the end of 2018 and into 2019: strengthening the International Communist Party in German-speaking areas, pursuing our internal, theoretical work more deeply in line with the principles of revolutionary communism, as well as being present publicly, through our initiatives, leaflets, etc.

(Issue n. 3/2019 of “*Kommunistisches Programm*” is now also out, entirely devoted to the German translation of “What Is the International Communist Party”)

TURKEY

In the depths of the social, economic and political abyss

Summing up

In articles published by this newspaper in past years, we sketched a brief history of Turkey, accompanied by some accounts of its present-day economic and social structure, as well as a broader history of the working class and above all of the fights, clashes and rallies, starting from the 1970s right up to the 2013 demos in Istanbul (Gezy Park). Some shorter comments later highlighted the continuous slaughter of workers in the coalmines (1992: 263 victims; 2010: 30 victims; 2013: 93 victims), which has aggravated social despair, though without resulting in any real response. More significant was the 2015 outbreak of economic and social struggle that affected the factories (Renault, Bosch) in Bursa, a city with two million, eight hundred thousand inhabitants to the south of the Sea of Marmara, during which 1500 workers stopped work, their numbers growing to 20 000 in 48 hours thanks to the presence of labour forces from outside the industrial district. An enormous contingent from the workforce came out and the demand for a reduction in the rate of production grew, creating uniformity in the methods of protest: all aspects of a true class war. Alarmed, the petty bourgeoisie, called upon by the government, patrolled the streets, trying to halt the impetus of the workers' protests. The agitation spread from the metalworking factories to the petrochemical companies and from there to the building sector. In two weeks Turkey was thus shaken by a wave of extraordinary agitation on economic grounds. In addition, while all this was going on, an authentic State massacre, counting a hundred or so deaths, took place at the station in Ankara on the occasion

of a big pro-Kurdish demonstration. And so, in only a few years, a wide-ranging social movement spontaneously developed, first and foremost in Istanbul, followed by a big strike at the companies Koc Holding and Fca (consumer electronics and automobiles), which stopped work for 9 days due to the drop in demand on the domestic front and home automobile market, losing 51% of their production in August and 67% in September. Subsequently, Erdogan's electoral victory, the internal fight against the Kurdistan Workers' Party, participation in the Syrian war against the Kurdish-Iraqi Peshmerga and Isis, the forced detention of thousands and thousands of Syrian migrants on Turkish territory, fleeing from the slaughter of war, filled the latter years of the decade.

On the "July Coup"

On a night in mid-July 2016 a coup took place, organized, according to Erdogan, by the "democratic and pro-Europe supporter" Guelen (who had moved to the USA in 1999 and come to a head-on clash with the President in 2013): a military and political clash during which a minority faction in the army attempted to overthrow the government and 260 people lost their lives, whilst 2000 were wounded. The invitation to come out onto the streets and defend the institutions against the so-called coup leaders, the recovery of control by tanks during the night and the wide-ranging purges that resulted, aiming to reinforce the powers of the President, all contributed to the common conviction that the so-called coup had really been exploited to repress not only the organizers (a fringe group of the armed forces) but first and foremost to dis-

perse the widespread, creeping dissent in the country.

For some years now Turkey has been politically divided into the supporters of a State inspired by Islam in all its social and religious manifestations, and those who defend a nation that has presented itself as non-religious ever since the foundation of the Turkish State by Atatürk: but divided also amongst different ethnic groups, such as variants, at times with common borders, of the Kurdish people (Turks, Iranians, Iraqis, Syrians) and above all amongst social classes and first of all the industrial proletariat, now a widespread presence in the country: a social reality also politically split, as shown by the referendum on the Constitution approved by 51.5 per cent: a mixture of ideologies that prevents the proletariat from uniting economically and politically.

After the "failure of the coup", thousands of people working in diverse sectors of public administration, from justice to the military, to the police, from education to news, were arrested or removed from their posts. The so-called international observers (the great imperial bourgeoisies) became entangled in the defence of the status quo, especially on the borders with Syria and in the north-western areas of Idlib and Afrin. Many internal critics of Erdogan's government were arrested, like the thousands of people connected to the episodes that took place that night. Since then, in around one year, 150 thousand have been removed from their places of work and around 7400 public employees have even been accused of having links with terrorist organizations. The repression has hit newspapers and television as well: a government decree ordered the closure of more than a hundred between

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newspapers, TV channels, journals or publishers. The repression, which began immediately after the coup, concluded in the Referendum on the constitution, approved amidst many accusations of electoral fraud, by which the Turkish President intends transforming the country into a presidential republic, increasing his own powers and ensuring the possibility of remaining President until 2029. The reform, which was to come into force after the 2019 elections, was to give the head of State the power to appoint ministers and allow him to intervene in the legal system [NOTE: This article was prepared before the June 2019 elections].

The “Turkish-Balkans route” and the proletariat

Turkey’s “isolation”, caused partly by the Turkish coup, partly by the tension with the United States concerning sanctions on aluminium and steel duties, the Turkish tanks ranged along the Syrian borders and the approaches towards Russia and Iran, have shown once again that the Middle East and the Turkish-Balkan-Greek area are affected by great political and social contrasts and above all by *large proletarian masses on the move*.

At least six billion euros link Turkey to the European Union through an agreement destined to “control” the population of Syria, preventing thousands of migrants, women and children, from escaping from the “Turkish lager”. These agreements attempt to guarantee a halt to the migratory flow from Turkey to Greece, the first stage on the so-called “Balkan route”, now substantially closed, over which the migrants entered Europe on their way to Germany or further north. The agreement, which came into force in March 2016, allowed Turkey to obtain a large amount of European funding of various sorts, despite Erdogan threatening on several occasions to abandon the “agreed” plan. In the refugee camps, thousands of young people, mostly Syrians, make a bid for safety through escape. Many

continue to work in Turkish factories or beg for money on the streets. It would be sufficient, say the good Samaritans, to provide shelter in line with the 1951 Geneva Convention on “refugee status” but, as things stand now, despair is rife.

With the billions it receives from the European Union, Turkey professes an “open borders” policy, according refugees the so-called “right to shelter” but the border crossing points have been largely closed in the last two years and consequently many Syrians fleeing the war enter illegally across the minefields between Turkey and Syria. This is why masses of them, driven by despair, seek the assistance of traffickers, obviously in return for large sums of money. Most of the young people and the Syrian population in Turkey live in tents, shacks and hovels today and the places where they work are often no better. The European brands, fashion giants H&M and NEXT, declare that in their factories many Syrian minors work for poverty wages, suffering abuse and sexual violence. In Turkey at present 4 million refugees live in this state of reclusion: of these, 3.5 million are Syrians, a third of whom minors. Up until now, only 4 thousand of them have obtained a “work permit” from the Turkish government. The Turkish textile industry is the sixth largest in the world with 60% of its labour force illegal and in this hell-hole part of the migrants find refuge. Up until three years before the agreement, Turkey did not recognize the right of “temporary protection” for those fleeing war: non-European refugees were, in fact, considered “guests” and this meant they could only enter the country on a tourist visa, or illegally. Of the 3 and a half million Syrian migrants, only 300 thousand live in the refugee camps financed by the UN High Commission for Refugees and managed by AFAD, the government agency for family aid, similar to the civil defence. Erdogan maintains that Turkey provides for the needs of all refugees but fails to say that *only* those who live in the legal internment

camps have the right to food coupons and a place in the UN tents: just as he fails to say that journalists are forbidden to enter the refugee camps without going through long and complex bureaucratic procedures. The prison camps are surrounded by barbed wire and the refugees can only go out during the day in the middle of nowhere, since the camps are a long way from built-up areas. Erdogan fails to say that only the first Syrian refugees managed to find black market labour and were later fired. Unemployment in Turkey is constantly on the rise: at the start it was possible to get by but this is no longer so. As well as food coupons, the refugees could also access medical care...but only those who managed to register refugee status. The European Union’s fairy-tale, aimed at soothing the consciences of right-thinkers and the middle classes, told the world: “Turkey is a safe and welcoming country for those fleeing from war”. And the propaganda office proudly proclaims, “Stay in Erdogan’s land and don’t go into Europe!”

All against all in the Kurdish-Syrian region

At the same time as the diplomatic divergences following the coup, Erdogan resumed economic relations with the Russian president, Putin. The two countries reached an agreement on plans for a new pipeline that was to transport natural gas from Russian territory into western Europe over the Black Sea, Turkey and Greece. However, the two countries failed to solve the problem of Syria, on whose territory Turkey and Russia fight on opposing fronts. Russia supports the Syrian régime with the support of the Iranians, whilst Turkey “supports” the various Islamic forces inside Syria, which are enemies to Assad. Notwithstanding all this, Turkish strategy has never moved from its true objective: to limit Syrian Kurds expanding in the north of Syria. On armed tanks, Turkish soldiers entered alongside the Free Syr-

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ian Army, conquering the lands west of the river Euphrates, with the objective of containing Kurdish expansion. One of the latest developments in the Syrian war, which has determined the political crisis with the West, was the U.S. decision to arm the Syrian Kurds engaged in winning back Raqqa and meeting with Turkish opposition, in view of the fact that the militia, for which American weapons were destined, were, according to Erdogan, a “terrorist group” close to the PKK, the Workers’ Party of Kurdistan, which has for decades been fighting the Turkish government to obtain an independent Kurdish State: the umpteenth, devastating patriotic illusion, condemning the Kurdish proletariat to eternally paying enormous blood sacrifices. By extending bombing to the Kurdish fighters in Syria and Iraq, Turkey has taken into account the possibility of the Iranian militia forming an alliance with the PKK and taking combined action against the Turks in the future. With the invasion of Syria in August 2016, it was not only the towns controlled by the Syrian Kurds that were taken, because the other firm objective remained that of defeating the Islamic State in the north of Syria, an operation led by the United States and only partly opposed by Turkey. Despite the action striking directly at the Islamic State, the indirect, and most important objective was to limit any further advance by the Kurdish Syrians in the north of the country. However, the constitutional reform that was intending to transform Turkey into a presidential republic met with criticism and worried reactions from international observers and European countries: approval of the reform from a juridical point of view was the last chapter in Turkey being ousted from the *desiderata* of European countries, even though the real objective of Erdogan’s reform was to obtain the consensus of Turkish nationalists opposed to entering the European Union.

Launching of the Turkish offensive in the Kurdish-Syrian territories of Afrin and Idlib even alarmed Macron’s

France, which declares its willingness to solve the “Syrian problem” and “respect Syria’s sovereignty”. The operation, launched on 20 January 2018 by the Armed Forces of Ankara in the Afrin region, “does not have the objective of occupying the land but of liberating the area from terrorists”, boomed Erdogan’s reply, when inviting France “not to play teacher” towards Turkey and hinting at France’s long history of colonialism. “France cannot impart lessons on this subject,” said Ankara’s chief diplomat, referring to the ongoing Turkish military campaign, “We are not France occupying Africa,” and threatened to explain himself better by extending operations from Afrin and its surroundings to other areas of Syria. On 27 October in Istanbul, however, came the diplomatic meeting on the Syrian crisis, attended by Russia, France and Germany, at Turkey’s invitation, a sign of the imperialists’ will to cash in on Syria’s near future. The “diplomatic efforts” spent in these seven years of warfare to fund a political solution to the conflict have led to nothing. So will there be a turning point now, thanks to the presence of France and Germany? The UN has not yet managed to spark off a decision-making process. The situation, kept in balance by the three allies (Russia, Syria and Iran) with Turkey’s guarantee, has allowed Assad to regain control of most of the country but the demand for a “change of régime” in Damascus has not been met. The military offensives “should”, thus, cease! How will the game end? Simple: Syria will be rebuilt. The huge masses of rubble covering the country from north to south will be removed, the towns rebuilt, Tartus and Latakia will remain peaceful bases in the Mediterranean, the Kurdish-Syrian territory will “enjoy” Turkish control, the Kurds will become resigned to acting as bowling pins, Iran will be a constant presence on the Syrian-Lebanese-Iraqi political landscape and, as in the past, Germany and France will have a real protectorate over Syria and rebuild the

country. New investments will engage Paris, Berlin and Europe in the reconstruction, at the centre of privileges acquired in the Middle East. Will there be a new return of thousands of desperate people to Syria? Will the dove of U.S. peace descend from the heavens with an olive twig in her beak? Will Israel stop firing missiles at Damascus and Gaza? Will Saudi Arabia put its new, million-dollar armaments from the USA back into its arsenals? Will the divergences on NATO’s southern front cease? Will Russia be the new partner of the Eurozone? Will the fairy-tale at last have its happy ending?

Growth and economic crisis

Over the past few years, once the illusion of lasting growth had faded, Turkey’s economy has entered a crisis phase and the engine of the economy, integrated by political and military plots, wheeling and dealing and corruption started to idle. The need for infrastructures began accelerating to a thousand billion dollars in investments: water (53.4 billion), telecommunications (98.8 billion), energy (241.5 billion), transport (581.1 billion, of which 1.1 billion for ports, 18.2 for airports, 62.7 for railways, 499.2 for roads). At the end of October, Istanbul’s new international airport will be inaugurated, a lavish project which, in terms of air travel, will make Turkey a grand economic platform and for which the *initial* cost will amount to 12 billion dollars. It should, so they say, become the largest airport in the world with a flow of 200 million passengers and over 300 destinations, overtaking Frankfurt.

But the projects do not stop here: they should include a fabric of small and medium-sized companies whose connections would make it possible to move goods and people to a value of 400 billion dollars. All this would be supported by thousands of European businesses: at present there are seven thousand German enterprises working in Turkey (and 1400 Italian businesses), involving over 100 thousand

follow →

workers (not forgetting citizens of Turkish origin who number 3 million in Germany and are integrated into the German economic fabric). The figures on exchanges between Germany and Turkey amount to 36.4 billion and between Turkey and Italy 19.8 billion, whilst Germany's direct foreign investments come to 9.5 billion dollars. Italy ranks as its fifth partner in commerce: FCA represents a long-standing industrial reality in Turkey, with a factory in Bursa-Tofas (Fiat range models) but there are also Pirelli and Ferrero. Some of Turkey's plans for infrastructures constructed over the past 10 years have gone smoothly, writes the press: the Osnam-Gazi bridge has not met with problems and neither have the tunnel under the Bosphorus, the underground, the railways and the hospitals... Streets, bridges, high-speed trains, innovative electrical power stations are supported in an atmosphere of widespread optimism: the schedule, at least 30% of it up until 2023, should hold up thanks to a public-private partnership. The *crazy project* should then become Erdogan's pride and joy - his cutting edge: the doubling of the Bosphorus, represented by an over 35-km-long canal supposed to join the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara, to a cost of somewhere between 15 and 65 billion dollars - which ... *Turkey cannot afford*. The crisis that has started gnawing away at the economy over the last few months is destined to wreak havoc both with dreams and with the completion of the many projects already underway and the magic formula of growth will have to give in to the ruthless numbers. It is sufficient to take a look at the present engine of the economy to realize that the system is destined to collapse: the interest rates are up to 17.75% and expected to rise further (see the Italian daily *Il Sole 24 ore*, 4 September 2018); this means there should be 21% inflation by the end of 2018 (figures of 29 September) but with a tendency to rise; since the beginning of the year the Turkish *lira* has touched on 40% devaluation and the dip tends to continue,

the exchange rate has gained 3 % and the *lira* has thus returned to a rate of around 6.1 with respect to the dollar; the deficit in current account (i.e. the difference between imports and exports of goods and services) is around 6% of GDP and at least one third of Turkey's private companies find themselves in serious difficulties: the total debt in strong currency due in the coming 6-9 months comes to 150 billion dollars and the government can do little to save it, indeed it has urgent need of capital flows in strong currency to finance the deficit. Inflation (17.9% consumer prices and 32.1% prices at production level) seems to be unstoppable and at its present level is already creating general discontent in the population. The increase in interest rates, however, risks suffocating an economy that is already slowing down: the GDP has fallen from 7.7% in 2017 to 7.4% in the first quarter of 2018 to 5.2% between April-June and 4.4% for the whole of 2018. The annual variation in GDP itself is as follows: 7% (2017), 3.8% (2018) and 2.3% (2019). What has happened to the estimated growth rate of 5.5%?

Many economists do not exclude the risk of the economy entering recession in the next few years. What has disappointed government investors has been the cautious cut in the investments (5 billion dollars) on which growth depended: and credit is undergoing a considerable squeeze. The big projects for which bids have not yet been posted will be suspended: others will be completed with international financing but *for now the money is not there!* Since mid-June the Turkish trading banks have sold gold to the value of 4.5 billion dollars to obtain liquid assets and by September 2019 bonds worth 118 billion dollars will mature, 50% of which issued by finance institutes. To meet the increasing cost of energy, Turkey - a country that imports goods and raw materials - also imports a good deal of the energy it consumes: the government has put up the price of natural gas and electricity for industrial and domestic use. The crisis that

is arising revolves around monetary sovereignty, which has objective limits and elevated costs. The currency devaluation is one aspect of the economy's intrinsic weakness: and it is precisely this loss of value that signalled the advent of the crisis, due to the increase in the amount of money needed for the circulation of goods. It is hard to re-solder the weaker links in the chain of the emerging markets, because they are in need of foreign currency to finance their debts and imports which, at some point, they are unable to pay for. Indeed international investors "are loathe to allow credit to a country where it is easy to print an excess of money in order to cause devaluation and, with it, a loss in the value of the agreed debt." (*Il sole 24 ore*, 22 August 2018). Turkey is exposed abroad to a sum equal to 51.4% of its GDP (437 billion of debts). The false surplus of monetary resources and of payment to balance the ratio between production and circulation, given an equal rate of velocity of money circulation, inevitably leads to a crisis.

Inflation, destined to rise, has the effect of increasing exports and thus raising income; but this income will not relieve economic growth sufficiently, since a recovery of balance abroad requires exiting the debt, recovering a competitive edge, increasing productivity and limiting the buying power of salaries and pensions. In this indistinct magma of imagined growth in the economy and of real crisis, in this horror, in which the war of all against all destroys and massacres the populations of entire countries (their names are Syria, Egypt, Iran, Israel as actual countries, or Palestine, Kurdistan, Jordan, Lebanon, as fake countries) on a territory devastated by weapons, missile ranges, tanks and crossed by masses of migrants on the run, wracked between coups and coups d'état, real and faked, in the midst of the poverty, exploitation and repression of our class, looms the monster of our present, inhuman society: the monster of capitalism.

VENEZUELA

Between democratic-bourgeois and military adventurers

To start with

To remind the proletariat, we recall what the Communist International wrote in its “Appeal to the working class in North and South America” in 1920: “The socialism of Latin America is the arch-traitor of the masses. It is a miserable thing, reformist, a toy of the democratic petty bourgeoisie or a sport for military-revolutionary adventurers. To unmask this socialism, destroy its influence over the masses, win the revolutionary elements over to communism – this is the basic and immediate revolutionary task”.¹

A century later, our opinion has not changed and it comes as no surprise to us that “that miserable thing, that toy” is still present and that some deluded supporters of Chavism continue to see in the latest events in Venezuela, which are perhaps a prelude to the “demoting” of the democrat Maduro, a situation that is in some way pre-revolutionary or, according to the point of view, pre-counter-revolutionary. With the economic and oil crisis and the collapse of so-called “Bolivian welfare”, political and social manifestations have, in fact increased, with the most confused of demonstrations, spreading to the big cities and dragging with them, from one side to the other, a proletariat harshly affected by the relentless fall in salaries and the disruption of the whole production apparatus. Amongst opposing factions, consisting mostly of the middle and lower classes, on the terrain of national political struggle a new contender for the presidency has arisen, Juan

Guaidò, the Head of Parliament, supported from abroad by an imperialist alliance ranging from Brazil to Colombia and from the USA to European countries, opposed by a front of sorts consisting of China, Russia, Turkey, Iran, Mexico and Bolivia. A fine game, this world Risiko!

We have no comment to make on this alliance between rival imperialist gangs. We are well aware that Latin-American history (but world history, too!) overflows not only with workers’ rebellions, military junta and dictatorships, but also with “peace alliances” and “war games”. The two articles published on these same pages, the first in January 2000 (“The old and worn masks of Latin-America”) and the second in July-September 2017 (“Venezuela: socialism of the XXIst century or of the empty counters”) in a way sum up the history of the first twenty years of the new century in Venezuela, which has experienced reformist illusions slow to die out: the former deals with Chavez’s rise to power, the latter with the probable end of Nicolás Maduro’s government – Chavez and Maduro, two puppets who ended up sparking off the curiosity and enthusiasm of all sorts of ingenuous subjects in a possible “Bolivian oil route to ...socialism”... But what interests drive these enemy-accomplices to clash in the Orinoco basin, if not that monster consisting of three hundred billion barrels of crude oil? Obviously it is a question of “business expectations”, of “virtual business”, at least as long as the oil remains in the ground. What at first seems unlikely, is that the imperialist powers

should crowd around the black an-thill even before it expresses itself in terms of value.

With his election and the subsequent referendum on constitutional reform, Chavez promoted a line of politics that, in his own words, was to lead to the country’s modernization, extending the “distribution” of income from oil to the “people” and thus ensuring stability of power and the accumulation of capital, thanks to the extraordinary growth in oil revenues. In all events, to come down to earth again, it would be enough to ask the proletariat to what extent so-called “XXIst-century socialism”, proclaimed in the palaces of power and on the streets and promised by the streams of oil, has really allowed them to scrape together one full meal a day. At the start of his mandate, in 2002, the attempted *coup d’état*, organized by that sector of business enterprise and the military parasites closely linked to the oligarchy and foreign powers and failing – so it’s said – due to the loyalty of the army and national-popular mobilization, revolved around the giddy increase in the price of oil, which had reached 140 dollars a barrel. With wastage and corruption consolidating at all levels, the American and world economic crisis of 2008-2010 then struck the country. First the harsh economic sanctions imposed by the USA on the state oil company Pdvs, whilst the price of shale oil was being generalized, then the enormous difficulties in the purchase of basic goods, the exploitation of the working class and finally chronic unemployment and soaring inflation gave rise to extreme contrast between growing poverty and abundant wealth. In only a few months, around three million Venezuelans

1. The “Appeal” was published in *Die Kommunistische Internationale*, no. 15, 1921, pp. 420-439, from which the quotations are taken.

(out of a population of 32 million) were obliged to leave the country, moving to Colombia (not forgetting the mass of residents, at least 200 thousand, who fill Florida). With the growth of overall discontent, a spate of mildew of all varieties grew up – a specific product of the middle classes and petty bourgeoisie – polluting the social ground and dragging the proletariat into the midst of chaos. To put an end to the poverty, the counter-positions between the mongrel classes will inevitably have to come to a head: and it will be an anti-proletarian clash, whether the poverty-struck population supports Maduro, his military junta and his state war machine (corrupt, parasitical and directly connected to the high ranks of the army), or whether the latter hooks himself to the US war machine, in favour of Guaidò. Standing alongside the Venezuelan proletariat, defending their class interests, uniting the international proletariat: these are *the only true objectives of our class*. But the petty bourgeoisie in agitation behind the national flags and appealing to the heroes of the past, Boliva, Sandino, Castro, rather than behind USA-and-Brazil-branded “freedom” with the masks of Donald Trump and Jair Bolsanaro, risks plunging into the chasm where it is awaited by the very proletarianization it fears like the devil. For now the game of sides has taken a different route to that taken in Kiev, in Maidan Square, when American agents shot from the rooftops, or when the Russians advanced to Donbass, once they had “legitimately” (as they say) gained possession of the Crimea. Faced with Madura’s unpopularity and as clashes arise around the humanitarian aid on the borders of Colombia and the country is struck by a “strange” electricity blackout, a question spontaneously arises: how ready are the Russians and the Chinese to lend Madura a hand? The answer lies in another question, perhaps a rhetorical one: are the 20 billion debt that Venezuela has accumulated towards

China and the geo-strategic interests of Russia worth a confrontation?

From colonial dominion to commercial capitalism and imperialism

The “Appeal” of 1920 continued as follows: “The process of producing material wealth in the whole of Latin America is condemned to remain bound to its state of economic and political dependence. First under colonial dominion, later under capitalist-trade dominion and finally under the dominion of industry, finance and imperialism, this process was and remains deterministically produced. [...] If the colonial countries of Asia and Africa were driven to undertake ‘wars of national liberation’ and were revolutionary in the sense that the dawning bourgeois class wished to free itself from the grip that was crushing it between the feudal past and the present imperialism, the Latin American countries, *which have not had to overthrow old, feudal régimes* [our italics – ed.], remain nailed to an imaginary defence against the state of growing backwardness and dependence and eternally paralyzed by the fear of antagonizing an internal enemy, the mass of poor, landless peasants, the poverty-stricken and above all the working class, which is already attempting to organize itself independently. The methods of warfare that the South American bourgeois reformists adopted were and continue to be the most modern military and political ones, obliging them to take the path of a forced march through the stages of capitalist development, the former to take control of the State and overthrow the old ruling classes, the latter to impose a faster rate of capitalist development. The widespread illusion of the bourgeoisie was to go through all the phases of a pure capitalist development together with the use of democracy as an inter-class political glue.

The illusion of independence from American imperialism has accompa-

nied the claims of the middle classes and industrial bourgeoisie. The cycles took place with no real bourgeoisie settling its accounts with the past, which is its present, a powerful aristocracy grounded on raw materials. [...] This American empire, with its enormous wealth and inexhaustible sources of raw materials would be infinitely more powerful than any empire preceding it: it would be a gigantic all-conquering and devastating superpower. The power of America and its development would constitute the most serious threat to world peace and safety, to the freedom of peoples and the emancipation of the proletariat. This is the threat you must defuse, workers of the two Americas.”

It is vital for the proletariat to remember all this. In this appeal, only revolutionary communism has been able to recover the memory and historical experience of a continent whose fabric weaves all classes into a single warp and weft. The character impressed by the history of the proletariat on this articulation and interweaving of political and social crises, from Mexico down to Chile, is unique.

It has given an important significance to the victories of the proletariat obtained on an immediate, revolutionary plane, but also to the tremendous defeats suffered in the course of the XXth century. This history, however, conveys and confirms to us a deep sense of concern for the class’s (and thus the revolutionary Party’s) historical delay on a worldwide scale. In the texts taken from the “Appeal”, the revolutionary communists of 1920 pointed out to us a deterministically expressed path leading to the Latin-American bourgeoisie’s backwardness. This path does not narrate the epic of the “national liberation movements” that took place in Asia and Africa; this is not its objective. But neither does it yield a Latin America detached from world history – a sort of gigantic overseas island with its own economic, social and political discon-

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tinuity. On the contrary, it narrates the development and forced march of capitalism, from rags and tatters to imperialism, and above all of a bourgeois class sick with delusions, which makes full use of democracy in all its variants: radical, militant, constitutionalist, nationalist, dictatorial, populist and always decrepit, with its political, cross-class glue. What becomes quite clear is the bourgeois terror of the proletarian movement and its potentially revolutionary action: i.e. the terror that it might become the head of the revolutionary process in an epoch when trade and financial capital are dominant, in an epoch when the poor peasants, as such, are not the product of primordial backwardness but a specific product of capitalism in

a phase when it is proving dramatically to be a historically outdated mode of production and thus superfluous and harmful, and when the middle classes are none other than the historical result of continuing decomposition and decay due to the periodic crises of capitalism.

Over a period of ten years, from 2009 to 2019, in South and Central America, a new style of governments has taken root (a “progressive left”, then replaced by a “conservative right”), dragged into the chasm of the American and world economic crisis. From Mexico to Brazil, from Argentina to Chile, the ongoing clash between classes has made the scourge of repression and exploitation worse and for the umpteenth time has pushed class domin-

ion once again into an American embrace. It is not just a matter of Venezuela or Cuba and their illusions of nationalism and sovereignty: these very illusions attract wolf-like appetites in all corners of the continent. In the depths of their *favelas*, the starving poor will have no hope of rescue, without a recovery of revolutionary class war. Abandoning their enormous slums, the derelict mass of the proletariat has been on the march for many months, to besiege the huge American wall that divides the world of capital from the world of salaried workers. Only the union of the exploited and a continent-wide class war can settle the accounts of the devastating tragedy into which proletarian humanity has been plunged.

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