

ICT Platform (2020)

About Ourselves

The Internationalist Communist Tendency began as the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party in 1983. However, its political roots go back much further. We see ourselves as one product of the revolutionary struggle of the working class throughout capitalist history. As such we draw on the lessons learned not only by Marx and Engels in the period of the First International and the Commune, but also by the revolutionary elements in Social Democracy before the First World War. After the war, the Communist Party of Italy was founded by our direct political ancestors who then saw the leadership taken from it by the degenerating Communist International (Comintern) in the form of "Bolshevisation" in the 1920s. The Communist Left attempted to fight back in the Committee of Intesa (1925) and later in both the gaols of Fascism and the factories of France and Belgium. It was these comrades who went on to found the Internationalist Communist Party in Italy in 1943. This was the only party formed at this time which was unambiguously based on opposition to both imperialist fronts in the Second World War and it is on their Platform of 1952 that the fundamental political approach of the Internationalist Communist Tendency is based.

Our tendency came into existence as a result of a joint initiative by the Internationalist Communist Party (PCInt) in Italy and the Communist Workers' Organisation (CWO) in Britain. There were two main reasons for this initiative. The first was to give organisational form to an already-existing tendency within the proletarian political camp. This had emerged from the International Conferences called by Battaglia Comunista (PCInt) between 1977-81. The basis for adherence to the last of these conferences was the seven points for which the CWO and PCInt had voted at the Third Conference. These were:

1. Acceptance of the October Revolution as proletarian.
2. Recognition of the break with Social Democracy brought about by the First Two Congresses of the Third International.
3. Rejection without reservation of state capitalism and self-management.
4. Recognition of the Socialist and Communist Parties as bourgeois.
5. Rejection of all policies which subject the proletariat to the national bourgeoisie.
6. An orientation towards the organisation of revolutionaries based on Marxist methodology.
7. Recognition of international meetings as part of the work of debate among revolutionary groups for co-ordination of their active political interventions towards the class in the class struggle, with the aim of actively contributing to the process leading to the International Party of the Proletariat, the indispensable political organ for the political guidance of the revolutionary class movement and the proletarian power itself.

The second was to act as a focus for organisations and individuals newly-emerging onto the international scene as capitalism's deepening crisis provoked a political response. In the event, the decades since the establishment of our tendency have hardly been a period of massive revival in the class struggle. On the contrary, workers' response to increasing attacks by capital have, in the main, been limited to sectional conflicts, even if militant (such as the British miners' strike of 1984-5 or the 1984 struggle of Spanish shipyard workers), and have as a result been defeated. International capital has thus been given a breathing space in which to restructure at the cost of millions of workers' livelihoods, increasing austerity measures, worsening conditions of work and terms for the sale of labour power.

In this context, it is not surprising that there were relatively few newcomers to proletarian politics during the Eighties. Many who did make an appearance later disappeared as political isolation overwhelmed them. Nevertheless, despite the unfavourable objective situation and our own modest forces, the organisational existence of the ICT has been consolidated.

Today the ICT exists as a specific and identifiable tendency toward the future revolutionary party, within the broad proletarian camp. Briefly the latter can be defined as those who stand for working class independence from capital; who have no truck with nationalism in any form; who saw nothing socialist in Stalinism and the former USSR, at the same time as recognising that October 1917 was the starting point for what could have become a wider world revolution. Amongst the organisations which fall within this broad framework there remain significant political differences, not least over the vexed question of the nature and function of the revolutionary organisation. The ICT's framework is as follows:

1. The proletarian revolution will be international or it will be doomed. International revolution presupposes the existence of an international party: the concrete political expression of the most class conscious workers who organise together to fight for the revolutionary programme amongst the rest of the working class. History has shown that attempts to form the party during the revolution itself were too little too late.
2. The ICT thus aims for the creation of a new workers' International as soon as the political programme and international forces exist for this. However, the ICT is for the party, and does not claim to be its sole pre-existing nucleus. The future party will not be the simple expansion of a single organisation.
3. Before the International can be formed the precise details of the revolutionary programme will have to be clarified in all its related aspects via discussion and debate amongst its potential constituent parts.
4. The organisations which eventually come to form the world party must already have a meaningful existence inside the working class in the area from which they spring. The proclamation of the International (or its initial nucleus) on the basis of little more than the existence of propagandist groups would not be a step forward for the revolutionary movement.
5. A revolutionary organisation has to strive to become more than a propaganda network. Despite the limited opportunities, it is the task of proletarian organisations today to work to establish themselves as a revolutionary force inside the working class; this in order to be in a position to point the way ahead in the class struggle of today as a precursor to organising and leading the revolutionary struggles of tomorrow.
6. The lesson of the last revolutionary wave is not that the working class can do without organised leadership, nor that the party is the class (a metaphysical abstraction of latter-day Bordigists). Rather, that leadership and its organisational form (the International) is the most important weapon that the revolutionary working class has. Its task will be to fight for a communist perspective in the mass organs of proletarian power (soviets). The political organisation, however, will remain a minority of the working class and is not a substitute for the class in general. The task of establishing socialism is one for the working class as a whole. It is a task which cannot be delegated, not even to the class conscious vanguard.

Platform of the Internationalist Communist Tendency (2020)

Preface

We are living in dangerous times. There is an enormous disproportion between the severity of the economic crisis and the consequent threat of imperialist war on the one hand, and the low level of the proletariat's response to this crisis on the other. Capital's real domination over production and distribution has become more and more a total domination over social and political relations as a whole. Bourgeois ideology has deeply penetrated the working class via the social democratic parties and trades unions. As such they suffocate at birth working class attempts to resist the effects of the crisis.

Strikes which have occurred, sometimes even in an entire branch of the national production, have not been extended because any sense of solidarity and class unity has been strangled by nationalism, by the idea of changing things in one firm at a time, by individualism: in fact, by those forms of dominant ideology that the left of the bourgeoisie has instilled amongst workers. The domination of capitalism over the working class by means of the unions and left capitalist parties is the concrete

manifestation of what Marx called the “reification of social relations”. Whatever their historical origins, today they are the material instruments of capital’s totalitarianism. They must be faced as such, both politically and organisationally and not by mere denunciation.

Despite capitalism’s undoubted success at containing the class struggle, its contradictions persist, primarily in the growth of the organic composition of capital and the consequent tendency of the rate of profit to fall. As Marxists we know they cannot be contained forever. The explosion of these contradictions will not necessarily result in victorious revolution. In the imperialist era global war is capital’s way of “controlling”, of temporarily resolving, its contradictions.

However, before this happens the possibility remains that the bourgeoisie’s political and ideological grip on the working class may be broken. In other words, sudden waves of mass class struggle may occur and revolutionaries have to be prepared for these. When the class once again takes the initiative and begins to use its collective strength against capital’s attacks, revolutionary political organisations need to be in a position to lead the necessary political and organisational battles against the forces of the left bourgeoisie.

Each successive wave of struggle will be a preparation for the revolution only if the programme and organisation of revolutionaries emerge strengthened from them; only when the revolutionary programme (and the organisation upholding it) is able, through the struggle itself, to sink deeper roots into the working class. This is demonstrated by the historical experience of the working class.

The 1905 Russian Revolution was a preparation for 1917 in the sense that the revolutionary programme which led to 1917 emerged strengthened from the earlier battles. There is no guarantee today that there will be such an episode of generalised, insurrectionary conflict which, although resulting in the immediate defeat of the class, also strengthens revolutionary forces. One thing is certain though: should such a mass movement occur without revolutionary ideas taking on a substantial political and organisational form inside the working class as a whole then any defeat would assume general historical proportions. It is the task of the proletarian political organisation to return to the working class the lessons of its own historical experience, organising the better elements produced by the class and leading the working class struggle towards an internationalist revolutionary solution so that they become a material force in the emancipation of our class.

Capitalism

As in every class society the capitalist mode of production suffers from the contradiction between the relations and the forces of production. Under capitalism labour power exists as a commodity which is sold by its owners (the proletariat) in return for a wage equal to the value of the goods required to maintain the existence and ensure the reproduction of labour power itself. In class terms this is expressed in the contradiction between the bourgeoisie (those who own capital and control the means of production) and the proletariat (those who expend their labour power on those means of production). Apart from “the bounties of nature”, labour is the source of all wealth. Only labour power can turn raw materials into commodities. All commodities have both a use value and an exchange value. Capitalists are only interested in the former insofar as it enables them to be sold to acquire the latter. It is the capitalised exchange value, as represented by the surplus value produced by workers’ labour power, which is the source of capitalism’s profits. The attempt by capital to acquire more and more surplus value from the labour force is the basis for the class struggle between bourgeois and proletarian, between capitalism and the working class. This is no less true today, in the so-called post-industrial society when capitalist spokesmen are telling us that the working class has disappeared, than it was in the nineteenth century, when a new breed of capitalist economists denied that labour power was the source of value. The fundamental class contradictions remain, irrespective of the technological changes which have taken place under capitalism and, indeed, precisely because of them.

The volatile development of the productive forces of the last fifty years has intensified the exploitation of the labour force enormously. As exploitation has increased, so has the the fall in the rate of profit as well as poverty on a global scale for increasingly huge numbers of the working class. Never before has the prophetic image included by Marx and Engels in the 1848 Manifesto proved to be so true:

Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange, and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells.

The Communist Manifesto

So if on the one hand technological development leads to the fall in the rate of profit, creating problems in the process of capital valorisation, which are the basis of the perennial crisis in which we live, on the other hand it has as a direct consequence the intensification of exploitation, the poisoning of the world, deforestation, pollution, environmental devastation of land and seas (e.g., the "continents" of plastic scattered in the oceans). This means a process of mass extinction of flora and fauna, the release of immense amounts of CO2 into the atmosphere that accelerate the climate emergency and, with it, the processes of desertification, the scarcity of water and the forced migration of hundreds of millions of human beings from natural environments that, from the Poles to the Equator, become increasingly less habitable. All this is a direct result of capitalism, all this will get worse as long as capitalism continues to be the dominant mode of production, it can only be addressed by overcoming capitalist exploitation whatever the precise form it takes.

"The proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class" (*The Communist Manifesto*) but only when it acts in concert to end class society and with it all exploitation and oppression. That oppression, whether passed on from previous modes of production or having arisen out of contradictions of capitalist society, which expresses itself in all forms of social domination, prejudice, bigotry, misery, slavery, degradation, and discrimination, is a useful tool for the ruling class to attack the most vulnerable in society (as seen in the lower wages of women and immigrants) whilst dividing the working class as a whole. This means we have to fight all forms of oppression, such as those founded in racial and gender relations, which weaken class solidarity and mystify capitalist relations.

State Capitalism

The basic antagonism between the social nature of work and the restricted ownership of property remains, irrespective of the precise legal form of bourgeois ownership of the means of production on the one hand and the changing form of the social character of wage labour on the other. Whilst classical (Western) capitalism was characterised in the nineteenth century by the individual capitalist extorting surplus value directly from his factory workers, in the twentieth century this gave way to new forms of capitalist control. State ownership of the most important means of production has not altered their capitalist nature as the property of finance capital, which is the real form of capital in the imperialist era. Nor does the predominance of national and multi-national monopolies in the form of joint-stock companies (acting as "social" capital) mean the end of capitalism's basic contradictions but rather exacerbates and extends them by giving them an international dimension. Engels recognised this long ago when he explained that:

... the transformation, either into joint-stock companies (and trusts), or into state ownership, does not do away with the capitalistic nature of the productive forces. In the joint-stock companies (and trusts) this is obvious. And the modern state, again, is only the organisation that bourgeois society takes in order to support the general external conditions of the capitalist mode of production against the encroachments as well of the workers as of individual capitalists. The modern state, no matter what its form, is essentially a capitalist machine, the state of the capitalists, the ideal personification of the total national capital. The more it

proceeds to take over the productive forces, the more does it actually become the collective capitalist, the more citizens does it exploit. The workers remain wage-workers — proletarians. The capitalist relation is not done away with.

Anti-Dühring

Thus, those countries which we were told not so long ago were socialist were in fact nothing more than a particular form of state capitalism: where the state directly controlled the material means of production and held a monopoly over the market. The miserable end of the USSR only confirms this analysis developed by the Communist Left (and based on the critique of political economy, or Marxism) during the long years which separated the October Revolution from the collapse of the Russian bloc. The tragic identification of state ownership with socialism has been brought to an end now that so-called “really existing socialism” has joined with the current organisational and legal set-up of global capitalism.

The Imperialist Epoch

The former USSR and the states aligned with it comprised an imperialist bloc. The collapse of that bloc has opened up a new chapter in the history of world capitalism but it is a chapter which is part of the story of capitalist imperialism. The First World War, the product of competition between the capitalist states, marked a definitive turning point in capitalism’s development. It showed that the process of capital concentration and centralisation had reached such proportions that henceforward the cyclical crises which had always been an intrinsic part of the process of capital accumulation would be global crises, resolvable only by world war. In short, it confirmed that capitalism had entered a new historical era, the era of imperialism where every state is part of a global capitalist economy and cannot escape the laws which govern that economy. Imperialism is therefore not merely a policy of the stronger capitalist powers applied against the weak, it is the inescapable process by which the financial and industrial tentacles of the highly developed capitalist centres absorb surplus value from the peripheral areas. This process recognises no state frontiers and commands no national loyalties from the indigenous bourgeoisie of the peripheral zones. These latter are part of an international capitalist class and are just as enmeshed in the machinations of international finance capital as the bourgeoisie of the traditional (and newer) capitalist metropolises.

The Present Period

The present period is characterised, as already mentioned, by the longest and largest structural crisis in the history of capitalism. Although it always operates, it is only since the beginning of the 1970s that the effect of the fall in the profit rate has been heavily felt, as part of an infernal cycle from which world capitalism shows that it cannot emerge.

The paradox that current capitalist society is going through is that, despite a technological potential that has no counterpart in the history of humanity, it is producing more and more, but at lower rates of growth, with a diminishing part of this wealth allocated to the “welfare state”.

The fall in the rate of profit pushes capital down the road towards speculation at the expense of productive investment. Frequent stock market bubbles, the consequent financial crises, the indebtedness of companies, states and families, have been and are the most evident effects, together with the progressive aggression against direct, indirect and deferred wages everywhere. Equally characteristic of the current period are wars that, ever present and devastating as the economic crises that generate them, have become a permanent feature of capitalism. Today, the war solution appears to be the most important means of resolving the problem of capital devaluation (i.e. by destroying value in order to rebuild) and the only possible way to open up a new cycle of accumulation, with ever greater concentration of industrial capital (means of production) and centralisation of financial capital.

The state thus continues to get into debt in the futile attempt to stem the crisis by kickstarting production. To date, the long shadow of the 2008 crash continues to extend its effects across the capitalist system in anticipation of the next, even more devastating, global crisis.

Social Democracy

The opening of capitalism's imperialist epoch, with its infernal cycle of global war — reconstruction — crisis, also put the possibility of a higher form of society (communism) on the historical agenda. This was dramatically confirmed in October 1917 when the Russian proletariat seized power as the first part of the European and world-wide revolutionary wave which emerged from the blood-letting and devastation of the First World War. However, the experience of this period no less dramatically confirmed the bankruptcy of the majority of the old parties of the Second International who not only condoned the mutual massacre of proletarians when they supported their "own" nation states in the imperialist war but also did their utmost to suppress revolution in the name of socialism during the insurrectionary outbreaks which brought that War to an end.

Thus, today we can see there is a marked difference between proletarian political organisations of the period before October and those in the period following it. During capitalism's rise and consolidation as the dominant mode of production bourgeois nationalist or anti-despotic movements provided the framework for the mobilisation of masses of European proletarians which in turn facilitated the formation of vast trade union and party organisations. Within these organs the working class was able to express its separate class identity by putting forward its own demands, albeit within the framework of existing bourgeois social and political relations. At the same time the revolutionary theories of Marx and Engels achieved recognition and became an established part of proletarian political life, even though the mainstream social democratic forces never acted according to the political precepts of Marxism. For these socialist parties the revolution Marx had foreseen remained a distant goal which would be achieved some day in the future by unspecified means. Socialism remained the "glorious future" for which they were theoretically struggling but in practice the strategic objective which defined their tactics became, not the assault on power, but increasingly parliamentary elections, the eight hour day, freedom of organisation, etc.

With social democracy's identification with imperialism in 1914 the working class movement reached a decisive turning point. This resulted in the complete separation of communists from the bogus forces of reformism which, through the Second International (1889-1914), had dominated the mass movement. The foundation of the Third International, proclaiming the opening of the era of world proletarian revolution, signalled the victory of the original principles of Marxism. Communist activity was now aimed solely at the overthrow of the capitalist state in order to create the conditions for the construction of a new society.

The epoch of imperialism is the era of the universal nature of capitalist domination and this demands a more direct and universal revolutionary strategy. The proletarian revolution and the installation of the dictatorship of the proletariat are the basic tenets of the International. Differences in specific situations, or more precisely the diversity of social and political forms of bourgeois domination throughout the world call for different tactical approaches. Nevertheless, the tactics of the proletariat's international organisation will always be defined on the basis of its universal revolutionary programme. The era of democratic struggles ended a long time ago and they cannot be repeated in the present imperialist epoch.

Parliament

Communists have no illusions that workers' freedom can be won through electing a majority in parliament. In the first place it is an illusion of "parliamentary cretinism" (*Eighteenth Brumaire*) to believe that the ruling class would peacefully stand by whilst we legislated in socialism. Parliamentary democracy is only the fig leaf to disguise the dictatorship of the capitalist class. The real organs of power in democratic capitalist society lie outside Parliament with the state bureaucracy, its security

forces and the controllers of the means of production. Parliament is useful to the bourgeoisie in that it gives the illusion that workers choose who is to misrule them. As such revolutionaries oppose parliamentary elections by calling for the workers to fight on their own class terrain. It is up to the party of revolutionaries to show that only through the destruction of capitalism and its state organs is it possible for the working class to secure complete freedom of expression and organisation. This will take the form of workers' councils in which delegates will not simply be elected by workers but recallable by them. Once they have carried out the suppression of capitalist relations, the councils will have abolished classes and thus any need for the state. They will thus transform themselves from a body with semi-state functions into a mere administrator of the economy. This is what we mean when we talk of "the withering away of the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat".

Trade Unions

Trades unions are organs of mediation between labour and capital. They arose as negotiators of the terms of sale of workers' labour power. They are not, and have never been, useful instruments for the overthrow of capitalism. In the imperialist era, the unions, regardless of their social composition, are organisations that work for the preservation of capitalism especially at the most crucial moments when it is under threat. Rank and file or "base" unions, which claim to be a radical alternative, and which almost everywhere arise in opposition to the official trade unions, end up as blunt weapons because they are also part of a contractual logic, often in conflict with each other, thus dividing the class. Unable to escape this logic of negotiation to support revolutionary class struggle, they inevitably end up as a barrier to the spread of the proletarian struggle and, above all, to the maturation of political consciousness and a revolutionary and anti-capitalist organisation. From this it follows that it is impossible for revolutionaries to conquer the unions or to transform them into organs for revolution. Everywhere the proletarian revolution will have to fight the unions as they will be bastions of the counter-revolution.

The experience of the last revolutionary wave, and the counter-revolution that followed, made it absolutely clear to revolutionary Marxists that the union is not, nor can it be, the organ of mass struggle in which the political minority of the class (the party) works to get across its programme and slogans to the working class as a whole. Such mass organs, which communist theory has traditionally understood as organs of both struggle and power, appear in situations of rising class struggle. Historically they have appeared in the form of the commune or soviet (council). Just as communists can only reach a position of political leadership in exceptional situations so — and because of this — the mass organs which the working class creates, and which make communist leadership possible, are born only in periods of mounting struggle.

Yet, outside of such situations the party has to develop its work of political leadership and development of the advance guard of the class. It is the permanent duty of communists to take part in workers' struggles, to stimulate them and to point the way forward. The possibility of the favourable development of struggles away from the immediate level from which they spring onto the wider arena of a political struggle against capital depends on the active presence of communists inside the workplaces. It is the task of the communist organisation to find a means of organising the most conscious workers in the workplace, not for trade union activity but as a direct link between the party and the broad mass of the working class.

National Liberation Struggles

The First Imperialist War in 1914 ended the era of history when national liberation was progressive for the capitalist world. The global character of capitalism in the imperialist epoch means that the apparent diversity of social formations in the world is not the reflection of a variety of different modes of production. Thus there is no need for the proletariat to adopt different strategies for revolutionary action in different parts of the globe. Marx's work had already drawn a distinction between the mode of production and the social formations more or less corresponding to it. The historical experience of class society confirms that different social formations, the product of different histories, can exist under the capitalist mode of production but they all nevertheless are dominated by imperialism, which

makes use of national, ethnic and cultural differences to maintain its own existence. Just as the social strata and traditions differ in various regions and countries, so does the way in which the bourgeoisie dominates politically. However, in every case the real power which they represent is the same: that of capitalism. Any idea that the national question is still open in some regions of the world and that therefore the proletariat can relegate its own revolutionary strategy and tactics to the background in favour of an alliance with the national bourgeoisie (or worse with one of the imperialist fronts) has to be absolutely rejected. Only when the proletariat unites to defend its own class interests will the basis of all national oppressions be undermined and the revolutionary organisation rejects all attempts to prevent class solidarity by ideologies of religious, racial or cultural separateness.

Revolution and Counter-Revolution

The defeat of the European revolutionary movement and the nature of the counter-revolution in Russia posed problems for revolutionary Marxists as they tried to understand the lessons of the whole experience in the period up to the Second World War. The counter-revolutionary process was reflected in the Third International with the imposition of the necessity to defend the Russian state and its constituent parties and at the same time the retreat of those parties back towards social democratic strategy and tactics. This process of degeneration was followed by Trotsky and his acolytes during the Thirties as shown by Trotsky's policy of entryism into social democratic and labour parties (the so-called "French turn"). This, and Trotskyism's support for the USSR's imperialist ambitions, wiped out Trotskyism as a potentially revolutionary current. It remained for others to draw the lessons of the defeat. Despite the pro-Russian stance of the now Stalinised Communist Parties, and the withering away of the great Bolshevik experience in the soil of state capitalism, the lessons drawn by the Communist Left about the imperialist and state capitalist nature of Russia prevented the communist programme from entirely disappearing with that experience. This meant that even during the second imperialist war an independent party of the working class could emerge with the formation of the Internationalist Communist Party in Italy in 1943.

The Degeneration of the Russian Revolution and the Comintern

The revolutionary process which began with the October victory in Russia ended when the Russian state turned in on itself in defence of its capitalist economic foundations. This was the result of the isolation of Soviet Russia and the defeat of the waves of proletarian struggle in the main European countries. This experience has demonstrated for Marxists once and for all that socialism in one country is impossible. No socialist or revolutionary state can exist outside of a real international revolutionary process. This is not to say that when a proletarian insurrection has been successful in a particular country that it cannot express real proletarian power. It does mean, however, that unless revolutionary movements elsewhere are successful and open up the concrete possibility of beginning the construction of new social relations, it will be impossible for that fledgling power to hold out.

By the second half of the Twenties the Comintern was totally dominated by the Russian Party, and it was no longer a centralised means for pursuing the strategic and tactical needs of the international working class. What was left of the potential for revolution in Europe and in China was undermined by Comintern policies which were now subservient to the [CPSU] state's need for self-preservation. In the USSR itself the break in the revolutionary process led to the strengthening of an anti-working class dictatorship under Stalin based on capitalist social relations. The development of such a regime in a country as large as the USSR meant its re-emergence as a major imperialist power. It was with this character that the Stalinist state and the various national-communist parties participated, first in the war in Spain, then in the Second World War. Following the Second World War the countries of Eastern Europe were taken over by Russian imperialism and adopted the Stalinist state capitalist model. The failure of perestroika and the collapse of this bloc was not the signal that a "workers' state" had finally completed its degeneration but evidence of the extent of the capitalist crisis in the weaker "superpower".

China

In China a different process led to the same result: a state capitalist regime which, even today is still searching for its “true” role within the international alliance system of imperialism. The essential difference in Chinese history is that it has never had a proletarian revolution to compare with the Russian October of 1917. The history of the present Chinese regime begins with the tragic defeat of the proletarian movement in Canton and Shanghai in 1927. This was followed by a national war conducted by a bloc of classes in which the peasantry acted as the shock troops. It ended with the establishment of a regime under Stalinist auspices and based on the same kind of highly centralised state capitalist relations.

This regime, which broke away from the Russian sphere of influence in the Sixties under the banner of neo-Stalinism, found itself turning to the US in the 1970s. Both these apparently contradictory moves stemmed from attempts to maintain control of the economy and encourage capital accumulation. At no time has China been a proletarian power and the ideology of Maoism was nothing but the means for dragooning the masses into sacrificing their interests for the benefit of the national capital.

Party, State and Class — the Lesson of the Counter-Revolution

These experiences of the counter-revolution oblige revolutionaries to deepen their understanding of the problems of the relationship between state, party and class. Whilst the role played by the former revolutionary party in the Russian counter-revolution has led many would-be revolutionaries to reject the idea of a class party altogether, the question is not so simple. The class party is indispensable to the proletariat’s revolutionary struggle for the very reason that it is the political and organised expression of class consciousness. It contains the politically most advanced part of the working class organised to defend the programme of emancipation for the entire proletariat and to lead the whole class towards the overthrow of capitalism. By definition the revolutionary party will always be a minority of the proletariat and yet the communist programme it defends can only be implemented by the working class as a whole. During the revolution the party will aim to take the political lead by putting forward its programme in the mass organs of the working class. Just as revolutionary consciousness without a party is unthinkable, the lesson of the Russian experience is that even the most class conscious party cannot maintain a revolution in isolation from the soviets (or similar mass organs of the working class). The soviets are the expression of working class political power (the dictatorship of the proletariat) and their decline and marginalisation from political life in Russia symbolised the strangling of the infant soviet state by the capitalist counter-revolution. The power that remained in the hands of the Bolshevik commissars as they became isolated from an exhausted and decimated working class was the power of a capitalist state. In the future world revolution the international party must aim to lead the revolutionary movement exclusively through the mass class organs which it encourages to come into being. However, there are no formal guarantees of victory and the revolutionary party cannot tie its hands in advance by erecting mechanistic barriers based on the fear of defeat. Neither the party nor the soviets are in themselves insurance against counter-revolution. The only real guarantee of victory is the class consciousness of the working masses themselves and the continuous spreading of the international revolution.

The Revolutionary International

The International — or the political organisations which precede it — comprises the most conscious part of the proletariat who are organised to defend the programme for the emancipation of the entire working class. Using the tools of Marxism, it draws on the political lessons of the historical experience of the class in order to elaborate this programme and define a strategy and tactics consistent with it. The world party of the future will have the task of wrenching away the masses from the reactionary influence of the various divisive counter-revolutionary and nationalist tendencies which hold sway over the working class. When the working masses — under pressure from the material contradictions of capitalism’s global crisis — appear once more on the historical scene in collision with their exploiters, the party will find the conditions to fully carry out its principal task. This is to win over the masses to the communist programme and gain political leadership of the struggle in order to lead it forward to the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist state.

The revolution, therefore, will only succeed if the revolutionary organisation — the International standing at the head of the class — is adequately developed and prepared for its own frontal assault against the political enemies of the revolutionary programme. We therefore reject schemes which relegate the birth of the party to the very moment of the revolution itself or which limit its tasks to propaganda and simply “preaching” of revolution.

Despite the onus on proletarian political forces to organise now the circumstances in which they find themselves impose severe limitations on their capacity to influence the broad masses. Throughout the imperialist epoch bourgeois domination over society has been refined and extended until it has encompassed almost every aspect of life. Alongside the most extreme forms of concentration of the means of production in the hands of imperialist finance capital, the political and ideological domination of the bourgeoisie is unparalleled. What Marx stated more than a century ago is more true than ever today:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every age the ruling ideas: i.e. the class which is the dominant material force in society is at the same time its dominant intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that in consequence the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are, in general, subject to it. The dominant ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas, and thus of the relationships which make one class the ruling one; they are consequently the ideas of its dominance.

The German Ideology

Under conditions of social peace, and especially in the imperialist heartlands where the bourgeoisie's domination is most extensive and advanced, this means the proletariat is subjected to the full weight of bourgeois ideology and organisations. This, in turn, imposes a marked separation between the proletariat as a whole and the political expression of its historical struggle: the communist party. It is periods of economic and social crisis which can lead to a break in the ideological and political hold of the bourgeoisie. Until then the revolutionary programme and the political organisations represented by it will exist under conditions of forced separation from the class. It is a separation which cannot be overcome simply by an act of will or by simple organisational means.

Nevertheless, the cycle of accumulation which began after the Second World War is nearing its end. The post-war boom has long since given way to global economic crisis. Once again the question of imperialist war or the proletarian revolution is being placed on the historical agenda and imposes on revolutionaries throughout the world the need to close ranks. In the epoch of global monopoly capitalism no country can escape the forces which drive capitalism to war. Capitalism's ineluctable drive towards war is expressed today in the universal attack on the working and living conditions of the proletariat. The material conditions for an international proletarian struggle against their exploiters therefore exist. The necessity and possibility of a communist revolution also exist. What is absent is the revolutionary International to prepare for such a struggle.

The above points show it is time to work actively for the construction of the international revolutionary party. The task of combating the political subjection of the working class to the forces of reaction and war must be developed as effectively as the meagre forces of the revolutionaries allow. This demands their organisation and centralisation on an international scale. The process of moving from today's fragmentary struggles of revolutionary forces scattered throughout the globe to tomorrow's political and military battles of the international revolutionary party demands the maximum of effort by communists to secure political homogenisation as well as attract new members.

The formation of the International Party of the Proletariat will come about through the dissolution of the various “national” or regional organisations which have worked together and are in agreement

about the platform and programme for revolution. The ICT aims to be the focus for co-ordination and unification of these organisations. Its statutes will provide the basis for the organisational homogenisation which will eventually result in the dissolution of the individual affiliated bodies and their centralisation into a genuinely international structure. Then the ICT will have completed the task it has set itself.

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