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Documents of the Communist Fraction of the Italian Socialist Party

Unitary and Invariant Body of Party Theses

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from the Unitary and Invariant Body of Party Theses

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Theses of the Communist Abstentionist Fraction of the Italian Socialist Party

From a conference in Florence held in May 1920. Published in *Il Soviet*, nos.16–17, June 6 & 27, 1920.

* * *

I

1. – Communism is the doctrine of the social and historical preconditions for the emancipation of the proletariat.

The elaboration of this doctrine began in the period of the first proletarian movements against the effects of the bourgeois system of production. It took shape in the Marxist critique of the capitalist economy, the method of historical materialism, the theory of class struggle and the conception of the development which will take place in the historical process of the fall of the capitalist regime and the proletarian revolution.

2. – It is on the basis of this doctrine which found its first and fundamental systematic expression in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 that the Communist Party is constituted.

3. – In the present historical period, the situation created by bourgeois relations of production, based on the private ownership of the means of production and exchange, on the private appropriation of the products of collective labour and on free competition in private trade of all products, becomes more and more intolerable for the proletariat.

4.— To these economic relations correspond the political institutions characteristic of capitalism: the state based on democratic and parliamentary representation. In a society divided into classes, the state is the organization of the

power of the class which is economically privileged. Although the bourgeoisie represents a minority within society, the democratic state represents the system of armed force organized for the purpose of preserving the capitalist relations of production.

5. – The struggle of the proletariat against capitalist exploitation assumes a succession of forms going from the violent destruction of machines of the organization on a craft basis to improve working conditions, to the creation of factory councils, and to attempts to take possession of enterprises.

In all these individual actions, the proletariat moves in the direction of the decisive revolutionary struggle against the power of the bourgeois state, which prevents the present relations of production from being broken.

6. – This revolutionary struggle is the conflict between the whole proletarian class and the whole bourgeois class. Its instrument is the political class party, the communist party, which achieves the conscious organization of the proletarian vanguard aware of the necessity of unifying its action, in space by transcending the interests of particular groups, trades or nationalities and in time by subordinating to the final outcome of the struggle the partial gains and conquests which do not modify the essence of the bourgeois structure.

Consequently, it is only by organizing itself into a political party that the proletariat constitutes itself into a class struggling for its emancipation.

7. – The objective of the action of the Communist Party is the violent overthrow of bourgeois rule, the conquest of political power by the proletariat, and the organization of the latter into a ruling class.

8. – Parliamentary democracy in which citizens of every class are represented is the form assumed by the organization of the bourgeoisie into a ruling class. The organization of the proletariat into a ruling class will instead be achieved through the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is, through a type of state in which representation (the system of workers' councils) will be decided only by members of the working class (the industrial proletariat and the poor peasants), with the bourgeois being denied the right to vote.

9. – After the old bureaucratic, police and military machine has been destroyed, the proletarian state will unify the armed forces of the labouring class

5. – After overthrowing the capitalist power, the proletariat must completely destroy the old State apparatus in order to organise itself as dominant class and install its own dictatorship: that is to say, it will deny all rights to the bourgeois class and individuals within it for as long as they socially survive, and will found the organs of the new regime on the producing class alone. The Communist Party, having set itself this fundamental aim as the distinctive feature of its program, at the same time represents, organises and directs the proletarian dictatorship.

6. – Only by means of force will the proletarian State be able to systematically intervene in the social economy, and adopt those measures with which the collective management of production and distribution will take the place of the capitalist system.

7. – This transformation of the economy and consequently of the whole of social life will gradually eliminate the necessity for the political State, whose machinery will gradually give way to the rational administration of human activities.

The Programme of the Communist Party of Italy

Leghorn, January 1921

The International Communist Party is constituted on the basis of the following principles established at Leghorn in 1921 at the foundation of the Communist Party of Italy (section of the Communist International).

* * *

1. – Under the present social regime of capital, the conflict between the productive forces and the relations of production develops at an ever increasing rate, giving rise to antithetical interests and to the class struggle between the proletariat and the ruling bourgeoisie.
2. – Production relations today are protected by the power of the bourgeois State: whatever the form of representative system and employment of elective democratic, the bourgeois State remains the organ for the defence of the interests of the capitalist class.
3. – The proletariat can neither smash nor modify the system of capitalist relations of production which exploits it without violently overthrowing the bourgeois power.
4. – The indispensable organ of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat is the class party. The Communist Party, which contains the most advanced and resolute part of the proletariat, unifies the efforts of the labouring masses and transforms their struggles for particular group interests and immediate gains into the general struggle for the revolutionary emancipation of the proletariat. The party is responsible for propagating the revolutionary theory amongst the masses, for organising the material means of action, and for leading the working class through the course of its struggles by ensuring the historical continuity and the international unity of the movement.

into an organization which will have as its task the repression of all counter-revolutionary attempts by the dispossessed class and the execution of measures of intervention into bourgeois relations of production and property.

10. – The process of transition from the capitalist economy to a communist one will be extremely complex, and its phases will differ according to differing degrees of economic development. The endpoint of this process will be the total achievement of the ownership and management of the means of production by the whole unified collectivity, together with the central and rational distribution of productive forces among the different branches of production, and finally the central administration of the allocation of products by the collectivity.

11. – When capitalist economic relationships have been entirely eliminated, the abolition of classes will be an accomplished fact and the state, as a political apparatus of power, will be progressively replaced by the rational, collective administration of economic and social activity.

12. – The process of transforming the relations of production will be accompanied by a wide range of social measures stemming from the principle that the collectivity takes charge of the physical and intellectual existence of all its members. In this way, all the birth marks which the proletariat has inherited from the capitalist world will be progressively eliminated and, in the words of the Manifesto, in place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

13. – The pre-condition for the victory of proletarian power in the struggle for the realization of communism are to be found not so much in the rational use of skills in technical tasks, as in the fact that political responsibilities and the control of the state apparatus are confided to those people who will put the general interest and the final triumph of communism before the particular and limited interests of groups.

Precisely because the Communist Party is the organization of proletarians who have achieved this class consciousness, the aim of the party will be, by its propaganda, to win elective posts for its members within the social organiza-

tion. The dictatorship of the proletariat will therefore be the dictatorship of the Communist Party and the latter will be a party of government in a sense totally opposed to that of the old oligarchies, for communists will assume responsibilities which will demand the maximum of sacrifice and renunciation and they will take upon their shoulders the heaviest burden of the revolutionary task which falls on the proletariat in the difficult labour through which a new world will come to birth.

II

1. – The critique which communists continuously make on the basis of the fundamental methods of Marxism, and the propagation of the conclusions to which it leads, have as their objective the extirpation of those influences which the ideological systems of other classes and other parties have over the proletariat.

2. – First of all, communism sweeps away idealist conceptions which consider the material of the world of thought as the base, and not the result, of the real relations of human life and of their development. All religious and philosophical formulations of this type must be considered as the ideological baggage of classes whose supremacy which preceded the bourgeois epoch rested on an ecclesiastical, aristocratic or dynastic organization receiving its authority only from a pretended super-human investiture.

One symptom of the decadence of the modern bourgeoisie is the fact that those old ideologies which it had itself destroyed reappear in its midst under new forms.

A communism founded on idealist bases would be an unacceptable absurdity.

3. – In still more characteristic fashion, communism is the demolition of the conceptions of liberalism and bourgeois democracy by the Marxist critique. The juridical assertion of freedom of thought and political equality of citizens, and the idea that institutions founded on the rights of the majority and on the mechanism of universal electoral representation are a sufficient base for a gradual and indefinite progress of human society, are ideologies which correspond to the regime of private economy and free competition, and to the inter-

To work then, comrades, beyond false unitarian sentimentalism, beyond miserable personal issues, for the cause of communist revolution to triumph.

Milano, October 1920.

Nicola Bombacci, Amadeo Bordiga, Bruno Fortichiari, Antonio Gramsci, Francesco Misiano, Luigi Polano, Umberto Terracini.

conquered to the Communist Party's directions, from Amsterdam's secretariat, and its joining the union section of the Communist International, according to the rules that are in the latter's Statute.

- d. Struggle to win over to the Communist Party the leadership of the movement of cooperative organization, to rid it from the present bourgeois and petty bourgeois influences and make it supportive of the proletarian revolutionary class movement.
- e. Participation to political and administrative elections in a way that is completely opposed to the old social-democratic practice, with the objective of waging revolutionary propaganda and agitation, of hastening the break-up of the bourgeois organs of representative democracy. Revision, by the party organs, and under the direction of the Central Committee, of the composition of all party elective representations in municipalities, provinces and parliament, with the faculty of dissolving them. Control and permanent direction by the Central Committee of those that will be kept. The parliamentary group will be considered as the organ with the duty of carrying out a specific tactical function under the guidance of the party central. It will not have the faculty to express its opinion, as a separate body, on issues involving party's general politics.
- f. Control of all propaganda activity by the central organs, and in particular disciplining of all party press organs, the managing committees of which will be nominated or confirmed by the Central Committee, which will control their activity in accordance with the political directions of congresses.
- g. Close contact with the youth movement, according to the guidelines provided by the statute of the Communist International; intensification of propaganda and organization among women.

We believe that these general guidelines of the program for common action will receive the approval of all communists, which will actively contribute to assure its triumph in the coming party meetings through a broad agitation and the organization of all forces that will move to this ground.

ests of the capitalist class.

4. – One of the illusions of bourgeois democracy is the belief that the living conditions of the masses can be improved through increasing the education and training provided by the ruling classes and their institutions. In fact it is the opposite: raise the intellectual level of the great masses demands, as a precondition, a better standard of material life, something which is incompatible with the bourgeois regime. Moreover through its schools, the bourgeoisie tries to broadcast precisely the ideologies which inhibit the masses from perceiving the present institutions as the very obstacle to their emancipation.

5. – Another fundamental tenet of bourgeois democracy lies in the principle of nationality. The formation of states on a national basis corresponds to the class necessities of the bourgeoisie at the moment when it establishes its own power, in that it can thus avail itself of national and patriotic ideologies (which correspond to certain interests common in the initial period of capitalism to people of the same race, language and customs) and use them to delay and mitigate the conflict between the capitalist state and the proletarian masses.

National irredentists are thus born of essentially bourgeois interests.

The bourgeoisie itself does not hesitate to trample on the principle of nationality as soon as the development of capitalism drives it to the often-violent conquest of foreign markets and of the resulting conflict among the great states over the latter. Communism transcends the principle of nationality in that it demonstrates the identical predicament in which the mass of disinherited workers find themselves with respect to employers, whatever may be the nationality of either the former or the latter; it proclaims the international association to be the type of political organization which the proletariat will create when it, in turn, comes to power.

In the perspective of the communist critique, therefore, the recent world war was brought about by capitalist imperialism. This critique demolishes those various interpretations which take up the viewpoint of one or another bourgeois state and try to present the war as a vindication of the national rights of certain peoples or as a struggle of democratically more advanced states against those organized on pre-bourgeois forms, or finally, as a supposed necessity of self-defense against enemy aggression.

6. – Communism is likewise opposed to the conceptions of bourgeois pacifism and to Wilsonian illusions on the possibility of a world association of states, based on disarmament and arbitration and having as its pre-condition the Utopia of a sub-division of state units by nationality. For communists, war will become impossible and national questions will be solved only when the capitalist regime has been replaced by the International Communist Republic.

7. – In a third area, communism presents itself as the transcendence of the systems of utopian socialism which seek to eliminate the faults of social organization by instituting complete plans for a new organization of society whose possibility of realization was not put in relation to the real development of history.

8. – The proletariat's elaboration of its own interpretation of society and history to guide its action against the social relations of the capitalist world, continuously gives rise to a multitude of schools or currents, influenced to a greater or lesser degree by the very immaturity of the conditions of struggle and by all the various bourgeois prejudices. From all this arise the errors and setbacks in proletarian action. But it is due to this material of experience that the communist movement succeeds in defining with ever greater clarity the central features of its doctrine and its tactics, differentiating itself clearly from all the other currents active within the proletariat itself and openly combating them.

9. – The formation of producers' cooperatives, in which the capital belongs to the workers who work for them, cannot be a path towards the suppression of the capitalist system. This is because the acquisition of raw materials and the distribution of products are effected according to the laws of private economy and consequently, credit, and therefore private capital ultimately exercises control over the collective capital of the cooperative itself.

10. – Communists cannot consider economic trade or craft organizations to be sufficient for the struggle for the proletarian revolution or as the basic organs of the communist economy.

The organization of the class through trade unions serves to neutralize competition between workers of the same trade and prevents wages falling to the lowest level. However it cannot lead to the elimination of capitalist profit, still less to the unification of the workers of all trades against the privilege of

4. Modification of internal party statutes to introduce into them the criteria of homogeneity as to centralization and discipline which are the indispensable basis of Communist Party structure; this by adopting innovations, such as a minimum waiting period for new party membership applications, and periodical membership reviews, the first to be made soon after the Congress.
5. Obligation for all Party members of total discipline of action towards all tactical decisions of both the International and the National Congress, the fulfillment of which will be the responsibility of the Central Committee, given full powers, as nominated by the Congress.

The guidelines of Party activity will be inspired by the enforcement of the criteria established by Moscow's Congress, and in short will be the following:

- a. Preparation of proletarian insurrectional action by exploiting all legal propaganda instruments, and by organizing at the same time on a broad basis illegal work, to create all indispensable conditions for action, and provide all necessary material means.
- b. Organization, within all unions, leagues, cooperatives, factories, firms, etc., of communist groups, connected to party organization, for the propaganda in, and the conquest of, such organisms, and for the revolutionary preparation.
- c. Action within the economic organizations to bring their leadership to the Communist Party. Appeal to revolutionary proletarian organizations which are outside the *Confederazione Generale del Lavoro* (tr. General Confederation of Labour. Italian national trade union) to return to support the struggle of communists against its present orientation and its present leaders. Rejection of the alliance agreement between Party and Confederation, which is inspired by the social-democratic criterium of parity of rights between party and trade union, to replace it with the actual control of the action of the proletarian economic organizations by the Communist Party through the discipline of communists who work inside the unions to the directions of the Communist Party. Separation of the Confederation, as soon as it is

the revolutionary process cannot agree with those of communists; and correctly criticize such a behavior, which is in deep contrast with the revolutionary necessities and with the revolutionary language of the same party leaders.

It is for the reasons given above, and for all other reasons that in several instances have been more extensively expounded by its left wing elements, that the Italian Socialist Party proved to be unsuited to his task; it is for these reasons that the International Moscow Congress, by accepting the requests of the Italian comrades who belong to a more advanced tendency, resolved to face clearly and firmly the issue of our party's renewal, and has set the foundations on which our next congress will have to work to achieve such tasks.

Which are therefore the tasks of the next Congress? Which are the objectives we must give ourselves so that it bravely faces the disease and utilizes the most radical remedies, rather than wasting time in vain verbal skirmishes and shrewd lobbying? We believe that these objectives and intentions could and should be present in all comrades who share, together with the fundamental principles of communism, the desire to apply in the most determined way all Moscow's resolutions to our party's formation and activity.

These resolutions will be the common platform of action for those left wing groups and currents which, although separated over particular conceptions of certain issues of doctrine and tactics, share the criticisms moved, from a revolutionary point of view, to the insufficiency of Party action.

The program of common action we are suggesting in view of the Congress can, in our opinion, be synthesized in the following main points:

1. Change of Party name into that of Communist Party of Italy (section of the Communist International).
2. Revision of the program voted in Bologna, some particular statements of which must be made more consistent with the principles of the Third International, so as to oppose it once more to the social-democratic program favored by the party right.
3. Consequent and formal exclusion from the Party of all members and organisms which have proclaimed, or will proclaim themselves, against the communist program through sections or Congress vote, or by means of any other type of expression.

bourgeois power. Further, the simple transfer of the ownership of the enterprises from the private employer to the workers' union could not achieve the basic economic features of communism, for the latter necessitates the transfer of ownership to the whole proletarian collectivity since this is the only way to eliminate the characteristics of the private economy in the appropriation and distribution of products.

Communists consider the union as the site of an initial proletarian experience which permits the workers to go further towards the concept and the practice of political struggle, which has as its organ the class party.

11. — In general, it is an error to believe that the revolution is a question of forms of organizations which proletarians group into according to their position and interests within the framework of the capitalist system of production.

It is not a modification of the structure of economic organizations, then, which can provide the proletariat with an effective instrument for its emancipation.

Factory unions and factory councils emerge as organs for the defense of the interests of the proletarians of different enterprises at the point when it begins to appear possible that capitalist despotism in the management of the enterprises could be limited. But obtaining the right of these organizations to supervise (to monitor) production to a more or less large degree is not incompatible with the capitalist system and could even be used by it as a means to preserve its domination.

Even the transfer of factory management to factory councils would not mean (any more than in the case of the unions) the advent of the communist system. According to the true communist conception, workers' supervision of production will not be achieved until after the overthrow of the bourgeois power, and it will be a supervision over the running of every enterprise exercised by the whole proletariat unified in the state of workers' councils. Communist management of production will be the direction of every branch and every productive unit by rational collective organs which will represent the interests of all workers united in the work of building communism.

12. — Capitalist relations of production cannot be modified by the intervention of the organs of bourgeois power.

This is why the transfer of private enterprises to the state or to the local government does not correspond in the slightest to the communist conception. Such a transfer is invariably accompanied by the payment of the capital value of the enterprise to the former owners who thus fully retain their right to exploit. The enterprises themselves continue to function as private enterprises within the framework of the capitalist economy, and they often become convenient instruments in the work of class preservation and defense undertaken by the bourgeois state.

13. – The idea that capitalist exploitation of the proletariat can be gradually diminished and then eliminated by the legislative and reformist action of present political institutions, be it elicited by representatives of the proletarian party inside those institutions or even by mass agitation, leads only to complicity in the defense of the privileges of the bourgeoisie. The latter will on occasion pretend to give up a minimum of its privileges to try to appease the anger of the masses and to divert their revolutionary attempts against the bases of the capitalist regime.

14. – The conquest of political power by the proletariat, even if such an objective is considered as the final, total aim of its action, cannot be achieved by winning a majority within bourgeois elective organs.

Thanks to the executive organs of the state, which are the direct agents of the bourgeoisie, the latter very easily ensures a majority within the elective organs for its delegates or for those elements which fall under its influence or into its game because they want to individually or collectively win elective posts. Moreover, participation in such institutions requires the agreement to respect the juridical and [political bases of the bourgeois constitution. This agreement is merely formal but nevertheless it is sufficient to free the bourgeoisie from even the slightest embarrassment of an accusation of formal illegality at the point when it will logically resort to its real means of armed defense rather than abandon power and permit the proletariat to smash its bureaucratic and military machine of domination.

15. – To recognize the necessity of insurrectionary struggle for the seizure of power, while at the same time proposing that the proletariat exercise its power by conceding representation to the bourgeoisie in new political organizations

As concerns the political party of the working class, the Socialist Party, which is supposed to sum up in itself the vanguard revolutionary energies, to impress a new character and a new direction to the struggle methods for the achievements of the maximum objectives of communism, it too manifests itself unsuited to the task.

It is certainly true that the majority of the Party, by adopting in Bologna the new maximalist program, and by giving its adhesion to Moscow's International, believed to have responded to the requirements of the historical problem emerged after the end of the great war. This had everywhere set one against the other, the two antithetical conceptions of the proletarian struggle: the social-democratic one, dishonored by the failure of the Second International and by its complicity with the bourgeoisies; and the communist one, which avails itself of the original Marxist statements and of the glorious experience of the Russian revolution which, organized in the new International, launched to the proletariat its revolutionary watchwords: violent struggle for the destruction of bourgeois power, for the proletarian dictatorship, for the regime of the workers' councils.

As a matter of fact the Party, maybe deluded by the legitimate satisfaction for having kept during the war a quite different demeanour if compared to the other parties of the Second International, did not understand that a formal program change had to be followed by a profound renewal of its structure and functions.

The events that followed demonstrated, thanks to circumstances that it is superfluous to recall, that the Party was far from being equal to the revolutionary task the historical situation was assigning to it.

It did not significantly modify the criteria of its politics; its mainly parliamentary action, by relying in the traditional pre-war methods, has often played the bourgeois government's game.

In the moments when crucial decision had to be taken, old fashioned persons were left arbiters of the situation; the party was not able to take back from them the leadership of the union and parliamentary action, and we relapsed into the old methods of agreements and compromises. The disappointed proletarian masses are then in part turning to other revolutionary currents that militate outside the party, like syndicalists and anarchists, whose conceptions of

the left elements of the Party itself to make a joint effort to abandon an intolerable situation, which is in contrast with the needs of the revolutionary struggle of the Italian proletariat.

All this induced us to become the promoters of a movement aimed at preparing the Congress and for an agreed understanding among all those comrades who veritably feel the need that the Congress indicates a definitive and strong solution for the serious problem.

We are not going to dwell in recalling the situation of our country. The conditions in which it participated to, and came out of the great world war, and the episodes of this troubled post war period, demonstrate even to our enemies the multiple symptoms of the irreparable disorganization of the present regime, and its incapability to fight the revolutionary consequences of its internal decomposition.

On the other hand the murmur, the feeling, the rebel impulse of the masses of all proletarian layers grow day by day, and manifest themselves in the continual agitations, in the fervour of the class battles; which are carried on with the aspiration, albeit merely instinctive, that such battles will in the end result in the final victory of the proletarian revolution.

The bourgeoisie, although conscious of its impotence to face the undoing of its social regime, concentrates its last energies in a defense against this advance of the revolutionary masses. On the one hand it organizes regular and irregular corps for the armed repression of workers risings, on the other it develops a shrewd policy of apparent concessions and fake benevolence towards the aspirations of the masses.

The organisms which lead the proletarian action, and whose duty is to develop a victorious opposition to this policy of bourgeois conservation, have several times unmistakably shown their inadequacy.

The union organization takes in large numbers of workers, that increase day by day, but while the latter in their struggles and strikes demonstrate that they feel the need to widen the battlefield and to move towards revolutionary conquests, the leading bureaucracy of the unions gives to the whole activity the traditional character of corporative struggles, restricting action within the boundaries of the pursuit of gradual improvements of the proletariat's conditions of living.

(constituent assemblies or combinations of these with the system of workers' councils) is an unacceptable programme and is opposed to the central communist demand, the dictatorship of the proletariat. The process of expropriating the bourgeoisie would be immediately compromised if this class retained a means to influence somehow the formation of the representative organs of the expropriating proletarian state. This would permit the bourgeoisie to use the influence which it will inevitably retain because of its experience and its intellectual and technical training, in order to deploy its political activity towards the reestablishment of its power in a counter-revolution. The same consequences would result if the slightest democratic prejudice was allowed to survive in regard to an equality of treatment which is supposedly to be granted to the bourgeois by the proletarian power in such matters as freedom of association, propaganda and the press.

16. – The programme which proposes an organ of political representation based on delegates from the various trades and professions of all the social classes is not even in form a road leading to the system of workers' councils, since the latter is characterized by the exclusion of the bourgeois from electoral rights and its central organization is not chosen on the basis of trade but by territorial constituency. The form of representation in question is rather an inferior stage even in comparison with present parliamentary democracy.

17. – Anarchism is profoundly opposed to the ideas of communism. It aims at the immediate installation of a society without a state and political system and advocates, for the economy of the future, the autonomous functioning of units of production, rejecting any concept of a central organization and regulation of human activities in production and distribution. Such a conception is close to that of the bourgeois private economy and remains alien to the fundamental essence of communism. Moreover the immediate elimination of the state as a machinery of political power would be equivalent to a failure to offer resistance to the counter-revolution, unless one pre-supposes that classes have been immediately abolished, that is to say that there has been the so-called revolutionary expropriation simultaneous with the insurrection against bourgeois power.

Not the slightest possibility of this exists, given the complexity of the pro-

letarian tasks in the substitution of the communist economy for the present one, and given the necessity that such a process be directed by a central organization representing the general interest of the proletariat and subordinating to this interest all the local and particular interests which act as the principal conservative force within capitalism.

III

1. – The communist doctrine and economic determinism do not see communists as passive spectators of historical destiny but on the contrary as indefatigable fighters. Struggle and action, however, would be ineffective if divorced from the lessons of doctrine and of experience seen in the light of the communist critique.

2. – The revolutionary work of communists is based on the organization into a party of those proletarians who unite a consciousness of communist principles with the decision to devote all their energy to the cause of the revolution. The party, organized internationally, functions on the basis of discipline towards the decisions of the majority and towards the decisions of the central organs chosen by that majority to lead the movement.

3. – Propaganda and proselytism in which the party accepts new members only on the basis of the most sure guarantees are fundamental activities of the party. Although it bases the success of its action on the propagation of its principles and final objectives and although it struggles in the interest of the immense majority of society, the communist movement does not make the approval of the majority a pre-condition for its action. The criterion which determines the occasion to launch a revolutionary action is the objective evaluation of our own forces and those of our enemies, taking into consideration all the complex factors of which the numerical element is not the sole or even the most important determinant.

4. – The communist party develops an intense work of study and political critique intimately linked to the exigencies of action and to historical experience, and it strives to organize this work on an international basis. Externally, in all circumstances and with the means at its disposal, it works to diffuse the

Manifesto-Programme of the Party Left

From an October 1920 meeting in Milan to prepare the Florence Congress: for the enforcement of Moscow's decisions, for the elimination of social-democrats, for the Communist Party.

* * *

Days ago, in Milan, a meeting has taken place of a small number of comrades representing the extremist fractions and tendencies within the Italian Socialist Party. From this meeting the program-manifesto we are now publishing has been produced; it does not need any comment.

We merely notice that the participation of abstentionists to this movement cannot be a surprise for anyone. Back at the Bologna Congress a meeting of our fraction deliberated to propose an agreement to electionist communists, according to which they, apart from the electoral issue, accepted two other strongholds of our motion: the change of Party name and the expulsion of the social-democratic right. This step did not have a favourable outcome, because, as is well known, nobody wanted to give up the prejudice of Party unity, with the exception of us abstentionists.

Today, after the known events and after the International Communist Congress, the logical development of our action leads us to a loyal agreement with the Party's revolutionary elements; with them, without difficulties and with no disagreement whatsoever, the project of common action that is today presented to all Italian comrades was drawn.

* * *

TO THE COMRADES AND TO THE SECTIONS OF THE ITALIAN SOCIALIST PARTY

The crisis that for a long time has been afflicting our Party has received additional attention thanks to both the recent events in Italy and to the resolutions of the Second Congress of the Third International; it is therefore necessary and urgent, as the date of the National Party Congress is getting close, for

ey, helps to strengthen the feeling that this is the true central activity to achieve the aims of communism; on the other hand, it leads to complete cessation of the work of revolutionary organization and preparation. It gives to the party organization a technical character quite in opposition to the requirements of revolutionary work, legal as well as illegal.

11. – For the parties which have gone over, by a majority resolution, to the Third International, the allowance of the continuation of electoral action prevents the necessary sorting out and elimination of social-democratic elements, without which the Third International would fail in its historic role, and would no longer be a disciplined and homogeneous army of the worldwide revolution.

12. – The very nature of the debates which have parliament and other democratic organs for their theatre excludes every possibility of passing from a criticism of the policy of the opposing parties, to a propaganda against the very principle of parliamentarism, and to an action which would overstep parliamentary rules—just as it would not be possible to get the right to speak if we refused to submit to all the formalities established by electoral procedure. Success in the parliamentary fencing will always depend only on the skill in handling the common weapon of the principles on which the institution itself is based, and in dealing with the tricks of parliament procedure—just as the success in the electoral struggle will always be judged only by the number of votes or seats obtained. Every effort of the Communist parties to give a completely different character to the practice of parliamentarism cannot but lead to failure the energies spent in that Sisyphean labour, whereas the cause of the Communist revolution calls these energies without delay on the terrain of the direct attack against the regime of capitalist exploitation.

lessons of its own critical experience and to refute enemy schools and parties. Above all, the party conducts its activity and propaganda among the proletarian masses and works to polarize them around it, particularly at those times when they are set in motion in reaction against the conditions capitalism imposes upon them and especially within organizations formed by proletarians to defend their immediate interests.

5. – Communists therefore penetrate proletarian cooperatives, unions, factory councils, and form groups of communist workers within them. They strive to win a majority and posts of leadership so that the mass of proletarians mobilized by these associations subordinate their action to the highest political and revolutionary ends of the struggle for communism.

6. – The communist party, on the other hand, remains outside all institutions and associations in which bourgeois and workers participate in common, or worse still, which are led and sponsored by members of the bourgeoisie (societies of mutual assistance, charities, cultural schools, popular universities, Freemasons' Lodges, etc.). It combats the action and influence of these institutions and associations and tries to divert proletarians from them.

7. – Participation in elections to the representative organs of bourgeois democracy and participation in parliamentary activity, while always presenting a continuous danger of deviation, may be utilized for propaganda and for schooling the movement during the period in which there does not yet exist the possibility of overthrowing bourgeois rule and in which, as a consequence, the party's task is restricted to criticism and opposition. In the present period, which began with the end of the world war, with the first communist revolutions and the creation of the Third International, communists pose, as the direct objective of the political action of the proletariat in every country, the revolutionary conquest of power, to which end all the energy and all the preparatory work of the party must be devoted.

In this period, it is inadmissible to participate in these organs which function as a powerful defensive instrument of the bourgeoisie and which are designed to operate even within the ranks of the proletariat. It is precisely in opposition to these organs, to their structure as to their function, that communists call for the system of workers' councils and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Because of the great importance which electoral activity assumes in practice, it is not possible to reconcile this activity with the assertion that it is not the means of achieving the principal objective of the party's action, which is the conquest of power. It also is not possible to prevent it from absorbing all the activity of the movement and from diverting it from revolutionary preparation.

8. – The electoral conquest of local governmental bodies entails the same inconveniences as parliamentarism but to an even greater degree. It cannot be accepted as a means of action against bourgeois power for two reasons: 1) these local bodies have no real power but are subjected to the state machine, and 2) although the assertion of the principle of local autonomy can cause some embarrassment for the ruling bourgeoisie, such a method would have the result of providing it with a base of operations in its struggle against the establishment of proletarian power and is contrary to the communist principle of centralized action.

9. – In the revolutionary period, all the efforts of the communists concentrate on enabling the action of the masses to attain a maximum of intensity and efficiency. Communists combine propaganda and revolutionary preparation with the organization of large and frequent proletarian demonstrations above all in the major centres and strive to use economic movements in order to organize demonstrations of a political character in which the proletariat reaffirms and strengthens its will to overthrow the bourgeois power.

10. – The Communist Party carries its propaganda into the ranks of the bourgeois army. Communist anti-militarism is not based on a sterile humanitarianism. Its aim instead is to convince proletarians that the bourgeoisie arms them to defend its own interests and to use their force against the cause of the proletariat.

11. – The Communist Party trains itself to act as the general staff of the proletariat in the revolutionary war. For this reason it prepares and organizes its own network of intelligence and communication. Above all, it supports and organizes the arming of the proletariat.

12. – The Communist Party concludes no agreements or alliances with other

Revolution which was the first realization of the conquest of power by the proletariat, and by the constitution of a new International in opposition to the social democracy of the traitors. In this historical period, and in those countries where the democratic regime achieved its formation a long time ago, there is no possibility of using the parliamentary tribune for the communist revolutionary work, and the clarity of propaganda, no less than the efficiency of the preparation for the final struggle for the dictatorship, demand that Communists conduct an agitation for an election boycott by the workers.

8. – In these historical conditions, where the main problem of the movement is the revolutionary conquest of power, the whole political activity of the class party must be devoted to this direct end. It is necessary to shatter the bourgeois lie according to which every clash between opposing political parties, every struggle for power, must necessarily take place within the framework of the democratic mechanism, that is through elections and parliamentary debates. We cannot succeed in destroying that lie without breaking with the traditional method of calling the workers to vote in elections side by side with members of the bourgeoisie, and without putting an end to the spectacle where the delegates of the proletariat act on the same parliamentary ground as the delegates of its exploiters.

9. – The dangerous idea that all political action consists of electoral and parliamentary action has already been spread too widely by the ultra-parliamentary practice of the traditional socialist parties. On the other hand, the distaste of the proletariat for the treacherous practice has lent favorable ground to the mistakes of syndicalism and anarchism which deny all value of party's political action and role. For that reason the Communist parties will never obtain great success in propagandizing the revolutionary Marxist method if the severing of all contacts with the machinery of bourgeois democracy is not put at the basis of their work for the dictatorship of the proletariat and the workers' councils.

10. – In spite of all the public speeches and all the theoretical statements, the very great importance which is attached in practice to the electoral campaign and its results, and the fact that for a long period the party has to devote to that cause all its means and all its resources in men, in the press, and even in mon-

bourgeoisie. They must also be destroyed by the revolutionary proletariat and replaced by local Soviets of the workers' deputies.

4. – While the executive, military and police machinery of the bourgeois State organizes direct action against the proletarian revolution, representative democracy constitutes a means of indirect defense which works by spreading among the masses the illusion that their emancipation can be attained through a peaceful process, and the illusion that the form of the proletarian State can also have a parliamentary basis with the right of representation for the bourgeois minority. The result of this democratic influence on the proletarian masses has been the corruption of the socialist movement of the Second International in the domain of theory as well as in that of action.

5. – The task of Communists at the present moment in their work of ideological and material preparation for the revolution is above all to remove from the minds of the proletariat those illusions and prejudices, which have been spread with the complicity of the old social-democratic leaders in order to turn it away from its historical path. In the countries where a democratic regime has held sway for a long time and has penetrated deeply into the habits and mentality of the masses, no less than into the mentality of the traditional socialist parties, this work is of a very great importance and comes among the first problems of revolutionary preparation.

6. – Possibilities of propaganda, agitation and criticism could be offered by participation in elections and in parliamentary activity during that period when, in the international proletarian movement, the conquest of power did not seem to be a possibility in the very near future, and when it was not yet a question of direct preparation for the realization of the dictatorship of the proletariat. On the other hand in a country where the bourgeois revolution is in course of progress and is creating new institutions, Communist intervention in the representative organs can offer the possibility of wielding an influence on the development of events in order to make the revolution end in victory for the proletariat.

7. – The present historical period was opened by the end of the World War with its consequences for the social bourgeois organization, by the Russian

political movements which share with it a specific immediate objective, but diverge from it in their programme of further action. It must equally refuse the alliance otherwise known as the "united front" with all working-class tendencies which accept insurrectionary action against the bourgeoisie but diverge from the communist programme in the development of subsequent action.

Communists have no reason to consider the growth of forces tending to overthrow bourgeois power as a favorable condition when the forces working for the constitution of proletarian power on communist directives remain insufficient, since only a communist leadership can assure its success.

13. – The soviets or councils of workers, peasants and soldiers, constitute the organs of proletarian power and can exercise their true function only after the overthrow of bourgeois rule.

Soviets are not in themselves organs of revolutionary struggle. They become revolutionary when the Communist Party wins a majority within them.

Workers' councils can also arise before the revolution, in a period of acute crisis in which the state power is seriously threatened.

In a revolutionary situation, it may be necessary for the party to take the initiative in forming soviets, but this cannot be a means of precipitating such a situation. If the power of the bourgeoisie is strengthened, the survival of councils can present a serious danger to the revolutionary struggle the danger of a conciliation and a combination of proletarian organs with the organs of bourgeois democracy.

14. – What distinguishes communists is not that, in every situation and in every episode of the class struggle, they call for the immediate mobilization of all proletarian forces for a general insurrection. What distinguishes them is that they clearly say that the phase of insurrection is an inevitable outcome of the struggle, and that they prepare the proletariat to face it in conditions favorable to the success and the further development of the revolution.

Depending on the situation which the party can better assess than the rest of the proletariat the party can therefore find itself confronted with the necessity to act in order to hasten or to delay the moment of the decisive battle. In any event, the specific task of the party is to fight against those who, desiring to hasten revolutionary action at any price, could drive the proletariat into disas-

ter, and against the opportunists who exploit every occasion in which decisive action is undesirable in order to block the revolutionary movement by diverting the action of the masses towards other objectives. The Communist Party, on the contrary, must lead the action of the masses always further in an effective preparation for the final and inevitable armed struggle against the defensive forces of bourgeois rule.

Theses on Parliamentarism

Presented by the Communist Abstentionist Fraction of the Italian Socialist Party at the Second Congress of the Communist International in Moscow, July–August 1920.

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1. – Parliamentarism is the form of political representation characteristic of the capitalist regime. In the field of principle the critique of the Marxist Communists in regards to parliamentarism and bourgeois democracy in general shows that the franchise granted to all citizens of all social classes in the elections of the representative organs of the State cannot prevent the whole governmental machinery of the State constituting the committee of defense of the interests of the ruling capitalist class, nor can it prevent the State from organizing itself as the historical instrument of the bourgeoisie in the struggle against the proletarian revolution.

2. – The Communists categorically reject the possibility of the working class conquering power by a majority in Parliament instead of attaining it by an armed revolutionary struggle. The conquest of political power by the proletariat, which is the starting point of the work of Communist economic construction, implies the violent and immediate suppression of the democratic organs, which will be replaced by the organs of the proletarian power, the workers' councils. With the exploiting class being thus deprived of all political rights, the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is to say, a system of class government and representation, will be realized. The suppression of parliamentarism is therefore a historic goal of the communist movement; still more, it is precisely representative democracy which is the first structure of bourgeois society which must be overthrown, before capitalist property, before even the bureaucratic and governmental State machinery.

3. – The same goes for the municipal or communal institutions of the bourgeoisie, which are falsely regarded as liable to be opposed to the governmental organs. In fact their machinery is identical with the state mechanism of the