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Platform of the ICC

70782 reads

After the longest and deepest period of counter-revolution that it has ever known, the proletariat is once again discovering the path of class struggle. This struggle - a consequence both of the acute crisis of the system which has been developing since the beginning of the 1960s, and of the emergence of new generations of workers who feel the weight of past defeats much less than their predecessors - is already the most widespread that the class has ever engaged in. Since the 1968 events in France, the workers' struggles from Italy to Argentina, from Britain to Poland, from Sweden to Egypt, from China to Portugal, from America to India, from Japan to Spain, have become a nightmare for the capitalist class.

The reappearance of the proletariat on the stage of history has definitively refuted all those ideologies produced or made possible by the counter-revolution which attempted to deny the revolutionary nature of the proletariat. The present resurgence of the class struggle has concretely demonstrated that the proletariat is the **only** revolutionary class of our time.

A revolutionary class is a class whose domination over society is in accordance with the creation and extension of the new relations of production made necessary by the development of the productive forces and the decay of the old relations of production. Like the modes of production which preceded it, capitalism corresponds to a particular stage in the development of society. It was once a progressive form of social development, but having become world-wide, it has created the conditions for its own disappearance. Because of its specific place in the productive process, because of its nature as the collective producer class of capitalism, deprived of the ownership of the means of production which it sets in motion - thus having no interests which bind it to the preservation of capitalist society - the working class is the only class, objectively and subjectively, which can establish the new mode of production which must come after capitalism: communism. The present resurgence of the proletarian struggle indicates that once again the perspective of communism is not only an historic necessity, but a real possibility.

However, the proletariat still has to make an immense effort to provide itself with the means to overthrow capitalism. As products of this effort and as active factors in it, the revolutionary currents and elements which have appeared since the beginning of this reawakening of the class, bear an enormous responsibility for the development and outcome of this struggle. In order to take up this responsibility, they must organise themselves on the basis of the class positions which have been definitively laid down by the historical experience of the proletariat and which must guide all their activity and intervention within the class.

It is through its own practical and theoretical experience that the proletariat becomes aware of the means and ends of its historic struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of communism. Since the beginning of capitalism, the whole activity of the proletariat has been a constant effort to become conscious of its interests as a class and to free itself from the grip of the ideas of the ruling class - the mystifications of bourgeois ideology. This effort expressed itself in a political continuity which extends throughout the workers' movement from the first secret societies to the left fractions which detached themselves from the Third International. Despite all the aberrations

and expressions of the pressure of bourgeois ideology which can be found in their positions and their activities, the different organisations of the class are irreplaceable links in the chain of historical continuity of the proletarian struggle. The fact that they succumbed to defeat or to internal degeneration in no way detracts from their fundamental contribution to that struggle. Thus the organisation of revolutionaries which is being reconstituted today expresses the general reawakening of class struggle (after a half-century of counter-revolution and dislocation of the past workers' movement) and absolutely must renew the historical continuity with the workers' movement of the past, so that the present and future battles of the class will be armed with all the lessons of past experiences, and so that all the partial defeats strewn along the proletariat's path will not have been in vain but will serve as signposts to its final victory.

The International Communist Current affirms its continuity with the contributions made by the Communist League, the First, Second and Third Internationals, and the left fractions which detached themselves from the latter, in particular the German, Dutch, and Italian Left. It is these essential contributions which allow us to integrate all the class positions into the coherent general vision which has been formulated in this platform.

Life of the ICC:

- [Congress Resolutions](#) ^[1]

1. THE THEORY OF THE COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

11239 reads

Marxism is the fundamental theoretical acquisition of the proletarian struggle. It is on the basis of marxism that all the lessons of the proletarian struggle can be integrated into a coherent whole.

By explaining the unfolding of history through the development of the class struggle, that is to say struggle based on the defence of economic interests within a framework laid down by the development of the productive forces, and by recognising the proletariat as the subject of the revolution which will abolish capitalism, marxism is the only conception of the world which really expresses the viewpoint of that class. Thus, far from being an abstract speculation about the world, it is first and foremost a weapon of struggle for the working class. And because the working class is the first and only class whose emancipation necessarily entails the emancipation of the whole of humanity, a class whose domination over society will not lead to a new form of exploitation but to the abolition of all exploitation, **only** marxism is capable of grasping social reality in an objective and scientific manner, without any prejudices or mystifications of any sort.

Consequently, although it is not a fixed doctrine, but on the contrary undergoes constant elaboration in a direct and living relationship with the class struggle, and although it benefited from prior theoretical achievements of the working class, marxism has been from its very inception the **only framework** from which and within which revolutionary theory can develop.

Heritage of the Communist Left:

- [Marxism: the theory of revolution](#) ^[2]

General and theoretical questions:

- [Communism](#) ^[3]

2. THE NATURE OF THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

7440 reads

Every social revolution is the act through which the class bearing with it new relations of production establishes its political domination over society. The proletarian revolution does not escape this definition but its conditions and its content differ fundamentally from past revolutions.

These previous revolutions, because they were hinged between two modes of production based on scarcity, merely substituted the domination of one exploiting class for that of another exploiting class. This fact was expressed by the replacement of one form of property by another form of property, one type of privilege by another type of privilege. In contrast to this the goal of the proletarian revolution is to replace relations of production based on scarcity with relations of production based on abundance. This is why it signifies the end of all forms of property, privilege and exploitation. These differences confer on the proletarian revolution the following characteristics, which the proletariat must understand if its revolution is to be successful:

- a. It is the first revolution to have a world-wide character; it cannot achieve its aims without generalising itself to all countries. This is because in order to abolish private property, the proletariat must abolish all its sectional, regional and national expressions. The generalisation of capitalist domination across the whole world has made this both necessary and possible.
- b. For the first time in history, the revolutionary class is at the same time the exploited class in the old system and, because of this, it cannot draw upon any economic power in the process of conquering political power. Exactly the opposite is the case: in direct contrast to what happened in past revolutions, the seizure of political power by the proletariat necessarily precedes the period of transition during which the domination of the old relations of production is destroyed and gives way to new social relations.
- c. The fact that, for the first time, a class in society is at the same time an exploited and a revolutionary class also implies that its struggle as an exploited class **can at no point be separated from or opposed to** its struggle as a revolutionary class. As marxism has from the beginning asserted against Proudhonism and other petty-bourgeois theories, the development of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat is conditioned by the deepening and generalisation of its struggle as an exploited class.

Heritage of the Communist Left:

- [Proletarian revolution](#) ^[4]

3. THE DECADENCE OF CAPITALISM

9375 reads

For the proletarian revolution to go beyond being a mere hope or historical potentiality or perspective and become a concrete possibility, it had to become an objective necessity for the development of humanity. This has in fact been the historic situation since the First World War: this war marked the end of the ascendant phase of the capitalist mode of production, a phase which began in the sixteenth century and which reached its zenith at the end of the nineteenth century. The new phase which followed was that of the decadence of capitalism.

As in all previous societies, the first phase of capitalism expressed the historically necessary character of its productive relations, that is to say their indispensable role in the expansion of society's productive forces. The second phase, on the other hand, expressed the increasing transformation of these relations into a fetter on the development of the productive forces.

The decadence of capitalism is the product of the development of the internal contradictions inherent in the relations of capitalist production which can be summarised in the following way. Although commodities have existed in nearly all societies, the capitalist economy is the **first** to be fundamentally based on the production of commodities. Thus the existence of an ever-increasing market is one of the essential conditions for the development of capitalism. In particular, the realisation of the surplus value which comes from the exploitation of the working class is indispensable for the accumulation of capital which is the essential motor-force of the system. Contrary to what the idolaters of capital claim, capitalist production does not create automatically and at will the markets necessary for its growth. Capitalism developed in a non-capitalist world, and it was in this world that it found the outlets for its development. But by generalising its relations of production across the whole planet and by unifying the world market, capitalism reached a point where the outlets which allowed it to grow so powerfully in the nineteenth century became saturated. Moreover, the growing difficulty encountered by capital in finding a market for the realisation of surplus value accentuates the fall in the rate of profit, which results from the constant widening of the ratio between the value of the means of production and the value of the labour power which sets them in motion. From being a mere tendency, the fall in the rate of profit has become more and more concrete; this has become an added fetter on the process of capitalist accumulation and thus on the operation of the entire system.

Having unified and universalised commodity exchange, and in so doing made it possible for humanity to make an immense leap forward, capitalism has thus put on the agenda the disappearance of relations of production based on exchange. But as long as the proletariat has not undertaken the task of making them disappear, these relations of production maintain their existence and entangle humanity in a more and more monstrous series of contradictions.

The crisis of over-production, a characteristic expression of the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production but one which in the past, when the system was still healthy, constituted an essential spur for the expansion of the market, has today become a permanent crisis. The under-utilisation of capital's productive apparatus has become permanent and capital has become incapable of extending its social domination, if only to keep pace with population growth. The only thing that capitalism can extend across the world today is absolute human misery which already is the lot of many backward countries.

In these conditions, competition between capitalist nations has become more and more implacable. Since 1914 imperialism, which has become the means of survival for every nation no matter how large or small, has plunged humanity into a hellish cycle of crisis - war - reconstruction - new crisis..., a cycle characterised by immense armaments production which has increasingly become the only sphere where capitalism applies scientific methods and a full utilisation of the productive

forces. In the period of capitalist decadence, humanity is condemned to live through a permanent round of self-mutilation and destruction.

The physical poverty which grinds down the underdeveloped countries is echoed in the more advanced countries by an unprecedented dehumanisation of social relationships which is the result of the fact that capitalism is absolutely incapable of offering any future to humanity, other than one made up of more and more murderous wars and a more and more systematic, rational and scientific exploitation. As in all other decadent societies this has led to a growing decomposition of social institutions, of the dominant ideology, of moral values, of art forms and all the other cultural manifestations of capitalism. The development of ideologies like fascism and Stalinism express the triumph of barbarism in the absence of a revolutionary alternative.

Heritage of the Communist Left:

- Decadence of capitalism [5]

4. STATE CAPITALISM

16927 reads

In all periods of decadence, confronted with the exacerbation of the system's contradictions, the **state** has to take responsibility for the cohesion of the social organism, for the preservation of the dominant relations of production. It thus tends to strengthen itself to the point of **incorporating** within its own structures the whole of social life. The bloated growth of the imperial administration and the absolute monarchy were the manifestations of this phenomenon in the decadence of Roman slave society and of feudalism respectively.

In the decadence of capitalism the general tendency towards state capitalism is one of the dominant characteristics of social life. In this period, each national capital, because it cannot expand in an unfettered way and is confronted with acute imperialist rivalries, is forced to organise itself as effectively as possible, so that externally it can compete economically and militarily with its rivals, and internally deal with the increasing aggravation of social contradictions. The only power in society which is capable of fulfilling these tasks is the state. Only the state can:

- take charge of the national economy in an overall centralised manner and mitigate the internal competition which weakens the economy, in order to strengthen its capacity to maintain a united face against the competition on the world market.
- develop the military force necessary for the defence of its interests in the face of growing international conflict.
- finally, owing to an increasingly heavy repressive and bureaucratic apparatus, reinforce the internal cohesion of a society threatened with collapse through the increasing decomposition of its economic foundations; only the state can impose through an all-pervasive violence the preservation of a social structure which is less and less capable of spontaneously regulating human relations and which is more and more questioned the more it becomes an absurdity for the survival of society itself.

On the economic level this tendency towards state capitalism, though never fully realised, is expressed by the state taking over the key points of the productive apparatus. This does not mean

the disappearance of the law of value, or competition, or the anarchy of production, which are the fundamental characteristics of the capitalist economy. These characteristics continue to apply on a world scale where the laws of the market still reign and still determine the conditions of production within each national economy however statified it may be. If the laws of value and of competition seem to be 'violated', it is only so that they may have a more powerful effect on a global scale. If the anarchy of production seems to subside in the face of state planning, it reappears more brutally on a world scale, particularly during the acute crises of the system which state capitalism is incapable of preventing. Far from representing a 'rationalisation' of capitalism, state capitalism is nothing but an expression of its decay.

The statification of capital takes place either in a **gradual** manner through the fusion of 'private' and state capital as is generally the case in the most developed countries, or through **sudden** leaps in the form of massive and total nationalisations, in general in places where private capital is at its weakest.

In practice, although the tendency towards state capitalism manifests itself in all countries in the world, it is more rapid and more obvious when and where the effects of decadence make themselves felt in the most brutal manner; historically during periods of open crisis or of war, geographically in the weakest economies. But state capitalism is not a specific phenomenon of backward countries. On the contrary, although the degree of formal state control is often higher in the backward capitals, the state's real control over economic life is generally much more effective in the more developed countries owing to the high level of capital concentration in these nations.

On the political and social level, whether in its most extreme totalitarian forms such as fascism or Stalinism or in forms which hide behind the mask of democracy, the tendency towards state capitalism expresses itself in the increasingly powerful, omnipresent, and systematic control over the whole of social life exerted by the state apparatus, and in particular the executive. On a much greater scale than in the decadence of Rome or feudalism, the state under decadent capitalism has become a monstrous, cold, impersonal machine which has devoured the very substance of civil society.

Heritage of the Communist Left:

- [State capitalism](#) [6]

Political currents and reference:

- [Trotskyism](#) [7]
- [Stalinism](#) [8]
- [Maoism](#) [9]

5. THE SO-CALLED 'SOCIALIST' COUNTRIES

28549 reads

By concentrating capital in the hands of the state, state capitalism has created the illusion that private ownership of the means of production has disappeared and that the bourgeoisie has been eliminated. The Stalinist theory of 'socialism' in one country, the whole lie of the 'socialist' or 'communist' countries, or of countries 'on the road' to socialism, all have their origins in this mystification.

The changes brought about by the tendency to state capitalism are not to be found on **the level of the basic relations of production**, but only on the level of the **juridical** forms of property.

They do not eliminate the private ownership of the means of production, but only the juridical aspect of individual ownership. The means of production remain 'private' property as far as the workers are concerned; the workers are deprived of any control over the means of production. The means of production are only 'collectivised' for the bureaucracy which owns and manages them in a collective manner.

The state bureaucracy which takes on the specific function of extracting surplus labour from the proletariat and of accumulating national capital constitutes a **class**. But it is not a **new** class. The role it plays shows that it is nothing but the same old bourgeoisie in its statified form. Concerning its privileges as a class, what is specific to the state bureaucracy is primarily the fact that it obtains its privileges not through revenues arising out of the individual ownership of capital, but through 'running costs', bonuses, and fixed forms of payment given to it according to the function its members fulfil - a form of remuneration which simply has the appearance of 'wages' and which is often tens or hundreds of times higher than the wages given to the working class.

The centralisation and planning of capitalist production by the state and its bureaucracy far from being a step towards the elimination of exploitation is simply a way of intensifying exploitation, of making it more effective.

On the economic level, **Russia**, even during the short time that the proletariat held political power there, has never been able to eliminate capitalism. If state capitalism appeared there so quickly in a highly developed form, it was because the economic disorganisation which resulted from Russia's defeat in World War I, then the chaos of the Civil War, made Russia's survival as a national capital within a decadent world system all the more difficult.

The triumph of the counter-revolution in Russia expressed itself as a reorganisation of the national economy which used the most developed forms of state capitalism and cynically presented them as the 'continuation of October' and the 'building of socialism'. The example was followed elsewhere: China, Eastern Europe, Cuba, North Korea, Indo-china, etc. However, there is nothing proletarian or communist in any of these countries. They are countries, where, under the weight of one of the greatest lies in history, the dictatorship of capital rules in its most decadent form. Any defence of these countries, no matter how 'critical' or 'conditional', is a completely counter-revolutionary activity.

Note

The collapse of the eastern bloc and of the Stalinist regimes has swept away this mystification of the so-called 'socialist' countries which for more than half a century was the spearhead of the most terrible counter-revolution in history. Nevertheless, the 'democratic' bourgeoisie, by unleashing its endless campaigns about the so-called 'failure of communism', is still perpetuating the greatest lie in history : the identification between Stalinism and communism. The parties of the left and extreme left of capital which, even in a critical manner, supported the so-called 'socialist' countries, are now obliged to adapt to the new conditions of the world situation. In order to carry on controlling and mystifying the proletariat, they are trying to make people forget their support for Stalinism, even if it means falsifying their own past.

Heritage of the Communist Left:

- Stalinism, the Eastern bloc ^[10]

6. THE PROLETARIAN STRUGGLE UNDER DECADENT CAPITALISM

10568 reads

Since its beginnings, the proletariat's struggle in defence of its own interests has carried within itself the perspective of ultimately destroying capitalism and establishing communism. But the proletariat does not pursue the final goal of its struggle out of pure idealism, guided by some divine inspiration. It is led to undertake its communist task because the material conditions within which its immediate struggle develops, force the class to do so since any other method of struggle can only lead to disaster.

As long as the bourgeoisie, thanks to the vast expansion of the capitalist system in its ascendant phase, was able to accord real reforms to the workers, the proletariat's struggle lacked the objective conditions necessary for the realisation of its revolutionary programme.

Despite the revolutionary and communist aspirations expressed even during the bourgeois revolution by the most radical tendencies in the workers' movement, in that historic period the workers' struggle could not go beyond the fight for reforms.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, one of the focal points of working class activity was the whole process of learning how to organise itself to win economic and political reforms through trade unionism and parliamentarism. Thus side by side within the genuine organisations of the class, one could find 'reformist' elements (those for whom the whole struggle of the class was simply the struggle for reforms) and revolutionaries (those for whom the struggle for reforms was simply a step, a moment in the process which would ultimately lead to the revolutionary struggle of the class). Also in this period the proletariat was able to support certain fractions of the bourgeoisie against other more reactionary fractions in order to push forward social changes favourable to its own development and favourable also to the development of the productive forces.

All these conditions underwent fundamental changes under decadent capitalism. The world has become too small to contain within it all the existing national capitals. In every nation, capital is forced to increase productivity (ie the exploitation of the workers) to the most extreme limits. The organisation of this exploitation has ceased to be a matter conducted solely between individual employers and their workforce; it has become the concern of the state and all the thousand and one mechanisms created to contain the class, direct it and steer it away from any revolutionary danger - condemning it to a systematic and insidious repression.

Inflation, a permanent phenomenon since World War I, immediately devours any wage increases. The length of the working day has either stayed the same, or has been reduced only to compensate for the increased time to get to and from work and to avoid the total nervous collapse of the workers, subjected to a shattering pace of life and work.

The struggle for reforms has become a hopeless utopia. In this epoch the proletariat can only engage in a fight to the death against capital. It no longer has any alternative between consenting to be atomised into a sum of millions of crushed, tamed individuals, or generalising its struggles as widely as possible towards a confrontation with the state itself. Thus it must refuse to allow its struggles to be restricted to a purely economic, local, or sectional terrain and instead organise itself in the embryonic forms of its future organs of power: the workers' councils.

In these new historic conditions many of the old weapons of the proletariat can no longer be used by the class. In fact the political tendencies who continue to advocate their use only do so in order to tie the working class to exploitation, to undermine its will to fight.

The distinction made by the workers' movement in the nineteenth century between the minimum and the maximum programme has lost all meaning. The minimum programme is no longer possible. The proletariat can only advance its struggles by situating them within the perspective of the maximum programme: the communist revolution.

Heritage of the Communist Left:

- [Proletarian struggle](#) ^[11]

7. THE TRADE UNIONS: YESTERDAY ORGANS OF THE PROLETARIAT, TODAY INSTRUMENTS OF CAPITAL

6294 reads

In the nineteenth century, the period of capitalism's greatest prosperity, the working class - often through bitter and bloody struggles - built up permanent trade organisations whose role was to defend its economic interests: the trade unions. These organs played an **essential** role in the struggle for reforms and for the substantial improvements in the workers' living conditions which the system could then afford. They also constituted a focus for the regroupment of the class, for the development of its solidarity and consciousness, so that revolutionaries could intervene within them and help make them serve as 'schools for communism'. Although the existence of these organs was indissolubly linked to the existence of wage labour, and although even in this period they were often substantially bureaucratised, the unions were nevertheless authentic organs of the class to the extent that the abolition of wage labour was not yet on the historical agenda.

As capitalism entered its decadent phase it was no longer able to accord reforms and improvements in living conditions to the working class. Having lost all possibility of fulfilling their initial function of defending working class interests, and confronted with an historic situation in which only the abolition of wage labour and with it, the disappearance of trade unions, was on the agenda, the trade unions became **true defenders of capitalism**, agencies of the bourgeois state within the working class. This is the only way they could survive in the new period. This evolution was aided by the bureaucratisation of the unions prior to decadence and by the relentless tendency within decadence for the state to absorb all the structures of social life.

The anti-working class role of the unions was decisively demonstrated for the first time during World War I when alongside the Social Democratic parties they helped to mobilise the workers for the imperialist slaughter. In the revolutionary wave which followed the war, the unions did everything in their power to smother the proletariat's attempts to destroy capitalism. Since then they have been kept alive not by the working class, but the capitalist state for which they fulfil a number of important functions:

- actively participating in the efforts of the state to rationalise the economy, regulate the sale of labour power, and intensify exploitation;

- sabotaging the class struggle from within either by derailing strikes and revolts into sectional dead-ends, or by confronting autonomous movements with open repression.

Because the unions have lost their proletarian character, they cannot be **'reconquered by the working class'**, nor can they constitute a field of activity for revolutionaries. For over half a century the workers have shown less and less interest in participating in the activities of these organs which have become an integral part of the bourgeois state. The workers' struggles to resist the constant deterioration of their living conditions have tended to take the forms of wildcat strikes outside of and against the unions. Directed by general assemblies of strikers and, in cases where they generalise, co-ordinated by committees of delegates elected and revocable by these assemblies, these strikes have immediately placed themselves on a political terrain in that they have been forced to confront the state in the form of its representatives inside the factory: the trade unions. Only the generalisation and radicalisation of these struggles can enable the class to move from the defensive terrain to the open and frontal assault on the capitalist state; and **the destruction of the bourgeois state power necessarily involves the destruction of the trade unions.**

The anti-proletarian character of the old trade unions is not simply a result of the fact they are organised in a particular way (by trade, by industry), or that they had 'bad leaders'; it is a result of the fact that in the present period the class **cannot maintain permanent organisations for the defence of its economic interests.** Consequently, the capitalist function of these organs also applies to all those 'new' organisations which play a similar role, no matter what their initial intentions. This is the case with the 'revolutionary unions' and 'shop stewards' as well as those organs (workers' committees, worker's commissions...) which stay in existence after a struggle - even in opposition to the unions - and try to set themselves up as 'authentic' poles for the defence of the workers' immediate interests. On this basis, these organisations cannot escape from being integrated into the apparatus of the bourgeois state even in an unofficial or illegal manner.

All political strategies aimed at 'using', 'regenerating' or 'reconquering' trade union type organisations serve only the interests of capitalism, in that they seek to vitalise capitalist institutions which the workers have often already deserted. After more than fifty years of experience of the anti-working class character of these organisations, any position advocating such strategies is fundamentally non-proletarian.

Heritage of the Communist Left:

- [The union question](#) ^[12]

8. THE MYSTIFICATION OF PARLIAMENT AND ELECTIONS

5729 reads

In the ascendant period of capitalism, parliament was the most appropriate form for the organisation of the bourgeoisie. As a specifically bourgeois institution, it was never a primary arena for the activity of the working class and the proletariat's participation in parliamentary activity and electoral campaigns contained a number of real dangers, against which revolutionaries of the last century always alerted the class. However, in a period when the revolution was not yet on the agenda and when the proletariat could wrest reforms from within the system, participation in parliament allowed the class to use it to press for reforms, to use electoral campaigns as a means for propaganda and

agitation for the proletarian programme, and to use parliament as a tribune for denouncing the ignominy of bourgeois politics. This is why the struggle for universal suffrage was throughout the nineteenth century in many countries one of the most important issues around which the proletariat organised.

As the capitalist system entered its decadent phase, parliament ceased to be an instrument for reforms. As the Communist International said at its Second Congress: "The centre of gravity of political life has now been completely and finally removed beyond the confines of parliament". The only role parliament could play from then on, the only thing that keeps it alive, is its role as an instrument of mystification. Thus ended any possibility for the proletariat to use parliament in any way. The class cannot gain impossible reforms from an organ which has lost any real political function. At a time when its basic task is to destroy all institutions of the bourgeois state and thus parliament; when it must set up its own dictatorship on the ruins of universal suffrage and other vestiges of bourgeois society, participation in parliamentary and electoral institutions can only lead to these moribund bodies being given a semblance of life no matter what the intentions of those who advocate this kind of activity.

Participation in elections and parliament no longer has any of the advantages it had last century. On the contrary, it is full of dangers, especially that of keeping alive illusions about the possibility of a 'peaceful' or 'gradual' transition to socialism through the conquest of a parliamentary majority by the so-called 'workers' parties'.

The strategy of 'destroying parliament from within' through the use of 'revolutionary' delegates has been decisively proved to have no other result than the corruption of the political organisations who undertake such activities and their absorption into capitalism.

Finally, to the extent that such activity is essentially the concern of specialists, an arena for the games of political parties rather than for the self-activity of the masses; the use of elections and parliament as instruments for agitation and propaganda tends to preserve the political premises of bourgeois society and encourage passivity in the working class. If such a disadvantage was acceptable when the revolution was not an immediate possibility, it has become a decisive obstacle in a period when the only task on the historical agenda for the proletariat is precisely the overthrow of the old social order and the creation of a communist society, which demands the active and conscious participation of the whole class.

If at the beginning the tactics of 'revolutionary parliamentarism' were primarily an expression of the weight of the past within the class and its organisations, the disastrous results of such tactics show that they are profoundly bourgeois.

Heritage of the Communist Left:

- [The parliamentary sham](#) ^[13]

9. FRONTISM: A STRATEGY FOR DERAILING THE PROLETARIAT

6119 reads

Under decadent capitalism when only the proletarian revolution is historically progressive, there cannot even momentarily be any tasks held in common between the revolutionary class and any faction of the ruling class, however 'progressive', 'democratic', or 'popular' it claims to be. In contrast to the ascendant phase of capitalism, the decadence of the system makes it impossible for any bourgeois faction to play a progressive role. In particular, bourgeois democracy, which in the nineteenth century was a progressive political form in relation to the vestiges of feudalism, has lost any real political content in the period of decadence. Bourgeois democracy only serves as a deceptive screen hiding the strengthening of the totalitarian power of the state, and the bourgeois factions who advocate it are just as reactionary as the rest of their class.

Since World War I 'democracy' has shown itself to be one of the most pernicious opiates of the proletariat. It was in the name of democracy that the revolutions that followed the war in several European countries were crushed; it was in the name of democracy and against 'fascism' that tens of millions of workers were mobilised for the second imperialist war; it is once again in the name of democracy that capital is today trying to derail the struggle of the proletariat into alliances 'against fascism', 'against reactionaries', 'against repression', 'against totalitarianism', etc.

Because it was the specific product of a period in which the proletariat had already been crushed, fascism is simply not on the agenda today and all propaganda about the 'fascist menace' is pure mystification. Moreover, fascism has no monopoly on repression and if the democratic left-wing political tendencies identify fascism with repression it is because they want to hide the fact that they are themselves resolute practitioners of repression, that it is they who have always been at the forefront in crushing the revolutionary movements of the class.

Just like 'popular fronts' and 'anti-fascist fronts', the tactic of the 'united front' has proved to be a major weapon for the diversion of the proletarian struggle. This tactic which advocates that revolutionary organisations call for alliances with the so-called 'workers' parties' in order to 'force them into a corner' and expose them, can only succeed in maintaining illusions about the 'proletarian' nature of these bourgeois parties and thus delay the workers' break with them.

The autonomy of the proletariat in the face of all the other classes in society is the first precondition for the extension of its struggle towards the revolution. All alliances with other classes or strata and especially those with factions of the bourgeoisie can only lead to the disarming of the class in the face of its class enemy, because these alliances make the working class abandon the only terrain on which it can temper its strength: its own class terrain. Any political tendency which tries to make the class leave that terrain is directly serving the interests of the bourgeoisie.

Heritage of the Communist Left:

- [The "united front"](#) ^[14]

10. THE COUNTER REVOLUTIONARY MYTH OF 'NATIONAL LIBERATION'

6176 reads

National liberation and the formation of new nations has never been a specific task of the proletariat. If in the nineteenth century revolutionaries gave their support to certain national liberation movements, they did not have any illusions that these were anything but bourgeois movements;

neither did they give their support in the name of 'the rights of nations to self determination'. They supported such movements because in the ascendant phase of capitalism the nation represented the most appropriate framework for the development of capitalism, and the establishment of new nation states, by eliminating the constricting vestiges of pre-capitalist social relations, represented a step forward in the development of the productive forces on a world scale and thus in the maturation of the material conditions for socialism. (see note)

As capitalism entered its period of decline, the nation together with capitalist relations of production as a whole, became too narrow for the development of the productive forces. Today in a situation where even the oldest and most powerful countries are incapable of developing, the juridical constitution of new countries does not lead to any real progress. In a world divided up by the imperialist blocs every 'national liberation' struggle, far from representing something progressive, can only be a moment in the continuous conflict between rival imperialist blocs in which the workers and peasants, whether voluntarily or forcibly enlisted, only participate as cannon fodder.

Such struggles in no way 'weaken imperialism' because they do not challenge it at its roots: in the capitalist relations of production. If they weaken one imperialist bloc it is only to strengthen another; and the new nations set up in such conflicts must themselves become imperialist, because in the epoch of decadence no country, whether large or small, can avoid engaging in imperialist policies.

In the present epoch a 'successful' struggle for 'national liberation' can only mean a change in imperialist masters for the country concerned; for the workers, especially in the new 'socialist' countries, it means an intensification, a systematisation, a militarisation of exploitation by the statified capital which - because it is an expression of the barbarism of the system - proceeds to transform the 'liberated' nation into a concentration camp. Contrary to what some people claim, these struggles do not provide the proletariat of the Third World with a springboard for class struggle. By mobilising the workers behind the national capital in the name of 'patriotic' mystifications, these struggles always act as a barrier to the proletarian struggle which is often extremely bitter in such countries. Over the last fifty years history has amply shown, contrary to the assertions of the Communist International, that 'national liberation' struggles do not serve as an impetus to the struggle either of the workers in the advanced countries or of the workers in the backward the workers in the backward countries. Neither have anything to gain from such struggles, nor any camp to choose. In these conflicts the only revolutionary slogan against this latter-day version of 'national defence' dressed up as so-called 'national liberation', is the one revolutionaries took up during World War I: revolutionary defeatism, "turn the imperialist war into a civil war". Any position of 'unconditional' or 'critical' support for these struggles is, whether intentionally or not, similar to the positions of the 'social chauvinists' of the First World War. It is thus totally incompatible with coherent communist activity.

Note

Since the collapse of the eastern bloc at the end of the 1980s and the resulting dislocation of the western bloc, national liberation struggles have ceased to be a mystification used by the left and extreme left factions of capital for dragging parts of the proletariat into supporting one imperialist camp against another. Nevertheless, while in the central countries of capitalism the myth of 'national liberation' has largely worn out with the collapse of the Russian imperialist bloc, it is still very much alive in certain peripheral regions of the world and can still be used to dragoon the workers of these countries into massacres (as in the Caucasian republics or the territories occupied by Israel, for example).

Heritage of the Communist Left:

- The national question [15]

11. SELF-MANAGEMENT: WORKERS SELF-EXPLOITATION

6321 reads

If the nation state itself has become too narrow a framework for the productive forces, this is all the more true for the individual enterprise which has never had any real autonomy from the general laws of capitalism; under decadent capitalism, enterprises depend even more heavily on those laws and on the state. This is why 'self-management' (the management of enterprises by the workers in a society which remains capitalist), a petty bourgeois utopia last century when it was advocated by Proudhonist tendencies, is today nothing but a capitalist mystification. (see note)

It is an economic weapon of capital in that it tries to get the workers to take up responsibility for enterprises hit by the crisis by making them organise their own exploitation.

It is a political weapon of the counter-revolution in that it:

- divides the working class by imprisoning it and isolating it factory by factory, neighbourhood by neighbourhood, sector by sector;
- burdens the workers with the concerns of the capitalist economy when their only task is to destroy it;
- diverts the proletariat from the fundamental task which determines the possibility of its emancipation: the destruction of the political apparatus of capital and the establishment of its class dictatorship on a world scale.

It is only on a world-wide scale that the proletariat can really undertake the management of production, but it will do this not within the framework of capitalist laws but by destroying them.

Any political position which (even in the name of 'working class experience' or of 'establishing new relations among workers') defends self management is, in fact, objectively participating in the preservation of capitalist relations of production.

Note

This mystification, which reached its culminating point with the experience of 'self-management' and the defeat of the workers at LIP in France in 1974-5, is today exhausted. However, it cannot be excluded that it will go through a certain revival in the future with the renewal of anarchism. In the struggles in Spain in 1936, it was the anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist currents who were the flag-bearers for the myth of self-management, presented as a 'revolutionary' economic measure.

Heritage of the Communist Left:

- "Self-management" [16]

12. 'PARTIAL' STRUGGLES: A REACTIONARY DEAD-END

5415 reads

The decadence of capitalism has accentuated the decomposition of all the moral values of capitalism and has led to a profound degradation of all human relations.

However, while it is true that the proletarian revolution will engender new relationships in every area of life, it is wrong to think that it is possible to contribute to the revolution by organising specific struggles around partial problems, such as racism, the position of women, pollution, sexuality, and other aspects of daily life.

The struggle against the economic foundations of the system contains within it the struggle against all the super-structural aspects of capitalist society, but this is not true the other way around. By their very content 'partial' struggles, far from reinforcing the vital autonomy of the proletariat, tend on the contrary to dilute it into a mass of confused categories (races, sexes, youth, etc.) which can only be totally impotent in the face of history. This is why bourgeois governments and political parties have learned to recuperate and use them to good effect in the preservation of the social order.

Heritage of the Communist Left:

- [Partial struggles](#) ^[17]

13. THE COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY CHARACTER OF THE 'WORKERS' PARTIES'

6786 reads

All those parties or organisations which today defend, even 'conditionally' or 'critically', certain states or fractions of the bourgeoisie whether in the name of 'socialism', 'democracy', 'anti-fascism', 'national independence', the 'united front' or the 'lesser evil', which base their politics on the bourgeois electoral game, within the anti-working class activity of trade unionism or in the mystifications of self-management, are agents of capital. In particular, this is true of the Socialist and Communist parties.

These parties, which were once real vanguards of the world proletariat, have since undergone a process of degeneration which has led them into the capitalist camp. After the death as such (despite the formal survival of their structure) of the Internationals to which these parties belonged (2nd International for the socialists, 3rd International for the communists), they themselves survived to be progressively transformed, each one separately, into (often important) cogs in the bourgeois state apparatus in their respective countries, into faithful managers of the national capital.

This was the case with the socialist parties when in a period of subjection to the gangrene of opportunism and reformism, most of the main parties were led, at the outbreak of World War I (which marked the death of the 2nd International) to adopt, under the leadership of the social-chauvinist right which from then on was in the camp of the bourgeoisie, the policy of 'national defence', and then to oppose openly the post-war revolutionary wave, to the point of playing the role of the proletariat's executioners, as in Germany 1919. The final integration of each of these parties into their respective bourgeois states took place at different moments in the period which followed the outbreak of World War I, but this process was definitively closed at the beg definitively closed at the beginning of the 1920s, when the last proletarian currents were eliminated from or left their ranks and joined the Communist International.

In the same way, the Communist Parties in their turn passed into the capitalist camp after a similar process of opportunist degeneration. This process, which had already begun during the early 1920s, continued after the death of the Communist International (marked by the adoption in 1928 of the theory of 'Socialism in one country'), to conclude, despite bitter struggles by the left fractions and after the latter's exclusion, in these parties' complete integration into the capitalist state at the beginning of the 1930s with their participation in their respective bourgeoisie's armament drives and their entry into the 'popular fronts'. Their active participation in the 'Resistance' in World War II, and in the 'national reconstruction' that followed it, has confirmed them as faithful agents of national capital and the purest incarnation of the counter-revolution.

All the so-called 'revolutionary' currents – such as Maoism which is simply a variant of parties which had definitively gone over to the bourgeoisie, or Trotskyism which, after constituting a proletarian reaction against the betrayal of the Communist Parties was caught up in a similar process of degeneration, or traditional anarchism, which today places itself in the framework of an identical approach by defending a certain number of positions of the SPs and CPs, such as 'anti-fascist alliances' – belong to the same camp: the camp of capital. Their lesser influence or their more radical language changes nothing as to the bourgeois basis of their programme, but makes them useful touts or supplements of these parties.

Heritage of the Communist Left:

- Fake "workers' parties" [18]

Political currents and reference:

- Trotskyism [7]
- Stalinism [8]
- Maoism [9]
- "Official" anarchism [19]

14. THE FIRST GREAT REVOLUTIONARY WAVE OF THE WORLD PROLETARIAT

7230 reads

By marking the entry of capitalism into its decadent phase, World War I showed that the objective conditions for the proletarian revolution had ripened. The revolutionary wave, which arose in response to the war and which thundered across Russia and Europe, made its mark in both Americas and found an echo in China, and thus constituted the first attempt by the world proletariat to accomplish its historic task of destroying capitalism. At the highest points of its struggle between 1917 and 1923, the proletariat took power in Russia, engaged in mass insurrections in Germany, and insurrections in Germany, and shook Italy, Hungary, and Austria to their foundations. Although less strongly, the revolutionary wave expressed itself in bitter struggles in, for example, Spain, Great Britain, North and South America. The tragic failure of the revolutionary wave was finally marked in 1927 by the crushing of the proletarian insurrection in Shanghai and Canton in China after a long series of defeats for the working class internationally. This is why the October 1917 revolution in Russia can only be understood as one of the most important manifestations of this class movement

and not as a 'bourgeois', 'state-capitalist', 'dual', or 'permanent' revolution which would somehow force the proletariat to fulfil the 'bourgeois-democratic' tasks which the bourgeoisie itself was incapable of carrying out.

Equally part of this revolutionary wave was the creation in 1919 of the Third International (The Communist International), which broke organisationally and politically with the parties of the Second International whose participation in the imperialist war had marked their passage into the bourgeois camp. The Bolshevik Party, an integral part of the revolutionary left which split from the Second International by taking up clear political positions expressed in the slogans "turn the imperialist war into a civil war", "smash the capitalist state", and "all power to the Soviets", through its decisive role in the creation of the Third International, made a fundamental contribution to the revolutionary process and represented at that moment an authentic vanguard for the world proletariat.

However, though the degeneration both of the revolution in Russia and of the Third International were essentially the result of the crushing of revolutionary attempts in other countries and of the general exhaustion of the revolutionary wave, it is equally necessary to understand the role played by the Bolshevik Party – since owing to the weakness of the other parties, it was the leading light in the Communist International – in this process of degeneration and in the international defeats of the proletariat. With, for example, the crushing of the Kronstadt uprising and the advocacy (despite the opposition of the left of the Third International) of the policies of 'conquering the unions', 'revolutionary parliamentarism', and the 'united front', the Bolsheviks' influence and responsibility in the liquidation of the revolution were no less than their contribution to the original development of that wave.

In Russia itself the counter-revolution came not only from 'outside' but also from 'inside' and in particular through the state structures which the Bolshevik Party set up and became identified with. What in October 1917 had simply been serious errors explicable in the light of the immaturity of the proletariat in Russia and of the workers' movement in general in the face of a new historical period, were from then on to become a screen, an ideological justification for the counter-revolution, and served as an important factor in it. However the decline of the post-war revolutionary wave and the revolution in Russia, the degeneration of the Third International and the Bolshevik Party, and the counter-revolutionary role which the latter played after a certain point, can only be understood by considering this revolutionary wave and the Third International, including their expression in Russia, as authentic expressions of the proletarian movement. Any other explanations can only lead to confusion and will prevent the currents which defend these confusions from really fulfilling their revolutionary tasks.

Even if the experiences of the class have left no 'material' gains, it is only by beginning from this understanding of their nature that real and important theoretical gains can be obtained from them. In particular, as the only historical example of the seizure of political power by the proletariat (apart from the ephemeral and desperate attempt represented by the Paris Commune in 1871, and the abortive experiences of Bavaria and Hungary in 1919), the October 1917 revolution has left a number of precious lessons for the understanding of two crucial problems of the revolutionary struggle: the content of the revolution and the nature of the organisation of revolutionaries.

History of the workers' movement:

- [1917 - Russian Revolution](#) ^[20]
- [1919 - German Revolution](#) ^[21]

Heritage of the Communist Left:

- Revolutionary wave, 1917-1923 ^[22]

15. THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

12311 reads

The seizure of political power by the proletariat on a world scale, the precondition for and the first stage in the revolutionary transformation of capitalist society, means in the first place the total destruction of the apparatus of the bourgeois state.

Since it is through its state that the bourgeoisie maintains its domination over society, its privileges, its exploitation of other classes and of the working class in particular, this organ is necessarily adapted to this function and cannot be used by the working class which has no privileges or exploitation to defend. In other words, there is no 'peaceful road to socialism': against the violence of the minority of exploiters exerted openly or hypocritically, but in any case more and more systematically by the bourgeoisie, the proletariat can only put forward its own revolutionary class violence.

As the lever of economic transformation of society, the dictatorship of the proletariat (i.e. the exclusive exercise of political power by the working class) will have the fundamental task of expropriating the exploiting class by socialising the means of production and progressively extending this socialised sector to all productive activities. On the basis of its political power, the proletariat will have to attack the political economy of the bourgeoisie by carrying forward an economic policy leading to the abolition of wage labour and commodity production and to the satisfaction of the needs of humanity.

During this period of transition from capitalism to communism, non-exploiting strata other than the proletariat will still exist, classes whose existence is based on the non-socialised sector of the economy. For this reason the class struggle will still exist as a manifestation of the contradictory economic interests within society. This will give rise to a state whose function will be to prevent these conflicts leading to society tearing itself apart. But with the progressive disappearance of these social classes through the integration of their members into the socialised sector, and with the eventual abolition of classes, the state will itself have to disappear.

The historically discovered form of the dictatorship of the proletariat is that of the workers' councils – unitary, centralised and class-wide assemblies based on elected and revocable delegates which enable the whole class to exercise power in a truly collective manner. These councils will have a monopoly of the control of arms as the guarantee of the exclusive political power of the working class.

It is the working class as a whole which alone can wield power in order to undertake the transformation of society. For this reason in contrast to previous revolutionary classes, the proletariat cannot delegate power to any institution or minority, including the revolutionary minority itself. The latter will act within the councils, but its organisation cannot substitute itself for the unitary organisations of the class in the achievement of its historic goals.

Similarly, the experience of the Russian revolution has shown the complexity and seriousness of the problem of the relationship between the class and the state in the period of transition. In the coming period, the proletariat and revolutionaries cannot evade this problem, but must make every effort to resolve it.

The dictatorship of the proletariat implies the absolute rejection of the notion that the working class should subordinate itself to any external force and also the rejection of any relations of violence within the class. During the period of transition, the proletariat is the only revolutionary class within society: its consciousness and its cohesion are the essential guarantees that its dictatorship will result in communism.

Heritage of the Communist Left:

- Dictatorship of the proletariat ^[23]

16. THE ORGANISATION OF REVOLUTIONARIES

8538 reads

a. Class consciousness and organisation

Any class fighting against the social order of the day can only do this effectively if it gives its struggle an organised and conscious form. Whatever the imperfection and alienation in their forms of organisation and their consciousness, this was already the case for classes like the slaves or the peasants who did not carry within them a new social order. But this necessity applies all the more to historic classes who bear the new relations made necessary by the evolution of society. The proletariat is, among these classes, the only class which possesses no economic power within the old society. Because of this its organisation and consciousness are even more decisive factors in its struggle.

The form of organisation which the class creates for its revolutionary struggle and for the wielding of political power is that of the workers' councils. But while the whole class is the subject of the revolution and is regrouped in these organisations at that moment, this does not mean that the process by which the class becomes conscious is in any way simultaneous or homogeneous. Class consciousness develops along a tortuous path through the struggle of the class, its successes and defeats. It has to confront the sectional and national divisions which constitute the 'natural' framework of capitalist society and which capital has every interest in perpetuating within the class.

b. The role of revolutionaries

Revolutionaries are those elements within the class who through this heterogeneous process are the first to obtain a clear understanding of "the line of march, the conditions and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement" (Communist Manifesto), and because in capitalist society "the dominant ideas are the ideas of the ruling class", revolutionaries necessarily constitute a minority of the working class.

As an emanation of the class, a manifestation of the process by which it becomes conscious, revolutionaries can only exist as such by becoming an active factor in this process. To accomplish this task in an indissoluble way, the revolutionary organisation:

- participates in all the struggles of the class in which its members distinguish themselves by being the most determined and combative fighters;
- intervenes in these struggles always stressing the general interests of the class and the final goals of the movement; and the final goals of the movement;
- as an integral part of this intervention, constantly dedicates itself to the work of theoretical clarification and reflection which alone will allow its general activity to be based on the whole past experience of the class and on the future perspectives crystallised through such theoretical work.

c. The relationship between the class and the organisation of revolutionaries

If the general organisation of the class and the organisation of revolutionaries are part of the same movement, they are nonetheless two distinct things.

The first, the councils, regroup the whole class. The only criterion for belonging to them is to be a worker. The second, on the other hand, regroups only the revolutionary elements of the class. The criterion for membership is no longer sociological, but political: agreement on the programme and commitment to defend it. Because of this the vanguard of the class can include individuals who are not sociologically part of the working class but who, by breaking with the class they came out of, identify themselves with the historic class interests of the proletariat.

However, though the class and the organisation of its vanguard are two distinct things, they are not separate, external or opposed to one another as is claimed by the 'Leninist' tendencies on the one hand and by the workerist-councilist tendencies on the other. What both these conceptions deny is the fact that, far from clashing with each other, these two elements – the class and revolutionaries – actually complement each other as a whole and a part of the whole. Between the two of them there can never exist relations of force because communists "have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole" (Communist Manifesto).

As a part of the class, revolutionaries can at no time substitute themselves for the class, either in its struggles within capitalism or, still less, in the overthrow of capitalism and the wielding of political power. Unlike other historical classes, the consciousness of a minority, no matter how enlightened, is not sufficient to accomplish the tasks of the proletariat. These are tasks which demand the constant participation and creative activity of the entire class at all times.

Generalised consciousness is the only guarantee of the victory of the proletarian revolution and, since it is essentially the fruit of practical experience, the activity of the whole class is irreplaceable. In particular, the necessary use of violence by the class cannot be separated from the general movement of the class. For this reason terrorism by individuals or isolated groups is absolutely foreign to the methods of the class and at best represents a manifestation of petty-bourgeois despair when it is not simply a cynical method of struggle between bourgeois factions. When it appears within the proletarian struggle, it is a sign of influences external to the struggle, and can only weaken the very basis for the development of consciousness.

The self-organisation of workers' struggles and the exercise of power by the class itself is not just one of the roads to communism which can be weighed against others: it is the only road.

The organisation of revolutionaries (whose most advanced form is the party) is the necessary organ with which the class equips itself to become conscious of its historic future and to politically orient the struggle for this future. For this reason the existence and activity of the party are an indispensable condition for the final victory of the proletariat.

d. The autonomy of the working class

However, the concept of 'class autonomy' used by workerist and anarchist tendencies, and which they put forward in opposition to substitutionist conceptions, has a totally reactionary and petty-bourgeois meaning. Apart from the fact that this 'autonomy' often boils down to no more than their own 'autonomy' as tiny sects who claim to represent the working class in the same way as the substitutionist tendencies they denounce so strongly, their conception has two main aspects:

- the rejection of any political parties and organisations whatever they may be by the workers;
- the autonomy of each fraction of the working class (factories, neighbourhoods, regions, nations etc.) in relation to others: federalism.

Today such ideas are at best an elementary reaction against Stalinist bureaucracy and the development of state totalitarianism, and at worst the political expression of the isolation and division typical of the petty-bourgeoisie. But both express a total incomprehension of the three fundamental aspects of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat:

- the importance and priority of the political tasks of the class (destruction of the capitalist state, world dictatorship of the proletariat);
- the importance and indispensable character of the organisation of revolutionaries within the class;
- the unitary, centralised and world-wide character of the revolutionary struggle of the class.

For us, as marxists, the autonomy of the class means its independence from all other classes in society. This autonomy constitutes an **INDESPENSABLE PRECONDITION** for the revolutionary activity of the class because the proletariat today is the only revolutionary class. This autonomy manifests itself both on the organisational level (the organisation of the councils), and on the political level and therefore, contrary to the assertions of the workerist tendencies, in close connection with the communist vanguard of the proletariat.

e. The organisation of revolutionaries in the different moments of the class struggle

While the general organisation of the class and the organisation of revolutionaries are two different things as far as their function is concerned, as far as their function is concerned, the circumstances in which they arise are also different. The councils appear only in periods of revolutionary confrontation when all the struggles of the class tend towards the seizure of power. However the effort of the class to develop its consciousness has existed at all times since its origins and will exist until its dissolution into communist society. This is why communist minorities have existed in every period as an expression of this constant effort. But the scope, the influence, the type of activity, and the mode of organisation of these minorities are closely linked to the conditions of the class struggle.

In the periods of intense class activity, these minorities have a direct influence on the practical course of events. One can then speak of the party to describe the organisation of the communist vanguard. On the other hand, in periods of defeat or of downturn in the class struggle, revolutionaries no longer have a direct influence on the immediate course of history.

All that can exist at such times are organisations of a much smaller size whose function is no longer to influence the immediate movement, but to resist it, which means struggling against the current while the class is being disarmed and mobilised by the bourgeoisie (through class collaboration, 'Sacred Union', 'the Resistance', 'anti-fascism', etc). Their essential task then is to draw the lessons of previous experience and so prepare the theoretical and programmatic framework for the future proletarian party which must necessarily emerge in the next upsurge of the class. These groups and fractions who, when the class struggle is on the ebb, have detached themselves from the degenerating party or have survived its demise, have the task of constituting a political and organisational bridge until the re-emergence of the party.

f. The structure of the organisation of revolutionaries

The necessarily world-wide and centralised character of the proletarian revolution confers the same world-wide and centralised character on the party of the working class, and the fractions and groups who lay the basis of the party necessarily tend towards a world-wide centralisation. This is concretised in the existence of central organs invested with political responsibilities between each of the organisation's congresses, to which they are accountable.

The structure of the organisation of revolutionaries must take two fundamental needs into account:

- it must permit the fullest development in revolutionary consciousness within itself and thus allow the widest and most searching discussion of all the questions and disagreements which arise in a non-monolithic organisation;
- it must at the same time ensure the organisation's cohesion and unity of action; in particular this means that all parts of the organisation must carry out the decisions of the majority.

Likewise the relations between the different parts of the organisation and the ties between militants necessarily bear the scars of capitalist society and therefore cannot constitute an island of communist relations within capitalism. Nevertheless, they cannot be in flagrant contradiction with the goal pursued by revolutionaries, and they must of necessity be based on that solidarity and mutual confidence which are the hallmarks of belonging to an organisation of the class which is the bearer of communism.

(see note)

Note

This mystification, which reached its culminating point with the experience of 'self-management' and the defeat of the workers at LIP in France in 1974-5, is today exhausted. However, it cannot be excluded that it will go through a certain revival in the future with the renewal of anarchism. In the struggles in Spain in 1936, it was the anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist currents who were the flag-bearers for the myth of self-management, presented as a 'revolutionary' economic measure.

Heritage of the Communist Left:

- Revolutionary organisation ^[24]
- Class consciousness ^[25]

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