

COMMUNIST REVIEW

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**Organ of the International Bureau
for the Revolutionary Party**

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WHERE HAVE WE COME FROM AND WHERE ARE WE GOING?

A LITTLE HISTORY

The International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party (IBRP) was initiated by the Partito Comunista Internazionalista (Battaglia Comunista) in Italy and the Communist Workers Organisation (CWO) in Britain, with the help of some comrades in France. Its creation marked the end of the first stage of the political work which began in 1976, and which is summarised below.

In 1976 the P.C.Int. (Battaglia) launched an appeal to all those groups which, in one way or another, followed the heritage and acquisitions of the communist left, in order to re-open the dialogue and debate between these groups on an international scale. The Communist Left, which was rich in experience and in the heritage of an indisputably remarkable theoretical elaboration, was the only political area within which it was possible to track down and re-unite the threads of the Marxist method and programme of action. However, the revolutionaries within this area found themselves dispersed and politically and organisationally divided in the face of the re-emergence of capital's cyclical crisis and simultaneously, the re-emergence of the historical alternative: war or revolution.

Faced with the need to close ranks and re-launch, in a systematic and organised way, revolutionary political work within the world proletariat, revolutionaries were confronted by a multiplicity of unconnected groups and organisations. These groups and organisations were divided by theoretical and political differences but at the same time they often ignored the existence and nature of these differences. Concentrating on either "localism" or theoretical abstractions, they were therefore incapable of developing a role in the events which were then beginning, and are now taking place.

Thus one could not properly speak of a revolutionary camp, but only of a proletarian political area - which is nevertheless distinct from the swamp of Stalinism, Trotskyism and the "new left", all of which are parts of bourgeois leftism. The revolutionaries inside this proletarian area had not yet begun to recognise themselves and unite.

This is not the place to go into the causes of this situation once again. They have been dealt with at length in the presses of our national organisations. The fact is that this situation had to be sorted out, and therefore it was necessary to do everything that could be done to change this. At the same time it was necessary to remain aware of the limits which constrain the will of men and organisations when they attempt to alter a reality which is the result of definite historical events.

The P.C.Int responded to this necessity by calling the First International Conference of groups which recognised the following criteria:-

- *acceptance of the October revolution as a proletarian one.
- *recognition of the break with Social Democracy brought about by the first and second Congresses of the Communist International.
- *rejection without reservation of state capitalism and self management.
- *recognition of the Socialist and Communist parties as bourgeois parties.
- *rejection of all policies which subject the proletariat to the national bourgeoisie.
- *an orientation towards the organisation of revolutionaries recognising Marxist doctrine and methodology as proletarian science.

The first Conference saw the participation of the International Communist Current (ICC) in addition to the P.C.Int. With the former, important differences emerged immediately on fundamental issues such as consciousness, and consequently on matters dealing with the role of the Party and the relationship between the Party and the class.

In the second and third conferences such divergences manifested themselves more and more seriously and the polemic which sprang from them was certainly incapable of serving as a basis for serious work towards rapprochement. In the meantime other groups had adhered to and participated in the second and third conferences. The CWO, which had already adhered to the First Conference and sent its own theses for discussion, but had been unable to participate because of technical difficulties, participated fully in the second and third conferences.

However, a great positive result was achieved; the ice was broken; it was clear to everyone, now, that there are no revolutionary politics that would not see every group strengthened by the recognition of others in different countries, discussing and considering the politics and positions of these groups.

International relations, from press exchanges to direct discussions, are now a fait accompli for the groups, as for the individual militants, in all countries.

Among the more politically advanced groups with the greater experience, on the other hand, steps forward were made in the process of clarification. It emerged clearly that the CWO and the PCInt occupied common ground, which was substantially different from that of the ICC. The first represented a coherently Marxist tendency against the neo-councilist tendency of the ICC, in which "anti-substitutionism" is theorised, masking the substantial workerism of that organisation and its inability to engage in any revolutionary activity beyond abstract phrase mongering. The positions and polemics inside the first three conferences have all been documented in the material produced by the conferences themselves. These documents and the discussion minutes are still available for anyone to read.

There was a disparity, however, between the level of the battle between these two tendencies and the capacity or desire of the other groups to take sides or even positions. Waiting for the best possible moment to force a decision on this issue would have meant drowning the entire initiative of the Conferences in a sea of polemics which had already reached the level of mere intellectual abstraction. It would have placed the conferences in an almost total impasse in the face of growing problems of the real intervention of revolutionaries in this struggle.

Beyond the specific themes and forms assumed by this break, in the dynamic of the conferences, it became clear that the first step had to be taken to decant the revolutionary forces which existed within the wider proletarian camp.

The third conference formalised this break with the ICC's refusal to accept the new additional criterion for admission to the conferences which was proposed by the PCInt and supported by the CWO. This was:-

*recognition of international meetings as a part of the work of debate among revolutionary groups for coordination 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 direction of the revolutionary class movement and of proletarian power itself.

The PCInt and CWO drew a common critical evaluation from this experience, and subsequently, having moved closer together on the theoretical plane, called a fourth conference (London Oct1982). They did this knowing that the number of adhering groups would be fewer. Actually, of the groups invited, only the SUCM (supporters abroad of the Iranian group the UCM) adhered to the conference.

The subsequent course of this organisation was such as to exclude its participation in the next conference (which will be called by the Bureau). But even such experiences provided the organisations now constituting the IBRP with material helpful for their political homogenisation.

As well as in the fourth conference, the PCInt and CWO have again taken up and discussed on the political and theoretical plane the problem of the actual organisation of the future International Party. The general terms of the answers given to this problem have been put down in a resolution passed by the fifth congress of the PCInt (31 October - 2nd Nov 1982). The constitution of the bureau is based on this resolution.

With the constitution of the IBRP the existence of a precise revolutionary tendency inside the proletarian political camp has essentially been defined.

THE BUREAU AND THE CONFERENCES

Within the Conferences there converged, met and clashed groups and organisations which, although belonging to the proletarian political camp delimited by the criteria given above, are not yet necessarily homogeneous on the political level.

Instead, the groups adhering to the Bureau recognise a platform which, is already part of the synthesis of the individual platforms of groups on the national level. That is, the groups whose platforms are already homogeneous with the Bureau's adhere to it. Equally, those militants who live in a country where there is no organisation adhering to the Bureau, and who belong to no other group, but adhere to the positions and politics of the Bureau will relate to the Bureau. This is the case with the comrades in France, who, in the political and organisational ferment in the proletarian political area in this country, intend to establish the basis for an organisational revival of the revolutionary movement rooted in the organic positions now expressed by the IBRP. As full militants of the supra-national organisation, the French comrades will work along the lines expressed in the "Statutes" (the most significant parts of which we publish here), in order to facilitate the birth of a communist organisation which will engage in the real political battles on the national and international scene on the basis of the IBRP's principles; such an organisation will work towards the establishment of the conditions for the International Party of the Proletariat and thus be a potential national section of such a party.

The IBRP will call and participate in International conferences as such, that is, as the supra-national representative of the individual adhering organisations.

The Bureau is for the party. Therefore it is not that Party. In the platform there is more exhaustive exposition of the significance of this. What should be underlined here is the role which it should follow in the specific present situation.

THE GENERAL SITUATION AND THE PERSPECTIVES FOR THE CLASS

Let us begin by examining class relations. It is obvious to all that there is an enormous disproportion between the level reached by the crisis and the consequent manace of imperialist war on the one hand, and the proletarian response to this crisis on the other. Capital's real domination over production and distribution becomes more and more a total domination over social and civil relations. Capital's political forces - from its parties to the unions - have, as the political embodiment of bourgeois ideology, deeply penetrated the body of the working class, and, as such an embodiment they suffocate at birth the destructive pressures emerging from the world of production and exchange.

Strikes which suddenly break out in workshops, factories and sometimes even in an entire branch of the national production, do not find the proper soil for their extension because the sense of solidarity, of class unity is strangled by nationalism, by the idea of changing things in one firm at a time, by individualism, in fact, by those forms of bourgeois ideology that the left of the bourgeoisie has instilled among the workers. The left of the bourgeoisie and its domination over the class are the instrument and the form in which what Marx called the reification of social relations concretely appears. They are the material instruments of capital's totalitarianism and must be considered as such, without merely making facile and vacuous denunciations.

But the contradictions persist and as Marxists we know that they cannot be contained for eternity. The explosion of these contradictions is not necessarily the victorious revolution. War is capital's way of "controlling", of temporarily resolving, that is,, of blocking its contradictions.

However, there always remains the possibility that the bourgeoisie's political and ideological grip on the working class may be broken. In other words, sudden huge waves of workers struggle may occur, and revolutionaries should be prepared for these.

When the class once more takes the initiative in the struggle, beginning by violently reacting to the attacks directed at it, it needs to find within itself its revolutionary political forces so that it is in a position to conduct the necessary political and organisational battles against the forces of the left bourgeoisie. If this condition is not fulfilled, the next wave of struggle not only will not lead to a victorious revolution but will not even constitute a positive step towards the revolution.

The successive waves of struggle will be preparatory for the revolutionary assault when and if the programme and organisation of revolutionaries emerges strengthened from them; when and if the revolutionary programme (and the organisation carrying it) is able, through the struggle itself, to sink deeper roots into the working class.

1905 was preparatory for 1917, in the sense that the revolutionary programme which led to 1917 emerged strengthened from the battles of 1905.

There is no guarantee that there will be another episode of generalised conflict resulting in the defeat of the class, in order to have a strengthening effect, on the revolutionary forces vis-a-vis the opportunists, which is a precondition for a subsequent victorious struggle. But, if there is not an immediate victory, it is necessary to at least be able to politically capitalise on the defeat by ensuring it leads to a great revival of the revolutionary forces in the heart of the class.

If this does not happen, the defeat would assume general historical importance, driving back the revolutionary movement by decades and paving

capitalism's way towards barbarism.

The constitution of the IBRP is a political achievement within the revolutionary movement considering the relationship between it and the perspectives for the working class. It is thus a concrete step towards the securing of more positive political conditions for the perspectives for the class.

The constitution of the IBRP occurs at a time when the proletarian political camp is being violently shaken by a crisis which has been the source of much discussion and much confusion. In reality, this crisis is nothing new. For some time it has been nurtured by the enormous contradiction between the capitalist crisis on the one hand and, on the other, the already mentioned persistent stagnation of the class and the political forces which relate to it.

This contradiction is, to some extent, felt in all countries, and many organisations of the proletarian political camp have given up under its weight because they have not been capable of understanding or explaining it. Now it is obvious that they could not have withstood it.

Groups with a long tradition like the Partito Comunista Internazionale (sic) (Programma Comunista) have gone completely to pieces, sinking into the marsh of petit bourgeois leftism, because they launched themselves on the search for subjective solutions to this contradiction. Others, like the ICC, have fallen into more of a total political impasse because they are without a programme for, or even an adequate first response to, the drama of these historic times, when there is the perspective of new situations.

Nothing can be expected to come from this stirring up of the proletarian political camp unless within it there is a determined delineation of a politically and theoretically firm front, which all should, in one way or another, take account of and debate with.

The foundation of the IBRP responds to this need, with all the limits placed upon this response by the finite strength of the organisations constituting it.

This magazine is the international mouthpiece of this tendency and the primary instrument of its political and theoretical confrontation with all those, whether individual militants or organisations, who work within the proletarian political camp.

The Bureau will conduct in these pages its public discussion with other tendencies and organisations in the conviction, now historically and politically confirmed, that, irrespective of the individuals and the formal configuration of the organisations constituting it, its principles and positions are the only consistent point of departure for the construction of the International Party of the Proletariat.

PLATFORM AND STATUTES OF THE INTERNATIONAL BUREAU FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. The capitalist mode of production is characterised by the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production. In class terms this is expressed in the contradiction between the bourgeoisie (the owners of the means of production) and the proletariat (which exercises its labour power on those means of production).

Independently of the form of bourgeois ownership of the means of production or the degree of socialisation of labour in any period, the objective contradiction which exists throughout capitalism's history remains unchanged. This was discovered by scientific socialism (marxism), and outlined in the Manifesto of the Communist Party.

"The essential condition for the existence, and for the sway of the bourgeois class, is the formation and augmentation of capital; the condition for capital is wage labour. Wage labour rests exclusively on competition between the labourers. The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the labourers, due to competition, by their revolutionary combination, due to association. The development of Modern Industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie, therefore, produces, above all, is its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable."

2. The contradiction between the social character of labour and the private ownership of the means of production grows with the changing form of this social character on the one hand and of property on the other. The ownership by the state of the most important means of production doesn't alter their nature as the private property of finance capital, which is the real form of capital in the imperialist era. Thus the rule of national and multi-national monopolies in the form of joint-stock companies (acting as 'social' capital) doesn't do away with but rather exacerbates the fundamental contradictions of capitalism and gives them an international dimension. Those countries, therefore, where the leading gangs talk of "socialism" are in fact nothing but state capitalist. State capitalism is the most advanced form of capitalist domination over society. This has been confirmed by the communist left's analysis of the events during the decades which separate us from the October Revolution.

3. With the continued sharpening of society's objective contradictions, bourgeois domination is refined and extended until it has encompassed the whole of society. Alongside the most exaggerated forms of concentration of the means of production in the hands of imperialist finance capital, the political domination of the bourgeoisie extends into all aspects of social life to an unparalleled degree. What Marx stated more than a century ago is today more true than ever.

"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 express-

ion 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 in particular 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 forces. This, in turn, means a marked separation between the proletariat as a whole and the theoretical and political expression of its historical struggle: the communist party.

4. The "reification of social relations" in proletarian consciousness is transformed into their desire for its overthrow only at certain historical moments. For Marx, as for us, "the class which overthrows it (i.e. the ruling class)... can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew". The proletariat experiences total alienation which

"...can, of course, only be abolished given two practical premisses. For it to become an "intolerable" power, i.e. a power against which men make a revolution, it must necessarily have rendered the great mass of humanity 'propertyless', and produced, at the same time, the contradiction of an existing world of wealth and culture." (The German Ideology)

Such a world of wealth and culture means the development of international economic relations and the consequent increase of competition. The victims of this competition are those who have been excluded from any form of ownership or control over the means of production. It is periods of crisis which could lead to the break in the ideological and political domination of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie. Until then, the revolutionary programme, the strategy and the organisation which represents them, exists under conditions of forced separation from the class. This separation, despite our revolutionary duty to end it by working to penetrate the heart of the class, cannot be overcome by a simple act of will or by simple organisational means.

5. Thus there is a marked difference between revolutionary communist organisations of the period before the October Revolution and those in the period after it. It is in precisely this respect that we say that Marx is more relevant today than ever. In capitalism's period of ascendance, in its period of revolution and consolidation, bourgeois nationalist or anti-despotic movements provided the framework for the mobilisation of huge masses of European proletarians and in turn facilitated the formation of vast trade union and party organisations. Within these organs the class gave immediate expression to its own separateness as a class, by putting forward demands to the state itself, i.e. within the framework of existing bourgeois political relations. The revolutionary theories of Marx and Engels achieved recognition and established their existence by working through these organisations though these forces never conformed to the practical or political precepts of Marxism. The revolution Marx pointed to remained for the socialist parties only a distant goal which would be reached in one way or another, sooner or later. Though socialism was the "glorious future" for which they were theoretically struggling, in fact the strategic objective to which tactics were subordinated became, not the assault on power, but more and more, elections, the eight hour day, freedom of organisation, etc..

It was in the imperialist epoch, and particularly with the emergence of its dramatic alternative of war or revolution, that the communist movement reached one of the most decisive moments of its maturation: its complete separation from the bogus forces which dominated the mass movement. The birth of the Third International, proclaiming the opening

of the era of proletarian revolution, signalled the final victory of the original principles of Marxism in the proletarian political movement, i.e. communist activity was now aimed solely at the violent overthrow of capitalism in order to create the conditions for the construction of a new society.

6. The counter-revolution in Russia, and the way in which it was reflected in the Third International with the return of the mass parties to counter-revolutionary theory and practice, whilst posing enormous new questions to Marxist minorities about communist politics and ideas, has also eliminated all ambiguity about the relationships between class, class consciousness and the communist party. The theoretical and political solutions to the problems connected with the withering away of the great Bolshevik experience in the soil of state capitalism allowed the re-organisation of tiny minorities around the theory and programme of communism. Even during the whirlwind of the second imperialist war there emerged a party which was opposed on the political, theoretical and organisational levels to all the bourgeois parties which operated both inside and outside the working class.

7. The class party is the specific and irrepressible organ of the proletariat's revolutionary struggle for the very reason that it is the political organ of the class. It contains the most conscious and advanced part of the proletariat and it expresses and defends the programme of emancipation of the entire proletariat. Using the tools of Marxism it draws from the historical experiences of the class the political lessons needed to elaborate this programme of emancipation in terms of a strategy and tactics which are consistent with it. The party has the task of wrenching the masses away from the illusory and reactionary influences of the various national "communist" and "socialist" tendencies by developing the weapons of revolutionary theory and the material means of action. In the period of capitalism's global social crisis, when the working masses, under the pressure of material contradictions, reappear on the historical scene in collision with their bourgeois exploiters, the party finds the conditions to fully carry out its task; the conquest of the masses political leadership in order to lead them in their revolution against the bourgeois state. The proletariat will complete its revolution only if it drives out of its midst the more or less camouflaged bourgeois and opportunist forces; only if, in its enthusiasm for struggle, it accepts the programme for the revolution. The revolution, therefore, will only succeed if the party has adequately developed its tasks of preparation and its own frontal assault against the various political enemies of the revolutionary programme; it will succeed only if the party is at its head. We therefore reject schemes which through an academic reading of some Marxist formulations relegate the birth of the party to the very moment of the revolution or limit its tasks to those of bland proselytism or to simple propaganda of a sermonising kind.

8. The end of the cycle of accumulation which began after the second world war poses yet again in an immediate fashion the question of "imperialist war or proletarian revolution" and imposes on revolutionaries throughout the world the need to close ranks. In the epoch of monopoly capitalism the march towards war is the same in all countries. It is expressed today in the attack on the working and living conditions of the proletariat. The objective conditions for an international proletarian struggle against the bourgeoisie therefore exist. The necessity and possibility of a communist revolution therefore exists. The guiding political organ of the revolutionary assault must be centralised and international.

It is time to work actively for the construction of the international revolutionary party, the International Party of the Proletariat. The task of combatting the political subjection of the proletariat 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. From the present dispersed and fragmentary intervention of the genuinely revolutionary forces in various countries to the ideological, political and military struggles of tomorrow's international revolutionary party, there unfolds a process which - independently of its length - will be characterised by the maximum of effort on the part of communists in the work of political homogenisation and orientation, and of organisation of new cadres.

9. The formation of the International Party of the Proletariat will come about through the dissolution of various organisations which have worked on a national level in agreement with its platform and programme of action. The International Bureau "for the Party" is the centre of coordination and unification of these organisations. Its statutes will provide the driving force in the process of political homogenisation and centralisation. This will lead to the dissolution of the affiliated organisations and the centralisation of their forces on an international level. Then the Bureau will have completed its task and it will be replaced by the leading organs of the International Party itself.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. The character of the imperialist epoch - as clarified by communist theory and the experience of the counter-revolution - means that the apparent diversity of social formations in the world isn't a product of a variety of dominant modes of production. Thus there is no need for different strategies for revolutionary action in different areas. Marx's work had already made the 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 produced by different histories can exist under the capitalist mode of production but they all nevertheless submit to imperialist domination, which makes use of their differences to maintain its own existence. All the more reason why the political expressions of bourgeois domination over the world are different in various regions and countries, just as the social strata and traditions existing in these countries are different. But in every case, the real power which such forms express is everywhere the same: that of capitalism. The era of history in which national liberation was progressive for the capitalist world ended a long time ago. Therefore all theories which consider the national question to be still open in some regions of the world, and thus relegate the proletariat's principles, tactics and strategy to a policy of alliances with the national bourgeoisie (or worse with one of the opposing imperialist fronts), are to be absolutely rejected.

2. The universal nature of capitalist domination demands a universal revolutionary strategy; the proletarian revolution and the installation of the dictatorship of the proletariat is the programme of the communist party in every country. The differences in specific situations, or more accurately the diversity of social and political forms of bourgeois domination in different countries requires different tactical lines. However, these are defined by the proletariat's international organisation on the basis of its universal revolutionary programme. In this

sense the differing amounts of democratic freedom in different countries takes nothing from the fact that the democratic revolution, whatever, disguise it adopts, is no longer practicable.. The era of democratic struggles ended a long time ago in the imperialist citadels and it cannot be repeated in any other area in this period of capitalist decadence. The lack of formal democracy in the countries dominated by the imperialist centres, even when the latter are democratic themselves, is the sign of their real class nature and their historical decadence, which expresses itself in their present-day incapacity to transmit to other regions and peoples the gains of so-called superior "Western Civilisation". Though demands for certain elementary freedoms might be included in revolutionary agitation, communist party tactics aim for the overthrow of the State and the installation of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is up to the party of revolutionaries to show that only through the destruction of capitalist domination and its state organs is it possible to secure the most complete freedom of expression and organisation for the working class.

C. The unions are the organs of mediation between labour and capital. 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 which work on a capitalist basis for the preservation of capitalism. They are, moreover, an integral part of capitalist preservation, as they tend to become involved in the direct administration of the productive process alongside the bosses. The administration of the capitalist economy is only possible with the integration of the unions and this inevitably leads them to subdue the workers in the interests of capitalism. From this it follows that it is impossible to conquer or change the unions, and therefore, the proletarian revolution everywhere will have to step over the corpses of the unions.

The experience of the first revolutionary wave, and the experience of the counter-revolution which followed it, made it absolutely clear to revolutionary marxists that the union is not, and cannot be, the organ of the mass struggle in which the class' political minority (the Party) works to ensure the transmission of its programme and slogans to the whole class. Such mass organs, which communist theory has traditionally seen as organs of both struggle and power, appear in a situation of rising class struggle; they are the councils. Just as communists can only carry out their historic task as the political guide of the working class in exceptional revolutionary situations, so - and because of this - the organs which the class has to give itself in order to make this guiding work possible, are born only in periods of mounting struggle. Outside such situations the party develops its work of guiding and organising the vanguard of the class, making use of all the room for manoeuvre available in any given situation. It is the permanent duty of a communist to take part in workers struggles, to stimulate them and to provide them with political leadership. But the possibility of the favourable development of struggles away from the immediate level on which they spring up towards the broader area of an anti-capitalist political struggle is dependent on the active presence of communist factory groups. These groups are not a substitute for the unions since they do not plan wage negotiations nor any other kind of mediation with capitalism, but present themselves as an organisational instrument for the most conscious workers in the workplace, as a direct product of the party.

D. 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 a result of the isolat-

tion of Soviet Russia and the defeat of the waves of proletarian struggle in the main European countries. In the second half of the twenties the remaining revolutionary potential in Europe and China was frustrated by the policies of the Comintern which, dominated by the Russian Party, by this time obeyed the Russian state's need for self-preservation rather than the strategic and tactical needs of the international working class. In Russia the interruption of the revolutionary process led to the strengthening of an anti-working class dictatorship based on capitalist social relations in the form of state capitalism. In the imperialist epoch the growth of such a regime with such a structure in a country as large as Russia necessarily meant the emergence of a new imperialist power. It was with this character that the Russian 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 fell into the direct orbit of Russian imperialism and their governments adopted the Russian model.

E. In China, a different process, starting from different premisses, 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 state 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 Russian auspices and based on the same kind of state capitalist relations.

F. Thus, in accordance with the basic Marxist thesis that "socialism in one country" is impossible, no "socialist" or "revolutionary" states can exist outside of a real international revolutionary process. The impossibility of building socialism in a single country does not mean that the state in a country where the proletarian insurrection has been successful cannot express real proletarian power. However, in the imperialist epoch, it is impossible for a proletarian power to hold out without revolutionary movements elsewhere signalling the extension of the revolutionary process throughout the world. Such movements will, in turn, open up the concrete possibility of starting the construction of new social relations.

G. As already stated in the General Principles, the counter-revolutionary process in Russia and the political regression of the Third International eventually led to the re-entry of the Comintern's mass parties into the political and ideological camp of the bourgeoisie. This was the consequence of supporting the Russian capitalist state and its bourgeois and imperialist policies. This first stage gave way to concern for the problems of their respective national capitals which became increasingly the real political basis of these parties. In the Western metropolitan countries where the interests of each national capital collides more directly with the interests of the Eastern bloc, there has been a progressive distancing of the national-communist parties from the dominant party in the USSR. This process has culminated in some of these parties taking up a position of formal equi-distance from the bloc leaders, ideologically expressed by so-called Euro-communism.

H. In the late sixties and early seventies the restructuring and reorganisation of the capitalist state which immediately preceded the overt demonstration of the capitalist crisis of accumulation, hit the old privileges and interests of the petty bourgeoisie and middle classes who swung to the left. At the same time China broke with the USSR,

disguising the material basis of its hostility behind the banner of neo-Stalinism. All this created the conditions for the birth and strengthening of the groups of the so-called "new left". In Southern Europe such groups went on to fill the ideological gap created by the decline of the Eurocommunist parties. In Britain, Germany and elsewhere, such groups eroded, ostensibly from the left, the old powerful social democratic and labour groups. Their petty bourgeois basis, their origins, and their political nature makes it impossible for any revolutionary positions to mature in them. Their defeat and elimination from the ranks of the working class will take place through the reaffirmation of the revolutionary programme inside the working class.

STATUTES OF THE INTERNATIONAL BUREAU FOR THE PARTY

This is an extract of the politically most important rules of the Bureau. Rules relating to practical matters have been omitted but can be sent to interested parties on request.

1. The "International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party" is constituted by organisations and militants of the communist left on the basis of the Platform which forms the essential part of these Statutes.

2. The Bureau centralises the international relations of all its affiliated organisations with third parties. An essential task of the Bureau is to promote the growth of communist organisations which, on the basis of its principles, and implanted in the real political struggle on a national and international level, work towards the establishment of the conditions for the International Proletarian Party. Thus as potential national sections of that party they organise and co-ordinate the intervention of these organisations and promote their political homogenisation with the aim of their eventual organisational centralisation. Where there are no affiliated organisations, the Bureau takes up relations with individual militants in various countries as its representatives in carrying out policies the Bureau considers best for the achievement of the above objectives.

3. Apart from exceptional cases, and then only in the short-term, the admission of more than one organisation from the same country is not permitted. Where it is allowed it is only as a first step in a process leading to the political and organisational unity of the groups involved.

4. In countries where there are affiliated organisations, the Bureau only conducts relations with their leading committees (Executive Committee, Central Committee etc.). Such leading committees will make a periodic report to the Bureau on the situation of their organisations and related problems....

Where, on the other hand, there doesn't yet exist an organisation officially recognised by the Bureau, individual internationalist militants will work in concert with the Bureau itself. The Bureau will maintain contact with third organisations and regularly inform its militants present in the country about this contact.

5. The Bureau is a product of a process of decantation and homogenisation within the framework of the first four International Conferences of the Communist Left. It is distinct from future conferences in both its aims and its mode of operation. As it administers the international political relations of its affiliated organisations it is up to the Bureau to call new international conferences, or to decide on the admission of its organisations to initiatives taken by others. Adhering organisations participate in these initiatives through the Bureau and its delegates.

6. To fulfil its principle task of co-ordinating and stimulating international debate and political homogenisation, the Bureau will publish an official review, which will be the theoretical organ of liaison and discussion between its affiliated organisations and with others in the proletarian camp, as well as an organ of political intervention. Texts and articles not signed by individuals or national organisations are to be taken as expressing the positions of the Bureau. The official language of the review will be English. Where necessary and given adequate financial resources, the Bureau will make provision for publications in other languages.

ON THE PROGRAMME OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF IRAN

INTRODUCTION

The International Bureau has received several requests from Iranians exiled in various countries for us to make a critique of the Programme of the Communist Party of Iran (which was formed in September 1983). We must also take up this task since the groups which have formed the International Bureau have polemicised with the supporters of one of the C.P. of Iran's constituent bodies, the Unity of Communist Militants (UCM), in an attempt to influence the initially positive steps they had taken away from bourgeois positions. The entry of this group into the C.P. of Iran effectively ends this phase of our work.

It is not every day that a new force claiming to be a 'Communist Party' and proclaiming internationalist obligations appears on the world stage. However, as the C.P. of Iran itself notes, there are numerous parties and forces in Iran and in the world who deceitfully speak in the name of communism. In examining their Programme we want not only to indicate why we think it is communist in name only but also to contrast it with some of the views expressed by the SUCM (Supporters of the UCM) before they accepted the C.P. Iran (CPI) Programme. Moreover, we don't want simply to give a warning about false programmes. We want also to indicate how we conceive of the emergence of an international communist programme and what its central issues should be.

THE MINIMUM PROGRAMME

The first point that strikes the reader of this vaguely worded document is that certain of its central concepts are never defined. We have already quoted from its front page which talks of the hypocrisy of those bourgeois forces which masquerade under the name of communism. Yet communism or socialism are never once defined clearly in the entire Programme. The first sections of the Programme outline fundamental Marxist precepts. The anarchic nature of capitalist production for profit, the fact that the proletariat alone is the really revolutionary class, the global nature of capitalist exploitation in the era of imperialism, the need for the destruction of the capitalist state and its replacement by a workers' democracy and the need for the communist party are all indisputable. Yet none of this takes us beyond the balance of forces which existed and the lessons learned by the proletariat before the beginning of this century. And this is the fundamental flaw in the Programme which renders it incapable of giving us "a clear idea of the ultimate aim; an accurate conception of the true state of affairs at the given moment or the immediate tasks of that moment." (Lenin, Revolutionary Adventurism p.24)

THE ULTIMATE AIM - SOCIALISM

Only points 6 and 7 of this Programme actually deal with the socialist revolution but the content of this revolution is limited to phrases which, though true in themselves, tell us nothing about how the CPI visualises a future socialist society. Since 1848 socialism has been seen as the substitution of social ownership for private ownership in which planned socialist production replaces the anarchy of capitalist production; and since the Paris Commune of 1871 we have realised that the dictatorship of the proletariat is the proletariat organised as the ruling class. All those bourgeois forces the CPI seem so aware of at the beginning of their Programme could agree with these statements. Here in Europe there is not a single Trotskyist, Maoist or Stalinist who could disagree with this since it in no way takes into account the proletariat's experiences in the decades after 1914. In 1848 Marx saw fit to clearly differentiate his socialism from all other varieties and to differentiate his current from all others. Yet today this fundamental task has been avoided by the CPI thus leaving us to look for scattered clues throughout the Programme as to their views on the more recent experiences of the proletariat. These clues

do not lend themselves to encouraging conclusions. In the first place, the Programme seems to have ignored the central lesson of the October Revolution - that the proletariat cannot be victorious in one country alone. Lenin in 1918 had clearly seen that "without a German revolution we are doomed" and by 1921 when no other successful proletarian assault on power had taken place the counter-revolution had begun. Stalin's "socialism in one country", with its abandonment of proletarian revolution for defence of state capitalism in Russia, was the logical culmination of this process. The CPI, however, believe that though "The struggle of the proletariat against capitalism is an international struggle.... the working class in each country must in the first place settle matters with the bourgeoisie of its own country." (Programme, pp 2-3). Now, apart from the fact that Lenin noted that a similar clause in the Bolshevik Programme was obsolete and marked it down for removal from the Programme "at the next Congress of our party" (see the "Materials relating to the Revision of the Party Programme" Collected Works Volume 24 pp276-80, May 1917) this reveals a nation by nation conception of revolution which brings out the extraordinarily undialectical and anti-marxist conception of the CPI.

They claim workers must "first settle matters with their own bourgeoisie" and to a certain extent this is true since without a local proletariat active in each capitalist unit against the class enemy the process of spreading the revolution cannot easily take place. However, it's nonsense to presume that the revolution can win in each country taken individually. Even in a major imperialist state a victorious proletariat which remained isolated would eventually be forced to reach an accommodation with capitalism. In defending any gains it would be compelled, as Russia was, to adopt capitalist relationships and consequently would in due course produce a form of state capitalism.

But the Programme makes no mention of any specific form of capitalism today at all (i.e. it does not give "an accurate conception of the state of affairs" at the present time). State capitalism represents the universal tendency of imperialist monopoly in this epoch yet it not only receives no mention (still better, critique) but in fact certain state capitalist measures like nationalisation are passed off as progressive stages on the road to socialism. Would this were the case, then Western Europe would be halfway to socialism. But this is not the case. Nationalisation of the banks or any other of the 'commodity heights' of the capitalist economy are not only compatible with capitalism (as Engels noted 100 years ago) but in the 20th century it is the chief means by which the states of a decaying capitalist system can concentrate enough capital to maintain a basic industrial infrastructure. This state monopoly is a form of imperialist monopoly in that it aims at the conservation of the existing social order.

However, we can perceive the real reason for the failure of this Programme to deal with state capitalism by looking at the few casual remarks it makes about Russia and China. Russia, we are told, "is an imperialist country" but only because it is the "standard bearer" of "Khrushchevite revisionism" whilst in China we find that "with the definite domination of revisionism over its Communist Party, the working class has been driven out of political power completely." Clearly the influence of Komala (The Toilers Revolutionary Organisation of Iranian Kurdistan) has won out in this political fusion with the UCM. Previously UCM supporters had told us that Russia ceased to be proletarian in the 20s when it forced on the Comintern the united front policy and they even wrote in Bolshevik Message 2 that the Russian CP had transformed "into a bourgeois party" when it advocated "class conciliation" in the name of united political fronts" (p.2). The same passage states that the Chinese CP became bourgeois at the same time for the same reason.. None of this can be squared with the Maoist phrases in this Programme which in turn reveals that there exists no difference between the state capitalist vision of the left in Europe and that of the CPI. And let's be clear about what this means. If the Russia of Stalin was a proletarian bastion then not only are united fronts with forces claiming to represent the workers possible but so are popular fronts with all democratic forces, (such as those in France and Spain in 1936, alliances with imperialist forces (such as the Hitler-Stalin

Part of the Yalta Agreement), primitive accumulation (so-called socialism in one country) and imperialist conquest (Eastern Europe after 1944). All those acts were carried out under the banner of "socialism" by those who came to lead the Russian and Chinese CPs from the 1920s. They are the direct antithesis of communism. We recognise that these acts were only possible because the proletariat had been driven from power by the early 1920s and never gained power in China in 1949. It is not therefore surprising that the CP of Iran, carrying all this baggage, cannot give us a precise definition of what the reality of socialism is today. Neither is it surprising to find that its Programme follows the dictum of Bernstein in that "the movement is everything, the goal is nothing" but without a clear aim the "movement" they try to conjure up isn't going anywhere.

THE PATH TO ACHIEVE THAT AIM

It was the merit of Lenin in his polemics against the Economists in What is to be done? that showed that this movement building was pointless outside of socialist aims. Or, as he put it, "without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement" (p.25). The CP of Iran offers us a theory which is, however, not at all revolutionary. Instead it seems to take for its starting point the view that "That struggle is desirable which is possible, and the struggle which is possible is that which is going on at the given moment", and as Lenin concluded, "This is precisely the trend of unbounded opportunism". (ibid p.48)

The CPI Programme, as we have seen, says little about what socialism actually is and in fact the Programme is not so concerned about "socialism" since it postpones its achievement to some vague future. Though the Programme agrees that "Iran is a capitalist country" (p.12) it concludes that the proletariat "cannot embark on an immediately socialist revolution" because Iranian capitalism rules through terror and not through democracy (p.13). Thus, the CPI concludes that what is needed is an intermediate stage, a democratic revolution which will be "a prelude to the social revolution of the Iranian proletariat and is an inseparable part of the world socialist revolution" (p.13). This is in some respects no more than a slavish imitation of the original 1903 Programme of the Bolshevik Party. However, such a programme was based on Lenin's analysis of Russia as a national capital (his Development of Capitalism in Russia, 1899). It is true that he concluded from this that in purely Russian terms the coming revolution would be a bourgeois democratic one, which would be quickly followed by a proletarian revolution. However, the outbreak of imperialist war in 1914 completely altered the old Social Democratic idea that each country in turn would have to develop capitalism before socialism could be achieved. Revolution was now posed on an international level and Lenin was the first to change his perspectives. He now concluded that the imperialist war opened a new era: that of the "parasitism and decay of capitalism". He explained this more fully in Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism:

"The present war is imperialist in character. This war is the outcome of conditions in an epoch in which capitalism has reached the highest stage of its development... in which the cartelisation of production and the internationalisation of economic life have assumed immense proportions... world capitalism's productive forces have outgrown the limited boundaries of national and state division, and the objective conditions are perfectly ripe for socialism to be achieved."

With this economic analysis of imperialism Lenin concluded therefore that what was on the agenda was not a national, democratic revolution in Russia but a socialist revolution on an international level. This is why he was able to insist in the April Theses that the old democratic revolution envisaged in the original Bolshevik Programme was obsolete and that therefore a new programme was necessary:

"Our theory is not a dogma but a guide to action... concretely things have worked out differently; they are more original; more variegated than

anyone could have expected....

The person who now only speaks of a 'revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry' is behind the times, consequently he has in effect gone over to the petty bourgeoisie against the proletarian class struggle.....

The formula is obsolete. It is no good at all. It is dead. And it is no use trying to revive it." (April Theses ppl4-21)

Had the Bolsheviks stuck to their original programme as Kamenev and others wanted then there would have been no October Revolution since the Soviets dominated by Social Revolutionaries would have been the logical outcome. Only Lenin's internationalist perspective can explain his greater clarity on the question than those who thought in purely Russian terms. In the intervening years this internationalism has been one of the cardinal points which have separated revolutionary marxists from those who defend new forms of capitalist domination under the guise of marxism. What the Communist Party of Iran therefore offers us is a rehash of outmoded ideas which in no way take into account the facts of the new era we live in, the era of capitalist decadence which is at the same time the era of imperialist war and proletarian revolution. With capitalism daily destroying vast resources the objective conditions for socialism not only already exist but the necessity of proletarian revolution becomes an ever-increasing necessity.

Although the Communist Party of Iran pays lip-service to internationalism the essence of their programme is the fact that it views imperialism, imperialist war and the 'democratic revolution' from the isolated Iranian situation. We have already seen above that this programme in no way rules out the possibility of "socialism in one country" but other remarks show that the CPI believe that this is not only possible but that a 'dominated' country, because of the more oppressive social and political conditions there, will lead the way. This is what one of their more internationalist supporters told Communist Worker (Kargar Komunist, a paper of the CPI no.5 April 1983):

"... it is an exaggeration to talk about a revolution in Europe taking place, but we ought not to ignore such a possibility in the near future - for example the beginning and materialisation of a proletarian revolution in Europe is dependent upon the outcome of the victorious national and democratic revolution in dominated countries...." (p.1 - CWO translation)

A strange inversion indeed! According to this scenario the non-socialist revolutions in the countries on the periphery of capitalism will lead the socialist revolution in the capitalist heartlands. It seems to have escaped their notice that a proletariat which requires a 'democratic' programme because it has not yet acquired the consciousness or the objective conditions for a socialist programme can hardly be considered as the revolutionary vanguard of the world working class. In the second place, though the possibility of the proletariat of one of the 'dominated' countries being the first to overthrow its local ruling class (given its specific weakness) exists, it can only avoid being crushed by imperialism if the proletariat in the imperialist bastions are already taking the road to attack state power in these countries, thus paralysing the power of the imperialists. Successful revolutions cannot occur in isolated countries in this epoch (Iran since 1979 would also seem to confirm this since the initial working class resistance quickly died). It is more likely that revolutions will grow out of a massive international crisis (collapse of IMF, war) and that like 1848 or 1917-21 the question of which class is to rule society will be posed on a wide level, even a global level.

This is what makes the theory advanced in this Programme of "an aristocracy of labour" so anti-proletarian. To justify the fact that the CPI have shifted the expectation for socialist revolution to the workers in the 'dominated' countries (and amongst these Iran is 'vital' - Programme p.14; see also Bolshevik Message 6 page 9, "The significant part about the Iranian working class is that... it is nearer to the conquest of political power") the

workers of the leading imperialist countries become accomplices to the super-exploitation and oppression of the workers in places like Iran. But it is only the imperialist bourgeoisie that benefits from this exploitation. Indeed, when the CPI tells us that "in the imperialist countries a definite section of the working class itself, i.e. the labour aristocracy, loses its revolutionary character and is transformed into the material basis for the infiltration and survival of bourgeois ideology in the working class" we can see that the CPI is incapable of distinguishing between bourgeois and proletarian forces. It is true that workers everywhere are at present saturated with anti-working class ideology (whether Islamic, Western imperialist or state capitalist) but this is a consequence of the bourgeoisie's real domination over society. This, however, cannot be seen in static terms since material conditions for this domination are constantly shifting and the crisis undermines the bourgeois ideology itself, leading to the disintegration of bourgeois belief in democracy etc. In this situation the same material pressures also force the workers to take action against the bourgeoisie. The CPI mention several ideologies which they say are arising within the working class such as Eurocommunism. On their views on Eurocommunism we wrote this in criticising a leading member of the CPI:

"There is a tendency to consider the proletariat of the capital exporting countries as a workers' aristocracy in the confrontations of the world proletariat. While this can be admitted in one sense, it is still dangerous and rather misses the point. In fact, from this idea the text somewhat mechanically reaches an incorrect assessment of Euro-communism which is seen by Hekmat as the "reappearance of social chauvinism in the name of Euro-communism in the workers' movement of the metropolitan countries". No, comrades. The rise of Euro-communism coincides with the fall in support for the "communist" parties by the workers. This confirms our thesis that the PCI (CP of Italy) et.al. are not expressions of the aristocracy of labour, but of the left wing of the bourgeoisie." (Letter from Battaglia Comunista to SUCM)

Today, when the cheap imports from South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong are being blamed for throwing millions onto the dole, when the entire working class in Europe faces extinction in nuclear war, it is absurd to compound the division created by imperialism into a so-called socialist programme. It is more significant to recognise that the working class of every country shares the same fundamental situation of exploitation and that today it is being forced to accept austerity measures imposed by international capital. The struggle of the Brazilian workers in this respect is not at all different from their British counterparts. Obviously the attacks that are undertaken in places like Brazil can provide immediate responses since the situation of the workers is more immediately desperate but despite slower responses in Europe and elsewhere they are still being made (Poland, Belgium, France) and given the greater numbers, strategic importance to imperialism and organisational experience it is clear that workers in the advanced countries have a predominant role to play in a future revolutionary wave. However, a future revolutionary wave will be international in scope, arising from the accumulated difficulties of imperialism on a world scale.

This brings us a stage nearer to understanding why this Programme offers nothing to the world working class. According to it imperialist wars are waged "for the purpose of re-dividing the world" and the consequent "militarism and political reaction" lead to the "intensification of crises and the unemployment and impoverishment of millions of human beings" (see p.7). This is again an inversion of the real order of things in that consequences are mistaken for causes and we find imperialist war causes crisis. In fact the truth of the matter is that imperialist war in this century is the outcome of the cyclical crisis of capitalism. As we said elsewhere,

"Capitalism in crisis resorts to extra-economic means; it resorts to the destruction of the means and forces of production, because only these lead to new conditions for a new accumulation cycle. The 1st and 2nd World

Wars signalled at the same time the end of one cycle and the beginning of another. We are now at the close of a third cycle and Lenin's alternative of imperialist war or proletarian revolution is being posed once again. Today capital can only resolve the fall in $\frac{s}{c+v}$ by eliminating huge amounts of c (destruction of factories, infrastructure, cities) and huge quantities of v (slaughter of humans)." (ibid)

For the CPI, however, imperialist war is just another attack on the workers in the 'dominated' countries and doesn't spring from the heart of capitalist development in this century. Fixated by an erroneous analysis of the "democratic revolution" programme of the Bolsheviks of 1903 they cannot see that the First World War and the Russian Revolution opened up an entirely new epoch, both in the development of capitalism and in the nature of the proletarian response to it. The CPI Programme pays lip-service to this in saying that "the epoch of imperialism is at the same time the epoch of the socialist revolution of the proletariat" but this clearly has no consequences for the CPI since they tell us that:

"... democratic and liberation movements and revolutions in countries subjugated by imperialism, such as the revolutionary struggles of the oppressed nations throughout the world for achieving the right of self-determination, all count in the present epoch as the reserve strength and potential components of the world socialist revolution of the proletariat." (p.12)

This is no longer the case. In the epoch of imperialist war the "liberation struggle" of an oppressed nation is a myth since the arming and financing of such a struggle depends on the imperialist powers themselves. Support for national liberation, like that of the democratic revolution, was seen by the leading revolutionaries of the Second International as historically conditioned. In the epoch up to 1914 national struggles and democratic struggles could be dubbed "progressive" if they led to the expansion of local capitalism and therefore added to the world army of the proletariat. Today no such independent development of capitalism is possible. To talk today of "oppressed nationalities" is in fact to adopt the slogans of the local bourgeois leaders of those nationalities (who sooner or later become the clients of imperialism). The only hope for the oppressed and exploited masses of those nationalities is to assert their separate class identity in solidarity with the exploited everywhere. Thus, to talk of such national and democratic struggles as a stage on the road to the struggle for socialism is not only obsolete as a marxist tactic but directly against the interests of the proletariat in that it gives the class enemy another ideological stick with which to beat down the independence of the proletariat. The supporters of the UCM have indeed already admitted that the democratic revolutions have failed in the 20th century, but only because of bad leadership "in countries like China, Cuba and Vietnam which were led by petty bourgeois radical forces claiming to be communist...." But how is this different from the CP of Iran which, through its guerrilla organisation Komala, has entered into a popular front with the party of the Kurdish landlords and bourgeoisie - the KDP. This party has a long history as an imperialist agent and is supported directly by Russian imperialism. Thus, in their haste to overcome the practical problems facing them, the CP of Iran is following the road of all who put their faith in national liberation. As we wrote in RP 21:

"The original perspective of a struggle national in form but proletarian in content has been replaced by one national in form and bourgeois in content." (p.9)

But all these capitulations stem from a failure to understand the present reality of capitalist development and with it the real path that has to be trodden towards socialism.

THE REAL STATE OF AFFAIRS TODAY.

We don't expect a fully formed communist programme to emerge spontaneously from the peripheral areas of capitalism. However, the Programme of the CPI is not a simple re-hash of old and outworn formulae, abandoned by the Third International during the revolutionary wave after World War 1 but re-adopted by its counter-revolutionary heirs of Stalinists and Trotskyists in all countries. Previously the constituent elements of the International Bureau made every effort to put the experience of the European working class before the supporters of the UCM in Europe on the grounds that communism is by definition an international movement. Or as Lenin put it at the beginning of the century,

"...the Social-Democratic movement is in its very essence an international movement. This means, not only that we must combat national chauvinism, but that an incipient movement in a young country can be successful only if it makes use of the experience of other countries." (What is to be done? p.36)

But what has been the SUCM response? In reply to our critique that they have been supporting national chauvinism by having no class position on the Iran-Iraq War or any independent class position on the war in Kurdistan they have given no concrete or direct reply (except to admit our charges). They have not even relayed communist positions to the organisation they support. Instead we find in their paper Communist Worker 5 that the CWO "has been actively involved in defending the Iranian communist movement" whilst Battaglia Comunisti "in six editions of its paper has stated the views of the UCM" (p.21). There is not a single word to suggest that their views were stated only as a prelude to criticism and that far from defending "the Iranian communist movement" we have sought to show how their positions are simply a re-hash of those of the Second International. The internationalism of the Supporters of the UCM (today the Supporters of the Communist Party of Iran) is calculated only on the basis of whatever uncritical support it can get for its own positions. It is for the supporters of the CPI to ask themselves how they can recognise today's heirs of the Italian Left, which was expelled from the degenerating Third International in the 1920s, as the clearest communists in Europe whilst the organisation they support peddles united fronts and imperialist wars (under the guise of defending revolutionary gains) as part of the proletariat's tactics.

In fact the most serious criticism of this Programme is reserved for what it doesn't say on the central issues facing the world proletariat today. The fundamental error, which all those who are attracted by the ideology of the bourgeois left are subject to, is a subjective desire to "do something now", to recreate the mass workers' movement of the last century. But in attempting to do this they become objectively the bearers of new social and political forms of state capitalism which helps capital to continue its barbaric course towards new crises, new catastrophes of imperialist war.

This period of mass parties is dead. In the 19th century the decennial crises of capitalism not only developed greater and greater capital concentration but capital expansion and accumulation also produced the conditions for the growth of mass working class organisations (socialist and labour parties and trades unions). However, these organisations reflected the existence of the proletariat within capitalism as well as embryonically against capitalism. And insofar as they adopted the revisionist programme, the minimum programme, they became increasingly dominated by the immediate struggle for reforms within capitalism - universal suffrage, shorter working day, etc, and the socialist goal was lost. Only a few internationalist revolutionaries (Lenin foremost among them) recognised that the very mass nature of these parties created new dangers.

It was the experience of the proletariat in war-torn Europe which finally smashed the ambiguous myth of the mass socialist party. As the Third International recognised in 1919, the First World War opened up a new era in the history of capitalism - "The epoch of the dissolution of capitalism, of its inner disintegration. The epoch of the communist revolution of the proletariat." (Platform of the CI)

The First World War revealed that capitalism had reached a period when it could no longer re-establish the conditions for profitable accumulation by economic means alone. In the 20th century the business cycle has become a cycle of global wars and we are in the third phase of the pattern, boom - slump - war - reconstruction - boom - slump. Capitalism stands at the threshold of a new war. And in these circumstances it is useless for the proletariat to include in its programme the old social democratic demands for universal suffrage, legal trades unions and the 40 hour week. Yet the CPI Programme is largely based on such demands and they even adopt the social democratic term of calling them the minimum programme. We are not opposed to demands as such. In any struggle the workers generally put forward demands but these are not tailor made in advance. They depend on the level of consciousness of the workers and the balance of forces existing between proletariat and bourgeoisie. Communists naturally attempt to put forward demands which develop the struggle, which draw in the widest layers of workers and which unite workers against the state. Clearly a direct struggle for communism is not the first demand we would put forward. As Marx noted in his "Address to the Central Committee of the Communist League",

"In the beginning of the movement, the workers will naturally not be able to propose any direct communist measures, however... if the petty bourgeoisie propose to buy out the railroads and factories... the workers must simply demand that they be confiscated.... If the democrats propose proportional taxes, they must demand progressive taxes.... if the democrats demand the regulation of the state debt, the workers must demand its repudiation..."

But such demands are put forward as moments in the class struggle with a tactical value for the proletariat. And if we look at the content of the demands put forward by the CPI what do we find? Some aren't minimum demands in any sense since they are only possible at the end of the process of rising class struggle (soviets, abolition of the army, democracy based on delegates instead of representatives, elected judges, etc) and therefore are almost as abstract as demanding "communism". Others are quite frankly easily recuperable by the bourgeoisie and in many places have already become means of domination over the working class. Take, for example, Clause 9 (p.21)

"Unconditional political freedom; the freedom of belief, expression, press, the freedom of assembly, elections the formation of unions..."

This "freedom" is already part of the programme of the Western European bourgeoisie in its ideological struggle with the USSR. Even in countries "dominated by imperialism" such a demand has been realised (e.g. India) and thus made such areas more secure for the operation of imperialist interests. Any demand declared in advance can be recuperated by the bourgeoisie and become part of a new form of bourgeois domination (all the economic demands (and more) of the CPI Programme are satisfied in state capitalist Russia, for example). If demands are part of a programme declared in advance they become, as happened to the programme of the Second International, goals in themselves and cease to be part of the struggle for communism. The converse of the Second International's preoccupation with the minimum programme was its total failure as a proletarian international in the face of imperialist war.

In a global sense the single most important factor for the world proletariat is the fight against imperialist war. And the most important omission from the Programme of the CPI is precisely this. This is not accidental. Like the Social Democrats of yesterday, the CPI of today wants to establish a mass party today. To put forward as a programmatic demand the 40 hour week may or may not do this but it does nothing to reveal the actual nature of the existing regime. To come out wholeheartedly against Iranian capitalism is a different matter. Calling for the defeat of one's own government as Lenin did in 1915 is not a popular policy but it is essential to proletarian internationalism;

"Comrade Kamenev contraposes to a party of masses a "group of propagandists". But the "masses" have now succumbed to the craze of revolutionary defensism. Is it not more becoming for internationalists at this moment to show that they can resist "mass" intoxication rather than wish to remain with the masses, i.e. to succumb to the general epidemic? Have we not seen how in all the belligerent countries of Europe the chauvinists tried to justify themselves on the grounds that they wished to remain "with the masses"? Must we not be able to remain for a time in the minority against the "mass" intoxication?" (April Theses, Collected Works Vol. 24 p.54)

However, in the Iran-Iraq War the UCM (forerunner of the CPI) calls the Iraqi state "an agent of US imperialism" in order to justify calling for a "defence of the revolution" which up until now has confirmed the reactionary Islamic regime in power. This sort of argument was also used by the social chauvinists of the Second International who called for support for their own countries on a variety of pretexts (defence of democracy, republicanism, defence against Russian barbarism, etc). We have criticised in greater detail the theoretical basis of this chauvinism elsewhere (see Workers Voice 9 and Revolutionary Perspectives 21). Suffice it to say here that what is being dished out to the exploited in the Iran-Iraq war or Chad or El Salvador is what imperialism has in store for workers everywhere and that an economic and political analysis of imperialist war is the first component of any communist programme today. Revolutionary defeatism today, however, doesn't mean, as the CPI seems to think, "insurrection now". It means that first of all the proletariat must recognise that the capitalist crisis can only be resolved in one of two ways. Either imperialist barbarism or socialist revolution. The massive sackings, the world-wide austerity plans, the small "training" wars (Chad, Falklands) are all preparations for a new global conflict. The task of communists is not to prepare new ambiguities like a "revolutionary democratic republic" which will only provide a new form to conserve the present rule of the bourgeoisie, but to agitate for the social disintegration tout court of all bourgeois institutions in all lands. Obviously, in different areas where these bourgeois institutions are less developed the tactics of communists might be different but this does not liquidate the fundamental task of communists to work for the revolutionary defeat of "their own" government in any local war which breaks out before the world bourgeoisie resorts to its last option - world war. The task of revolutionaries everywhere is to work for the formation of an international party based on a programme which clearly spells out the independent interests of the proletariat.

The CPI, as we have demonstrated, doesn't stand either in theory or practice for the independence of the proletariat. Those workers and toilers who follow it will find that it must become increasingly linked to the KDP in the popular front struggle against Khomeini. However, once the Islamic Republic falls it will be the KDP who will get control of an autonomous Kurdistan. The CPI would see this as a step forward in the realisation of their programme but in fact it would be a step closer to their extinction. Representing neither the independent proletarian struggle nor the dominant faction of the bourgeoisie they will be confined to the dust bin of history along with their obsolete and reactionary formulae from the pre-history of the workers' movement.

(CRISIS AND IMPERIALISM Text presented at the Vth Congress of the Partito Comunista Internazionale (Nov. 1982)

CRISIS AND IMPERIALISM

The present economic crisis, which we interpret as the latest confirmation and manifestation of the tendential fall of the average rate of profit, presents peculiarities which distinguish it from similar crises that capitalism has experienced in the past. It brings us in fact to the era in which monopoly capitalism has reached full maturity and is striving to carry out the task for which it has been historically produced.

Monopoly is, as Marx stressed in Volume 3 of Capital, the stage at which the capitalist system reaches under the impetus of the tendential fall of the average rate of profit. The average rate of profit as has been noted tends to decrease as a consequence of the continuous change in the organic composition of capital. The introduction into the productive process of growing amounts of constant capital as substitute for variable capital tends to restrict the source of extraction of surplus value. Such a decrease, however, can be absorbed by increasing the productivity of labour. The concentration of means of production, to which the centralisation of capital in fewer hands corresponds, allows the absorption into the productive process of very large quantities of constant capital (assuming the continued existence of bourgeois relations of production) and therefore of the more advanced technology which allows productivity to rise to exorbitant levels. The related decrease in the employment of the labour force and the consequent fall in the rate of profit which is determined in the big industrial combines thus finds its prime source of absorption. Large-scale industry, moreover, creates economies of scale due to the amount of fixed costs per unit of production which added to the productivity of labour makes for the production of lower priced, and therefore more competitive, commodities in relation to those produced by productive units of a lower organic composition. The great quantities of commodities produced give, ultimately, a power of intervention in the process of price formation unknown to small or medium-sized firms. This generally lowers the price determined by the law of supply and demand. Through the combination of all these favourable elements large-scale production is able to acquire surplus value extorted from outside itself and its own productive process. The greater competitiveness and control, albeit partial, of the process of price formation in the market makes the sale of commodities possible at a higher price than what they would have had if the market had operated in obedience to the laws of supply and demand without any kind of interference. We are obviously dealing here with a form of parasitic appropriation of surplus value, or indeed of profit, stemming from beyond the direct exploitation of labour power (and especially today) from a position in the market which favours the highest realisation of profits produced by monopolies. Marx called this particular kind of profit "extra-profit" and stressed that it was something different, something more, than "normal" profit.

From the second half of the 18th Century up to today large-scale industry has had a powerful development. Today it is calculated that less than 2% of the great firms of the industrialised West control 70-80% of the world market. Above all in the first stage of its life the large monopoly has satisfied in full the tasks for which it was historically created, in so far as quite a few saw in its development and final formation the overcoming of the fundamental contradictions immanent to the capitalist accumulation process which had led Marx to anticipate as inevitable the catastrophic collapse of capitalism. In the economic contest with small and medium, and therefore less competitive, firms the big monopolies could transfer more

easily enormous masses of surplus value produced in backward sectors. They thus found themselves in the best position to keep to themselves the new productive sectors which new scientific discoveries continually put at their disposal. Not only that but laying railways, developing engineering and the steel industry allowed capitalism as a whole to favourably develop the productive forces without major disturbances. If, in fact, its rate of profit was lower, it compensated for it fully with "extra-profit". Moreover, by enlarging the productive base through the opening up of new sectors it enlarged the total mass of surplus value produced by the system. The consequent growth of total profit in practice annulled the effects of the tendential fall in the average rate of profit. But notwithstanding this the contradiction between the bourgeois use of the productive forces and the lack of recognition of their social character has a way of showing itself. Thus the more the productive forces are developed the more obvious and strident becomes the contradiction. The growing mass of surplus value extorted from the workers with difficulty can be used within the area where the big monopoly firms operate. Very quickly the problem of the destination of the excess finance capital which had been formed was posed in the industrialised metropolises. The problem of control of areas where besides extracting cheap primary products they could also export finance capital immediately arose for the most developed areas. Lenin distinguished this period as a phase of modern imperialism, or rather that phase in which the appropriation of surplus value takes place beyond the realm of the direct exploitation of labour power, i.e. that produced by monopoly and finance capital. In the beginning even the export of finance capital did not present great difficulties given the limited number of imperialist powers and the vast extent of the market at their disposal. But monopoly could not remain a marginal experience in a free trade economy. The generalisation of this experience was inevitable since it offered, without modifying the existing relations of production, a more adequate basis for the new stage of development of the productive forces. But really because it favoured this development, the new basis could only bring out the pre-existing contradictions in a more mature context. Having gone beyond the brief season of plenty the real characteristic of decadent societies, produced by the extension of the parasitic expropriation of surplus value, exploded dramatically. The restriction of the area of internal realisation of surplus value due to the growth of monopoly enterprises at the expense of small and medium sized firms, rendered increasingly acute the necessity of realising extra-profit by exporting finance capital, and thus more acute the tensions between different countries. The new productive sectors having been absorbed, there was now no compensation for the continuous expulsion of labour power from the process of production and thus the tendential fall in the rate of profit was not offset through the increase in the total mass of surplus value extracted. Thus began our epoch - that of great crises and great wars. Since then capitalism has been imposing on humanity a very high price and making the systematic destruction of the productive forces a functional factor in its own survival. The following figures unequivocally show the direct connection between the movement of the economic cycle and the two world wars.

The approach of the First World War was matched after 1907 by an abrupt rise in unemployment. 1.8% in that year became 8.5% in the next. 1909-10 unemployment remained around 5%. In 1906 it had been 0.8%. In 1914 it rose to 8% and in 1915 it reached 17%. The same curve re-appeared towards the Second World War. In 1926 unemployment equalled 1.9%; from 1927 to 29 it varied around 4%. It reached 7% in 1930, 18.9% in 1931 and went above 20% 1932-5. The rise flattened out in 1936 at 16.9% but in 1938 unemployment was again at 19%. For the period before the First World War there are no figures available for the utilisation of productive capacity though there are for the period 1929-34. In 1929 the use of productive capacity was 83%. In 1930 it was 66%. It reached 83% again in 1932 but in 1933 was 60%. It only went above 80% again after 1950. (The figures cited have been taken from Baran and Sweezy and refer only to the US.)

From these cyclical movements of the economic process we can see two phases. An ascendant phase which coincides with the post war period, and another, descendant phase which ends with the explosion of conflict. On the basis of past experience and the movement of the present economic cycle we find ourselves today in the descendant phase of the economic cycle which opened with the end of the Second World War and ended in the 1960s. Also in this period, as the figures show, is the opposite of the tendency after a period of expansion taken together. The figures are for the USA but taking into account that it is the greatest imperialist centre in the world they are valid for the entire world economy. Taking 1950 as a base of 100 we have for unemployment and capital utilisation the following figures:

YEAR	CAP. UT.	UNEMPLOYMENT.
1951	103	3.7%
1952	99	2.7
1953	98	2.5
1954	87	5.0
1955	92	4.0
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1958	76	6.8
1959	81	5.5

From 1959 to 1963 the utilisation of productive forces was on average equal to 82 and unemployment 6.0%. From 1970 the utilisation of productive capacity has never gone over 70 whilst unemployment has continued growing until today it equals 18 millions or 12% of the available labour force.

The line of the tendency is clear: we are not seeing a conjunctural crisis which can be solved in a more or less definite period of time but a permanent economic crisis whose only result is world war. On the other hand the same responses which capitalism has until now given to the crisis shows that what we are dealing with are attempts to check the fall in the rate of profit, i.e. of attempts aimed at minimising the consequences of one of the most characteristic contradictions of the system. Monopoly capitalism has done nothing but raise the parasitic appropriation of capital to world level.

MANIFESTATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE CRISIS.

The first signs of the crisis at the start of the 1970s were really the storms in the international finance markets. In 1972 the recurrence of this forced Nixon to break the Bretton Woods agreement which controlled international exchange and the exchange relations between the different currencies of the Western bloc. The denunciation of the accords allowed the conversion of the dollar into gold on parity loan terms and added further dollar issues beyond this parity. In practice the USA issued for a fixed period dollars without gold support. Through this system it succeeded in unloading its own crisis on the entire Western bloc. When the mass of dollars in circulation assumed the dimensions of an avalanche, the owners of dollar finance capital began to ask for convertibility into gold according to the fixed rate of parity. But as the issue had taken place outside the agreed parity, the USA, in order to remain faithful to Bretton Woods, would have had to declare itself bankrupt. They declared instead the nonconvertibility of the dollar. Since then, despite numerous efforts, the former regime of fixed exchange rates which Bretton Woods allowed, and which was a sign of economic stability, has never been re-established and the financial crisis has spread affecting almost all the major currencies. Bourgeois economists and intellectuals have since then put forward dozens of projects but all with little result. And it couldn't be otherwise. This is because their analyses don't encompass the real

cause of the crises but are limited to drawing out only superficial phenomena. Why, after years of stability were, and still are, the foreign exchanges subjected to this monetary storm? Taking 1962 as equal to 100 as an index of industrial profit, it became equal to 144 in 1960 and 83 in 1970, falling to less than 80 in 1971. For the second half of the 60s industrial profits, hitherto growing, began to decrease. Finance capital's response to this tendency couldn't be anything but to step up activities to increase extra-profit. Along with was inevitably exchange speculation. The USA issued dollars without regard to agreed rates. In reality they were doing nothing but pay for goods and services produced elsewhere with devalued money and so paid less than they should have. In practice it was appropriating to itself via clearly speculative methods the surplus value produced by other productive systems through which it made up for the decline in profits in its own directly productive activity.

From the foreign exchange markets speculation has gradually extended itself to practically all economic and commercial activity. The oil crisis of 1973 was the most colossal speculative activity which large-scale monopoly capitalism has ever carried out. The oil market, as is well known, is in the hands of a restricted number of multi-nationals. The oil price at the point of production has remained practically unchanged for over 20 years and yet today if compared in constant prices the increase at the point of production compared to 1950 is derisory whilst effectively its price on world markets has grown steeply. That is, whilst the producing countries have scarcely been able to get the 1950 price, the consuming countries have paid 30-40 times more for it. As oil is a fundamental primary product in modern industrial society, and consumed by almost everyone everywhere we have to give an account of the amount of speculation practised by the multi-nationals. In 1973, a black year for world industry, the biggest companies in the sector, which are also the most powerful, registered profit increases of an average 80% with the highest being 150% (Exxon). The wide difference between industrial profit and extra-profit is crystallised moreover in the high rate of interest demanded by the banks on the international finance markets. The leader of the policy of high interest rates is again the USA, or rather the biggest concentration of monopolies in the world. The dollar being the most important international currency and the US meanwhile having recovered competitiveness compared to 1972 and thus reduced its imports and also the quantity of dollars in circulation by increasing interest rates. Since commercial transactions on the world market are carried out largely in dollars, it is as if a tax has been imposed on the greater part of international economic activity from which the greatest finance capitals benefit. Creating for themselves an area where finance capital is so abundantly rewarded, through lack of equalisation on the part of the communications system they would have enormous flights of finance capital towards the most remunerative areas. From here the extension of the policy of high taxes throughout the world is literally strangling the firms which haven't the support of the self-financing structure of the big monopolies. In Italy, according to the evidence of Merloni (President of the Italian CBI), in the last three years active and passive rates of interest practised by the banks has grown by 70-80%. This means that if previously every lire collected by the banks paid them three times that amount when loaned out, today it pays them 24 times. The most dramatic and obvious consequence of the sum of this speculative activity is inflation. To this we will devote a more detailed analysis (see "Imperialism and Inflation"). Here we are concerned with stressing how parasitic activity under the pressure of the crisis expanded itself excessively with disruptive effects on the national and international assets of the capitalist economy.

Monopoly, the instrument par excellence for allowing capitalism to contain the fall in the rate of profit, having exhausted its initial

phase of expansion, reproduces the fundamental contradiction of capital in a new dimension which offers no other alternative but that monopoly (state capitalism is also monopoly) gives way to socialism, or a slow but inexorable decline of the entire society. The search for extra-profit was, for a given period of time, the instrument that permitted the containment, within the orbit of bourgeois relations of production, of the powerful development of the productive forces of the last century but this development has also imposed the creation of monopoly and in the end has created an economic framework where the acquisition of extra-profit becomes ever more difficult. The recomposition of the source of obtaining surplus value which is periodically necessary takes place now only through the systematic destruction of the excess productive forces.

RESTRUCTURING OF THE PRODUCTIVE APPARATUS

Because there can be appropriation of surplus value, even if parasitic, it is necessary that it is therefore extorted. The mechanism of monopoly appropriation has had success for a whole historic period because it has been accompanied by a sharp growth of the productivity of labour together with an expansion of the productive base. In fact we can say that the world would not have had large scale production and industry on a widespread level without monopoly capitalism. Modern industry would never have developed with a free market economy. For the big monopoly firms increasing the productivity of labour is vital. Only by producing more competitive commodities can they compensate for the tendentially lower profit rates. The crisis therefore could only increase the pressure for productivity increases. But here the difference between the present crisis and the analogous ones of the 30s or the end of the 19th/beginning of the 20th century soon reveals itself. The first two crises both reached the stage of development of productive forces of all types. There were new boom sectors struggling to take off in an economic contest still dominated by small and medium firms. These two crises, by accelerating concentration, favoured its development and with it the development of all industrial activity. The huge emigration of workers from the beginning of the 1900s until the end of the 60s from places where the agricultural economy dominated to the large industrial metropolises gives an index of how impressive this development was, especially if we note that in some sectors the growth of productivity has been calculated at 1 to 2000, and the working week has on average been reduced from 48 to 40 hours i.e. only about 6 hours since c. 1900 and the last reduction only in the last 10 years. Capitalism has thus seen in the dramatic crises of the past that it could still look forward to sufficiently wide margins in which to plan a further development even if this was within the general framework of decadence. On the other hand, the rise in productivity takes place today in a totally different technological framework. There aren't absolutely new sectors with potential for expansion on the horizon. Electronics and information systems derived from them undoubtedly constitute the basis of a new industrial revolution but only through a recognition of their social character, otherwise they can only be the most sophisticated instrument for the fiercest dictatorship that has ever been exercised by one class over another. The fact is that present productive rationalisation is restructuring and replaces the workforce without a hope of reabsorption. The stage of technological development is now of complete automation and restructuring cannot take place on this basis. A new organisation, a new international division of labour is emerging from it.

Within the most advanced factories the traditional assembly line is being replaced by integrated groups. The group, composed of a few workers is completely isolated from the others. The productive process is placed under the control of elaborate electronics and each group is electronically connected to the central planner. From this it takes its orders and

instructions. The real director of the group is a machine. The machine in its turn works under the control of a restricted number of technicians who nevertheless remain completely detached from the workers at the bottom. The traditional factory hierarchy is omitted. The so-called movement of bosses which broke out two years ago at FIAT is basically a product of this new organisational reality.

The new productive process has slowly exhausted all the layers of intermediate technicians and made the foremen attached to the line idle. The lack of clear political denunciations of the new factory situation and the criminal complicity of the unions have prevented this stratification of workers aristocracy in the factory being able to become conscious of their destiny. Their frustration has inevitably been utilised by the bourgeoisie and the working masses have been attacked as 'anarchists' and 'rebels' against all discipline. The unions have been and are the real enemy in this phase of restructuring. Capitalist slogans are crystallised in their platform of demands, all proposed on the grounds of defending skills which is nothing but a recognition of disqualification and of the new division of labour which definitively separates the workers from any link with the productive process and reduces him still further to an appendage of the machine. There is thus a dual movement; on the one hand the categories and internal divisions in the factory are reduced but on the other the workers are divided among themselves through their dispersal into little groups. The totality and indispensable unity of the workers therefore emerges from it even more fragmented even if we can glimpse new possibilities of a greater political synthesis in the economic moments of class struggle. Further, out of the restructuring we are not getting the predominance of the aristocracy of labour, as many pseudo-revolutionary intellectuals have maintained, so much as an acceleration of the proletarianisation of society with the destruction of vast strata of petty bourgeoisie.

The white collar petty bourgeoisie in particular, given the automatising of the tertiary sector, is destined to lose whatever link it has to the productive base and is therefore subject to still further movement and dispersal. The FIAT experience shows that the proletariat must form a strong pole of attraction for this strata otherwise they will form the army of a modern Vendée.

The growing disqualification and instability of the production cycle is moreover changing profoundly the labour market. In the productive process there exists a restricted layer of technicians trained in the programming phase of centralised control and an unskilled workforce which helps the robot whilst it works and finishes the non-automatic tasks which, with the introduction of microprocessors, become fewer and fewer and almost totally subsidiary. Workers also act as a maintenance crew. Even here, however, it isn't as commonly thought; alongside a few highly trained technicians work groups of workers who finish the maintenance work using extremely simple equipment. The labour force is thus easily replaced and therefore has a weaker bargaining position. The instability of the economic cycle has moreover made the possibility for capital to free itself from excess labour at unfavourable moments even more important. Until now it has had recourse to the CI (redundancy schemes) and mass lay-offs. A completely new labour market is being formed. In the great army of unemployed, or amongst those seeking their first job, a factory worker is assigned to a labour agency managed by the state and the unions. The wage is made up of a fixed part (minimum wage) and a part linked to productivity (the biggest part). The unemployed worker always received the minimum which he however loses if he turns a job down. The workers can now work in first one factory then another. Their antagonist is therefore the agency which, being managed by the union, also draws up the work contract. The

dependence of this labour force on the unions is total. Such a labour market weakens the proletariat enormously and reinforces the union as the instrument of bourgeois dictatorship in the workplace. But it also furnishes the objective conditions for a new conflict with the unions, extending from the factory to the whole country, from the microcosm of the integrated groups to the macrocosm of society. To fail to take this into account could be to make a mistake of prime importance for the future development of the class struggle. But up to what point can capitalism push itself down this road? Restructuring undoubtedly raises productivity and facilitates in certain ways the exercise of the dictatorship of capital but also opens up contradictions which taken together could create a really explosive mixture. The balance of the first period of the process of restructuring has produced according to IMF figures 30 million unemployed in the West alone. Without a collapse of 1929 dimensions we have reached unemployment levels equal to the 30s when unemployment in the West was 40 million. According to the forecast of CNR, in 1985, when the process of restructuring will be completed, the industrial sector will lose 30% of present jobs, and the tertiary sector which, according to many intellectuals and economists, should have absorbed those expelled from industry, will lose 5 out of 6 jobs in the service sector. We are dealing with an enormous mass of jobless to add to those already out of work.

Again, according to CNR, even the forecast reduction in weekly working hours to 36 will not form a basis for re-absorption because the tendency to expulsion of labour power is innate in the new technology to a point that even though a reduction in the working day carried out in line with the cycle of production could in fact produce an increase in employment, a further reduction will follow the growth in productivity due to the possibility of shedding labour given group organisation, the automatisation of tasks, pauses and breaks necessary for the 50 hour week. The irreversibility of the tendency for unemployment to grow is even confirmed in the fact that it grows when the cyclical conjuncture is favourable. In Italy, in 1980 in face of a growth of 5% in GNP 250,000 were unemployed. Besides considerations related to tensions in the social order which unemployment of those dimensions creates, the contradiction which opens up between the ends which capitalism pursues and the objectives it reaches is emphasised. Productivity increases are sought in order to produce commodities more competitively but this greater competitiveness even though intended to enlarge the market reduces it since it is achieved by expelling workers from the productive process or rather that mass of workers which by definition form the most consistent part of the total demand for commodities. The excess of commodities, and by definition capital that follows from it, ends inevitably in the search for outlets abroad. But even here things are terribly complicated. The bigger industrialised countries, more or less finding themselves in the same situation, are provoked into adopting protectionist measures which limit international trade. International competition is therefore intensifying but this intensification pushes even further the search for increased productivity into a vicious circle ending up in the present period of no outlets. This frenetic competition has literally brought the poorer countries to their knees. The race for competitiveness is in fact pushing the great industrial concentrations to run right to the end of the road in the search for reductions in production costs, and thus to increase those economies of scale over medium and small scale industry. But in a period in which there is already a high concentration of the means of production, another step in concentration has assumed dimensions which cross national borders. Integrated production processes are coming into existence on a continental scale which involves the world's greatest industrial groups. In Italy alone it's enough to remember the FIAT-Peugeot, Alfa-Nissan, and FIAT-Alfa agreements.

The first of these agreements, which is also the most significant, foresees the construction of a great car factory which will use obviously the most

advanced technology. The economies of scale such a factory allows are enormous. In practice it allows (for the moment only for some models) the elimination of entire factories which become consequentially obsolete. This international integration of the productive process leads, however, inevitably to the deepening of the gulf between the metropolitan countries and the periphery. The countries, even the industrialised ones, that don't manage to hold back the tide with similar colossi are inevitably destined for failure. The poor countries are obviously still more exposed because being deprived of an advanced industrial structure they can't even imagine restructuring but are forced to cede more of the commodities they produce by the old system or more primary products in exchange for means of production and capital coming from the metropolises. But further impoverishment besides translating itself into death by starvation for millions of people is now turning back on the metropolitan areas themselves. The well-publicised case of Mexico now reduced to begging loans simply to pay the interest on previously contracted debts isn't an exception but the next inevitable stage for many other countries of the Third or Fourth World, and even of those semi or recently developed industrialised countries (e.g. Poland) which aren't capable of holding back the tide. But their failure will also signal the culmination of the crisis on a world-scale because it implies a further restriction on the market. On the other hand how do we interpret the numberless conflicts which daily burst out in every corner of the world up to the immediate periphery of the metropolises if not as a type of permanent imperialist war where the poor countries have nothing else to give the big internationalist capitalist monopolies but starving people holding out their arms for that systematic destruction of the productive forces which capitalism physiologically needs? They fight almost always with the illusion of winning independence or a greater autonomy but in reality they are nothing but blind instruments of the shrewd rapine which capital daily perpetuates against the world of labour.

PERSPECTIVES FOR THE CRISIS

Until the first signs of the world economic crisis, our party maintained that the down turn was inevitable. The alternative posed is clear; either the bourgeoisie overcoming the crisis through world war leading towards a more monopolistic capitalism concentrated in the hands of a few power groups, or proletarian revolution. Today we are seeing the proof of this thesis which has been clearly revealed in the last decade. The recovery of the market daily creates new tensions even between the most advanced countries of the two imperialist blocs. Every strategic area is affected thus posing the possibility of extension. The very idea of the inevitability of war is slowly maturing even among the masses. Certainly it is not a question of hours or days. The international bourgeoisie justifies the arms race as necessary for the maintenance of that equilibrium of terror considered as indispensable for peace and sanctifies the atomic bomb as the weapon whose destructive power is so great it discourages war. But in the past other weapons have also been considered in the same way. And it is well known that though they have never been used war has not been avoided. Petty bourgeois pacificism and in particular that of the PCI (Italian Communist Party) furnishes the illusion that Europe could become the leader of a new bloc. Europe taken as a whole forms the most industrialised area of the world. Its productive and technological potential is on the same level as that of the USA and is certainly greater than that of Russia. It is not true that the most virulent trade wars of recent years involving Europe and the USA is enough to stimulate the idea of a military conflict between them. In reality, Europe isn't and can't become leader of a bloc if it is not linked to the countries producing the primary products which it lacks. It is involved in an imperialist bloc which forms a single totality. Whether from a productive or military point of view it is organised in the orbit of the Western bloc. The future split of one or more

European country from the bloc to which it belongs would mean the breakdown of the whole present day imperialist structure. But this hypothesis by no means excludes war - it would indeed be its beginning. Europe, divided in blocs, finds itself once again destined to be the great theatre of the conflict which is being prepared. It's still up to the European proletariat to play the decisive role.

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