

Theses on the Nature and Role of the Revolutionary Communist Party

International Communist Party

Texts of the Communist Left No. 3

Contents

September 1980 foreword	1
Characteristic Theses of the Party	2
Considerations on the Organic Activity of the Party When the General Situation is Historically Unfavorable.....	15
Theses on the Historical Duty, Action and the Structure of the World Communist Party	19
Supplementary Theses on the Historical Task, the Action, and the Structure of the World Communist Party.....	27

September 1980 foreword

Although victorious, along with the United States of America and Russia, in the second imperialist war, England lost forever its predominance in the imperialist world; but it didn't lose its domination over the metropolitan proletariat, which it had used to dominate the colonial peoples and oppressed nations of the world.

By way of these meager and rare texts, products of the Communist Marxist Left, the proletariat, smarting from its many defeats at the hands of its deadly enemy by whom it continues to be exploited, here makes an umpteenth effort, and not the last, to reread correctly the history of its class, using them to rebuild its revolutionary political party. Because this is the point: to rebuild the class political party of the proletariat.

The four texts that this pamphlet contains are a contribution, even if a small one, toward reaching this great historical objective, to which true communists call proletarians and above all young proletarians. The English working class has frequently launched powerful and wide-ranging struggles to defend its economical conditions, in order to fight against capitalist greed and in support of the official political organization that claims to represent their interests, the Labour Party. But these struggles have neither freed them from their centuries-old condition of being exploited, nor resulted in the acquisition of an advanced political position towards capitalism and its State. These struggles, and the network organized by the unions and the Labour Party, haven't allowed them to confront the bourgeois regime as an independent and autonomous class. The English proletariat, on a see-saw of Conservative and

Labour governments, has been played with like a tennis ball. As long as Great Britain controlled a colonial empire, certain economical and social concessions were made to the proletariat in exchange for its social and political "availability"; but now that British colonial predominance is a thing of the past, not only is the English proletariat fast losing all of its privileges, but it is also unable to recover its class independence.

The reason for this tragic situation is the absence of the revolutionary political party in England and in the world. If the English proletariat doesn't start making preparations, with the support of proletarians of other countries, for the building of its political party, it can never hope to free itself from the rule of the capitalist regime, especially if this rule is exercised by "socialist", "labour", or "workers" parties that falsely proclaim themselves to be acting in the name of the workers. Such work requires sacrifice, abnegation, strength, patience and the commitment of workers who in for "the long haul", who are interested in learning from the history of the world proletariat. In the spirit of dedication to this work, we present these texts to our brothers, so that they can get nearer to the programmatic bases of the party, on which the political organization rests; because without its historical programme, the proletariat cannot finally triumph over the capitalistic bourgeoisie.

Today, this may all seem a dream, a utopia, but myths have always had a way of urging the working classes on to overcome "harsh reality", shattering that notion of the enemy's invincibility which so undermines the confidence of working classes. But an even greater weakness is the lack of the party. Therefore the party must come first.

Characteristic Theses of the Party

Produced at a Party meeting held in Florence, 8–9
December, 1951

I – Theory

The doctrine of the Party is founded on the principles of the historical materialism of the critical communism set out by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*, in the *Capital* and their other fundamental works and which formed the basis of the Communist International constituted in 1919 and of the Italian Communist Party founded at Leghorn in 1921 (section of the Communist International).

1—In the present capitalist social regime an ever increasing contrast between productive forces and production relations is developing. This contrast reveals itself in the opposing interests and the class struggle between the proletariat and the ruling bourgeoisie.

2—The present production relations are protected by the bourgeois State. Even when democratic elections are used and whatever the form of the representative system may be, it is always the exclusive organ of the capitalist class.

3—The proletariat cannot crush or modify the mechanism of capitalist production relations, source of its exploitation, without wrecking the bourgeois power through violence.

4—The class Party is the indispensable organ for the proletarian revolutionary struggle. The Communist Party consists of the most advanced and resolute part of the proletariat, unites the efforts of the working masses transforming their struggles for group interests and contingent issues into the general struggle for the revolutionary emancipation of the proletariat. Propagating the revolutionary theory among the masses, organizing the material means of action, leading the working class all along its struggle, by securing the historical continuity and the international unity of the movement, are duties of the Party.

5—After it has knocked down the power of the capitalist State, the proletariat must completely destroy the old State apparatus in order to organize itself as ruling class and set up its own dictatorship. It will deny all functions and political rights to any individual of the bourgeois class as long as they survive socially, founding the organs of the new regime exclusively on the productive class. Such is the programme which the Communist Party sets itself and which is characteristic of it. It is the Party alone which therefore represents, organizes and directs the proletarian dictatorship. The necessary defense of the proletarian State against all counter-revolutionary attempts can only be se-

cured by taking from the bourgeoisie and from all the parties, enemies of proletarian dictatorship, any means of agitation and political propaganda, and by the proletariat's armed organization, able to repulse all internal and external attacks.

6—Only the force of the proletarian State will be able to put systematically into effect the necessary measures for intervening in the relations of the social economy, by means of 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 social life will lead to the gradual elimination of the necessity for the political State which will progressively become an apparatus for the rational administration of human activities.

In the face of the capitalist world and the workers' movement following the Second World War the position of the Party is founded on the following points:

8—In the course of the first half of the twentieth century the capitalist social system has been developing, in the economic field, by creating monopolistic trusts among the employers, and by trying to control and to manage production and exchanges according to control plans with State management of whole sectors of production. In the political field, there has been an increase of the police and army potential of the State, all governments adopting a more totalitarian form. All these are neither new sorts of social organizations as a transition from capitalism to socialism, nor revivals of pre-bourgeois political regimes. On the contrary, they are definite forms of a more and more direct and exclusive management of power and State by the most developed forces of capital.

This course excludes the progressive, pacifist and evolutionist interpretations of the becoming of the bourgeois regime, and confirms the prevision of the concentration and of the antagonistic arraying of the class forces. The proletariat in order to confront its enemies' growing potential with strengthened revolutionary energy, must repel the illusory revival of democratic liberalism and constitutional guarantees. The Party must not even accept this as a means of agitation: it must historically get rid once and for all, of the practice of alliances, even for transitory issues, with the middle class as well as with the pseudo-proletarian and reformist parties.

9—The world imperialistic wars show that the crisis of disgregation of capitalism is inevitable as it has entered the phase when its expansion, instead of signifying a continual increment of the productive forces, is conditioned by repeated and ever-growing destructions. These wars have caused repeated deep crises in the workers' world organization because the dominant classes could impose on them

military and national solidarity with one or another of the belligerents. The only historical alternative to be set against such a situation is the awakening of the internal class struggle, until the civil war of the working masses to overthrow the power of all bourgeois states and of world coalitions, with the reconstitution of the International Communist Party as an autonomous force, independent of any organized political or military power.

10—The proletarian State, being its apparatus an instrument and a weapon for the struggle in a transition historical period, does not draw its force from constitutional canons and representative systems. The most complete historical example of such a State is up to the present that of the Soviets (workers' councils) which were created during the October 1917 Russian Revolution, when the working class armed itself under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party alone; during the totalitarian seizure of power, the wiping out of the Constituent Assembly, the struggle to repulse the external attacks of bourgeois governments and to crush the internal rebellion of defeated classes, of middle and petty-bourgeois strata and of opportunist parties, inevitable allies of the counter-revolution at the decisive moment.

11—The integral realization of socialism within the limits of one country is inconceivable and the socialist transformation cannot be carried out without failure and momentary setbacks. The defense of the proletarian regime against the ever-present dangers of degeneration is possible only if the proletarian State is always co-ordinate with the international struggle of the working class of each country against its own bourgeoisie, its State and its army; this struggle permits of no respite even in wartime. This co-ordination can only be secured if the world communist Party controls the politics and programme of the States where the working class has vanquished.

II – Tasks of the Communist Party

1—The proletariat can only free itself from the capitalist exploitation if it fights under a revolutionary political organ: the Communist Party.

2—The chief aspect of the political struggle in the Marxist sense is the civil war and the armed uprising by which a class overthrows the power of the opposed dominant class and sets up its own power. Such a struggle can only succeed if it is led by the Party organization.

3—Neither the struggle against the power of the exploiting class nor the successive uprooting of the capitalist economic structures can be achieved without the political revolutionary party: the proletarian dictatorship is indispensable all along the historical period where such tremendous changes will take place and will be exercised openly by the Party.

4—The Party defends and propagates the theory of the movement for the socialist revolution; it defends and strengthens its inner organization by propagating the communist theory and programme and by being constantly active in the ranks of the proletariat wherever the latter is forced to fight for its economic interests; such are its tasks before, during and after the struggle of the armed proletariat for State power.

5—The Party is not made up of all members of the proletariat or even of its majority. It is the organization of the minority which has, collectively, reached and mastered revolutionary tactics in theory and in practice; in other words, which sees clearly the general objectives of the historic movement of the proletariat in the whole world and for the whole of the historical course which separates the period of its formation from that of its final victory.

The Party is not formed on the basis of individual consciousness: not only is it not possible for each proletarian to become conscious and still less to master the class doctrine in a cultural way, but neither is it possible for each individual militant, not even for the leaders of the Party. Consciousness consists in the organic unity of the Party alone.

In the same way, therefore, that we reject notions based on individual acts or even on mass action when not linked to the party framework, so we must reject any conception of the party as a group of enlightened scholars or conscious individuals. On the contrary, the Party is the organic tissue whose function inside the working class is to carry out its revolutionary task in all its aspects and in all its complex stages.

6—Marxism has always energetically rejected the theory which proposes to the proletariat only trade, industrial or factory associations, theory which considers that these associations can, by themselves, lead the class struggle to its historical end: the conquest of power and the transformation of society. Incapable of facing the immense task of the social revolution on its own, the union is however indispensable to mobilize the proletariat on a political and revolutionary level. This however is possible only if the Communist Party is present and its influence inside the union grows. The party can only work inside entirely proletarian unions where membership is voluntary and where no given political, religious or social opinions are forced on members. This is not the case with confessional unions, with those where membership is compulsory and with those which have become an integrant part of the State system.

7—The Party will never set up economic associations which exclude those workers who do not accept its principles and leadership. But the Party recognizes without any reserve that not only the situation which precedes insurrectional struggle but also all phases of substantial growth of

Party influence amongst the masses cannot arise without the expansion between the Party and the working class of a series of organizations with short term economic objectives with a large number of participants. Within such organizations the party will set a network of communist cells and groups, as well as a communist fraction in the union.

In periods when the working class is passive, the Party must anticipate the forms and promote the constitution of organizations with immediate economic aims. These may be unions grouped according to trade, industry, factory committees or any other known grouping or even quite new organizations. The Party always encourages organizations which favor Contact between workers at different localities and different trades and their common action. It rejects all forms of closed organizations.

8—In any situation, the Party refuses at the same time the idealist and utopian outlook which makes social transformation dependent on a circle of “elected” apostles and heroes; the libertarian outlook which makes it dependent on the revolt of individuals or unorganized masses; the trade union or economists’ outlook which entrusts it to apolitical organizations, whether they preach the use of violence or not; the voluntaristic and sectarian outlook which does not recognize that class rebellion rises out of a series of collective actions well prior to a clear theoretical consciousness and even to resolute will action, and which, as a result, recommends the forming of a small “elite” isolated from working-class trade unions or, which comes to the same, leaning on trade unions which exclude non-communists. This last mistake, which has historically characterized the German KAPD and Dutch *Tribunists* [The members of Kommunistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (KAPD) in Germany and of the Dutch group of *Tribune* review, lead by Gorter and Pannekoek, that definitely abandoned the C.I. in 1921], has always been fought against by the Marxist Italian Left.

The differences for reasons of strategy and tactics which led our current to break away from the Third International cannot be discussed without reference to the different historical phases of the proletarian movement.

III – Historical Waves of Opportunist Degeneration

1—It is impossible, unless we want to give way to idealism or to mystical, ethical or aesthetic considerations which are in complete opposition to Marxism, to assert that in all historical phases of the proletarian movement the same *intransigence* is necessary, that any alliance, any united front, all compromise is to be refused *on principle*. Quite on the contrary, it is only on a historical basis that questions of class and party strategy and tactics can be solved. For this rea-

son, it is the development of the proletarian class throughout the world between the bourgeois and the socialist revolutions which must be considered, and not particularities of time and place that nourish casuistry politics and which leave practical questions to the whim of groups or steering committees.

2—The proletariat itself is above all the product of capitalist economy and industrialization; like communism it cannot be born of the inspiration of individuals, brotherhoods or political clubs, but only of the struggle of the proletarians themselves. In the same way, the irrevocable victory of capitalism over those forms which have preceded it historically, that is the victory of the bourgeoisie over the feudal and land-owning aristocracy and over the other classes characteristic of the old regime, be it Asiatic or European or of other continents, is a condition for communism.

At the time of the *Communist Manifesto*, modern industrial development was still at its beginnings and present only in a very few countries. In order to speed up the explosion of modern class struggle, the proletariat had to be encouraged to struggle, armed, at the sides of the revolutionary bourgeoisies during the anti-feudal insurrections or those of national liberation. In this way the workers’ participation in the great French Revolution and its defense against the European coalitions right up to Napoleonic times, is part of the history of the workers’ struggle and this in spite of the fact that from the very beginning the bourgeois dictatorship ferociously quelled the first communist inspired social struggles.

Because of the defeat of the bourgeois revolutions of 1848, this strategy of alliance between proletariat and bourgeoisie against the classes of the old regime valid, in the eyes of Marxists, until 1871, in view of the fact that this feudal regime still persists in Russia, in Austria and in Germany and that the national unity of Italy, Germany and the east European countries is a necessary condition of Europe’s industrial development.

3—1871 is a clear turning-point in history. The struggle against Napoleon III and his dictatorship is in fact directed against a capitalistic and not a feudal form; it is at the same time the product and proof of the mobilization of the two fundamental and enemy classes of modern society. Although it sees in Napoleon an obstacle to the bourgeois development of Germany, revolutionary Marxism goes immediately on the side of the anti-bourgeois struggle which will be that of all parties of the Commune, the first workers’ dictatorship in history. After this date, the proletariat can no longer choose between contending parties or national armies in so far as any restoration of pre-bourgeois forms has become socially impossible in two big areas: Europe to the confines of the Ottoman and Tsarist empires

on the one hand, and England and North America on the other.

a. Opportunism at the end of the 19th Century

4—If we disregard Bakuninism during the First International and Sorelianism during the Second, as they have nothing to do with Marxism, the social-democratic revisionism represents the first opportunist wave within the proletarian Marxist movement. Its vision was the following: once victory by the bourgeoisie over the old regime was universally secured, a historical phase without insurrections and without wars opens up before humanity; socialism becomes possible by gradual evolution and without violence, on the basis of the extension of modern industry and due to the numerical increase of workers armed with universal suffrage. In this way it was tried (Bernstein) to empty Marxism of its revolutionary contents, pretending that its rebellious spirit was inherited from the revolutionary bourgeoisie and not belonging to the proletarian class in itself. At this time, the tactical question of alliance between advanced bourgeois parties and the proletarian party takes on a different aspect to that of the preceding phase; it is no longer a question of helping capitalism to win, but to make socialism derive from it with the help of laws and reform, no longer to fight on the barricades of the towns and in the country against menaces of restoration; but only to vote together in parliamentary assemblies. That is why the proposal of alliances and coalition and even the acceptance of ministerial posts by workers' representatives is from then on a deviation from the revolutionary path. That is also why radical Marxists reprove all electoral coalition.

b. Opportunism in 1914

5.—The second tremendous opportunist wave hits the proletarian movement when war breaks out in 1914. Most of the parliamentary and trade-union leaders as well as strong militant groups, and in some countries whole parties present the conflict between national States as a struggle which might bring back the absolutism of the feudal system and which might lead to the destruction of the conquests of the bourgeois civilization and even of modern productive system. They preach solidarity with the national State at war, the result of which is an alliance between Tsarist Russia and the advanced bourgeoisies of France and England.

The majority of the Second International therefore falls into the war opportunism from which very few parties, one of which is the Italian Socialist Party, escape. Worse, only advanced groups and fractions accept the position of Lenin who, having defined the war as being a product of capitalism and not a conflict between the latter and less advanced politic-social forms, draws the conclusion that the "holy union" must be condemned and that the proletarian party

should practice a defeatist revolutionary policy within each country against the belligerent State and army.

6—The Third International arises on a basis that is both anti-social democratic and anti-social patriotic.

Not only throughout the whole of the proletarian International are no alliances entered into with other parties to wield parliamentary power; more than that, it is denied that power can be conquered, even in an "intransigent" way, just by the proletarian party through legal means, and the need is reasserted, amidst the ruins of capitalism's peaceful phase, for armed violence and dictatorship.

Not only are no alliances entered into with governments at war even in the case of "defensive" wars, and class opposition kept up even during war; more than that, every effort is made, by means of defeatist propaganda at the front, to turn the imperialistic war between States into a civil war between classes.

7—The response to the first wave of opportunism was the formula: no electoral, parliamentary or ministerial alliances to obtain reforms.

The response to the second wave was another tactical formula: no war alliances (since 1871) with the State and bourgeoisie.

Delayed reactions would prevent the critical turning point of 1914–18 being turned to advantage by engaging in a wide-scale struggle for defeatism in war and for the destruction of the bourgeois State.

8—One great exception is the victory in Russia in October 1917. Russia was the only major European State still ruled by a feudal power where penetration by capitalist forms of production was weak. In Russia there was a party, not large but with a tradition firmly anchored in Marxism, which had not only opposed the two consecutive waves of opportunism in the Second International, but which at the same time, after the great trials of 1905, was up to posing the problems of how to graft two revolutions, the bourgeois and the proletarian, together.

In February 1917 this party struggles alongside others against Tsarism, then immediately afterwards not only against the bourgeois liberal parties but also against the opportunist proletarian parties, and it defeats them all. What is more, it then becomes the centre of the reconstitution of the revolutionary International.

9—The effect of this formidable event is to be found in irrevocable historical results. In the last European country placed outside of the geo-political area of the West, an uninterrupted fight leads a proletariat, whose social development is far from being complete, to power. Liberal-democratic forms of the western type, set up during the first phase of the revolutions are brushed aside and the proletarian dictatorship faces the immense task of accelerating eco-

conomic development. This means that the still present feudal forms must be overthrown and that the recent capitalistic forms must be overcome. The realization of this task calls above all for victory over the gangs of counter-revolutionary insurgents and the intervention of foreign capitalism. It calls not only for the mobilization of the world proletariat for the defense of soviet power and to direct the assault on the western, bourgeois powers, but for the extension of the revolutionary struggle to continents inhabited by colored people, in short the mobilization of all forces able to carry on an armed fight against white capitalist metropolises.

10—In Europe and America strategic alliances with left-bourgeois movements against feudal forms of power are no longer possible and have given way to direct struggle by the proletariat for power. But in underdeveloped countries the rising proletarian and communist parties will not disdain to participate to insurrections of other anti-feudal classes, either against local despotic dominations or against the white colonizers.

In Lenin's time, there are two historical alternatives: either the world struggle ends in victory, that is by the downfall of capitalistic power at least in a large advanced part of Europe, and this would permit the Russian economy to be transformed at a fast rhythm, "jumping" the capitalistic stage and quickly catching up with Western industry, already ripe for socialism, or the big imperialist centers stay put, and in this case the Russian *revolutionary power* is forced to restrain itself to the economic task of the bourgeois revolution, making the effort of immense productive development, but of a capitalistic, not a socialist character.

11—Evidence of the pressing need to accelerate the taking of power in Europe, to prevent the violent collapse of the Soviet State or else its involution into a capitalistic state in a few years at the very most, appeared as soon as bourgeois society consolidated after the serious shock of the First World War. But the communist parties didn't manage to take power, except in a few attempts which were rapidly crushed, and this led them to ask themselves what they could do to counter the fact that large sections of the proletariat were still prey to social-democratic and opportunistic influences.

There were two conflicting methods: the one which considered the parties of the Second International, which were openly conducting an unremitting struggle both against the communist programme and against revolutionary Russia, as open enemies, and struggled against them as the most dangerous part of the bourgeois front—and the other which relied on expedients to reduce the influence of the social-democratic parties over the masses to the advantage of the communist party, using strategic and tactical "maneuvers".

12—To justify the latter method the experiences of the Bolshevik policy in Russia were misapplied, departing from the correct historical line. The offer of alliances with petit-bourgeois and even bourgeois parties was justified historically by the fact that the Tsarist power, by banning all of these movements, forced them to engage in insurrectional struggle. In Europe, on the other hand, the only common actions which were proposed, even as a maneuver, were ones respectful of legality, whether within the trade-unions or within parliament. In Russia, the phase of liberal parliamentarism had been very short (in 1905 and a few months in 1917) and it was the same as far as legal recognition of the trade union movement was concerned. In the rest of Europe, meanwhile, half a century of degeneration of the proletarian movement had made these two fields of action propitious terrain on which to dull revolutionary energies and corrupt the workers' leaders. The guarantee which lay in the Bolshevik Party's solidity of organization and principle was not the same as the guarantee offered by the existence of the state power in Moscow, which due to social conditions and international relations was more liable, as history has showed, to succumb to a renunciation of revolutionary principles and policy.

13—The Left of the International (to which the great majority of the Communist Party of Italy belonged before it was more or less destroyed by the fascist counter-revolution which was favored chiefly by the mistake of historical strategy) upheld that in the West all alliances or proposals of alliances with socialist or petit-bourgeois parties should be refused at all costs; in other words that there should be no united political front. It admitted that the communists should widen their influence within the masses by taking part in all local and economic struggles, calling on the workers of all organizations and of all faiths to develop them to the maximum, but it refused that the party's action should be subordinated to that of political committees of fronts, coalitions or alliances even if this subordination was to restrict itself to public declarations and be compensated by internal instructions to militants or the party and by the subjective intentions of the leaders. Even more strongly it rejected the so-called "Bolshevik" tactics when it took the shape of "workers' government", i.e. the launching of the slogan (that became in some instances a practical experiment, with ruinous consequences) of coming into the parliamentary power with mixed majorities of communists and socialists of the various shapes. If the Bolshevik party could draw up with no danger the plan of provisional governments of several parties in the revolutionary phase, and if that allowed it to go to the firmest autonomy of action and even to outlaw the former allies, all that was made possible *only* by the diversity of situation of the historical forces: urgent need of two revolutions, and destructive attitude, by the State in force, towards any coming to power

through a parliamentary way. It would have been absurd to transpose such a strategy to a situation in which the bourgeois State has a half a century hold democratic tradition, and parties that accept its constitutionalism.

14—Between 1921 and 1926, increasingly opportunistic versions of the International's tactical method were imposed at its congresses (third, fourth, fifth and at the Enlarged Executive Committee in 1926). At the root of the method was the simple formula: alter the tactics to fit the circumstances. By means of so-called analyses, every six months or so new stages of capitalism were identified and new maneuvers proposed to address them. This is essentially revisionism, which has always been "voluntarist"; in other words, when it realized its predictions about the advent of socialism hadn't come true, it decided to force the pace of history with a new praxis; but in so doing it also ceased to struggle for the proletarian and socialist objectives of our maximum programme. Back in 1900 the reformists said that the circumstances ruled out all possibility of insurrection. We shouldn't expect the impossible, they said, let us work instead to win elections and to change the law, and to make economic gains via the trades unions. And when this method failed it provoked a reaction from the essentially voluntarist anarcho-syndicalist current, who blamed party politics and politics in general, predicting that change would come through the effort of bold minorities in a general strike, led by the trade unions alone. Similarly, the Communist International, once it saw the West-European proletariat wasn't going to fight for the dictatorship, preferred to rely on substitutes as a way of getting through the impasse. And what came of all this, once capitalist equilibrium had been restored, was that it neither modified the objective situation nor the balance of power, but did weaken and corrupt the workers' movement; just as had happened when the impatient revisionists of right and left ended up in the service of the bourgeoisie in the war coalitions. All the theoretical preparation and the restoration of revolutionary principles was sabotaged by confusing the communist programme of taking power by revolutionary means with the accession of so-called "kindred" governments by means of support and participation in parliament and bourgeois cabinets by communists; in Saxony and Thuringia it would end in farce, where two policemen were enough to overthrow the government's communist leader.

15—Internal organization was subjected to similar confusion, and the difficult task of sorting out revolutionary members from opportunist ones in the various parties and countries would be compromised. It was believed that new party members, more amenable to co-operating with the centre, could be procured by wresting away entire Left wings of the old social-democratic parties (whereas in fact, once the new International had gone through its initial pe-

riod of formation, it needed to function permanently as the world party and only have new converts joining its national sections on an individual basis). Wanting to win over large groups of workers, deals were struck instead with the leaders and the movement's cadres were thrown into disorder, and dissolved and recombined during periods of active struggle. Recognizing Fractions and groups within the opportunist parties as "communist", they would be absorbed by means of organizational mergers; thus almost all of the parties, instead of preparing for the struggle, were kept in a state of permanent crisis. Lacking continuity of action and with no clear boundaries set between friend and foe, they would register one failure after another, and on an international scale. The Left lays claim to organizational unicity and continuity.

The overthrow of the structure of the parties under the pretext of "bolshevisation" was another reason for the Left to differ from the leadership of the International. The territorial organization of the party was changed for a network of factory cells. This narrowed the political horizon of the members who had the same trade and therefore the same immediate economic interests. In this way, the natural synthesis of the different social impulses which would have helped to make the struggle a general one, common to all categories, was not achieved. As this synthesis was lacking, the only factor of unity was represented by the top executives whose members became in this way officials with all the negative characteristics of the old socialist party system.

The criticism which the Italian Marxist Left made of this organization must not be mistaken as claiming the return to "internal democracy" and to "free election" of the party leaders. It is neither internal democracy nor free elections which give the Party its nature of being the most conscious fraction of the proletariat and its function of revolutionary guide. It is instead the matter of a deep discrepancy of conceptions about the deterministic organicity of the party as a historical body, living in the reality of the class struggle; it is a fundamental deviation in principles, that made the parties unable to foresee and face the opportunist danger.

16—Analogous deviations took place in Russia where, for the first time in history, the difficult problem of organization and internal discipline of the communist party which had come to power and whose membership had enormously increased, arose. The difficulties met in the internal social-struggle for a new economy and revolutionary political struggle outside of Russia provoked contrasting opinions between Bolsheviks of the Old Guard and new members.

The Party's leading group had in its hands not only the party apparatus but also the whole State apparatus. Its opinions or those of the majority within it were made good not by means of party doctrine and its national and in-

ternational tradition of struggle, but by repression of the opposition by means of the State apparatus and by strangling the party in a police like manner. All disobedience towards the central organ of the party was judged as a counter-revolutionary act warranting, besides expulsion, punitive sanctions. The relationship between Party and State was thus completely distorted and the group which controlled both was thus able to enforce a series of surrenders of principles and of the historical line of the party and world revolutionary movement. In reality the party is a unitary organism in its doctrine and its action. To join the party imposes peremptory obligations on leaders and followers. But joining and leaving is voluntary without any kind of physical compulsion and shall be so before, during, and after the conquest of power. The party directs alone and in an autonomous way the struggle of the exploited class to destroy the capitalist State. In the same way, the Party, alone and autonomous, leads the revolutionary proletarian State, and just because the State is, historically, a transitory organ, legal intervention against party members or groups is a pointer to a serious crisis. As soon as such intervention became a practice in Russia, the party became crowded with opportunistic members who sought nothing more than to procure advantages for themselves or at least to benefit from the protection of the Party. Yet they were accepted without hesitation and instead of a weakening of the State there was a dangerous inflation of the Party in power.

This reversal of influences resulted in the opportunists getting the upper hand on the orthodox; the betrayers of revolutionary principles paralyzed, immobilized, accused, and finally condemned those who defended them in a coherent way, some of whom had understood too late that the party would never again become a revolutionary one.

In fact, it was the government, at grips with the hard reality of internal and external affairs, which solved questions, and imposed its solutions on the Party. The latter, in turn, had an easy time in international congresses to impose these solutions on the other parties which it dominated and handled as it liked. In this way the directive of the Comintern lines became more and more eclectic and conciliatory with respect to world capitalism.

The Italian Left never questioned the revolutionary merits of the party which had led the first proletarian revolution to victory, but it maintained that the contributions of the parties still openly struggling against their bourgeois regime, were indispensable. The *hierarchy* which could solve the problems of revolutionary action in the world and in Russia must therefore be the following: the International of the world communist parties—its various sections, including the Russian one—finally the communist government for internal Russian politics but exclusively along party lines. Otherwise the internationalist character of the

movement and its revolutionary efficiency could not but be compromised.

Only by respecting this rule could a divergence of interests and objectives between the Russian State and the world revolution be avoided. Lenin himself had many times admitted that if the revolution broke out in Europe or the world, the Russian party would take not second but at least fourth place in the general political and social leadership of the communist revolution.

17—We cannot say exactly when the opportunistic wave which was to bear away the Communist International, originated. This was the third wave, the first having paralyzed the International founded by Marx and the second which had shamefully brought about the fall of the Second International. The deviations and political errors discussed in paragraphs 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 above, threw the world communist movement into total opportunism which could be seen from its attitude towards fascism and totalitarian governments. These forms appeared after the period of the great proletarian attacks which, in Germany, Italy, Hungary, Bavaria and in the Balkan States, followed the end of the First World War. The communist International defined them as employers' offensives with a tendency to lower the standard of living of the working classes economically, and politically as initiatives aiming at the suppression of democratic liberalism, which it presented, in a turn of phrase doubtful to Marxists, as being a favorable milieu for a proletarian offensive, whereas communism has always considered it as the worst possible atmosphere of revolutionary corruption on the political level. In reality, fascism was the complete proof of the Marxist vision of history: the economic concentration was not only evidence of the social and international character of capitalist production, but it urged the latter to unite and the bourgeoisie to declare social war on the proletariat, whose pressure was as yet much weaker than the defense capacity of the capitalist State.

The leaders of the International on the other hand created serious historical confusion with the Kerensky period in Russia, leading not only to a serious mistake in theoretical interpretation, but to an inevitable overthrow of tactics. A strategy for the defense and conservation of existing conditions was outlined for the proletariat and communist parties, advising them to form a united front with all those bourgeois groups which upheld that certain immediate advantages should be granted to the workers and that the people should not be deprived of their democratic rights. The groups were in this way much less decided and perspicacious than the fascists and thus very feeble allies.

The International did not understand that Fascism or National Socialism had nothing to do with an attempt to return to despotic and feudal forms of government, nor with the victory of the so-called right-wing bourgeois sec-

tions in opposition with the more advanced capitalist class from the big industries, nor an attempt to form an autonomous government of the intermediate classes between employers and proletariat. It did not understand either that freeing itself from a hypocritical parliamentarism, fascism inherited on the other hand wholly the pseudo-Marxist reformism, securing for the least fortunate classes not only a living wage but a series of improvements of their welfare by means of a certain number of measures and state interventions taken, of course, in the interest of the State. The Communist International thus launched the slogan “struggle for freedom” which was forced upon the Communist Party of Italy by the president of the International from 1926 onwards. Yet nearly all the militants of the party had wanted for four years to lead as autonomous class policy against fascism refusing coalition with all democratic, monarchist and Catholic parties in favor of constitutional and parliamentary guarantees. And it was in vain that the Italian Left warned the leaders of the International that the path it had chosen (and which ended finally with the Committees for National Liberation!) would lead to the loss of all revolutionary energies, and demanded that the real meaning of the anti-fascism of all the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois parties as well as the pseudo-proletarian ones should be openly denounced.

The line of the communist party is by its nature an offensive one and in no case may it struggle for the illusory preservation of conditions peculiar to capitalism. If, before 1871, the working class had to fight side by side with bourgeois forces, this was not in order to hold on to certain advantages, nor to avoid an impossible return to old times but in order to help in the total destruction of all out-grown political and social forms. In everyday economic policy, just as in general politics, the working class had nothing to lose and therefore nothing to defend. *Attack and conquest*, those are its only tasks.

Consequently, the revolutionary party shall interpret the coming of totalitarian forms of capitalism as the confirmation of its doctrine and therefore its complete ideological victory. It shall take an interest in the effective strength of the proletarian class in relationship to its oppressor in order to get ready for the revolutionary civil war. This relationship has ever been made unfavorable only by opportunism and gradualism. The revolutionary party shall do all in its power to stir up the final attack, and where this is impossible, face up without ever slating a “Vade retro Satana”, as defeatist as stupid because it comes to begging foolishly for tolerance and pardon from the enemy class.

c. Opportunism after 1926

18—In the Second International, opportunism took on the form of humanitarianism, philanthropy and pacifism culminating in the repudiation of armed struggle and insurrec-

tion and, what is more, finding justification for legal violence between States at war.

During the third opportunist wave deviation and treason of the revolutionary line went as far as armed fighting and civil war. But even when opportunism wants to impose a given government against another in one country by means of an armed struggle aiming at territorial conquests and strategical positions, the revolutionary criticism remains the same as when it organizes fronts, blocks and alliances with purely electoral and parliamentary designs. For instance the alliance of the Spanish Civil War and the partisan movement against the Germans or the fascists during the Second World War was without doubt betrayal of the working class and a form of collaboration with capitalism, in spite of the violence which was made use of. In such cases, the communist party’s refusal to subordinate itself to committees made up of heterogeneous parties should be *even firmer*: when action passes from legal agitation to conspiracy and fighting it is still more criminal to have anything whatsoever in common with non-proletarian movements. We need not recall that in the case of defeat, such collusions were concluded by the concentration of all the enemy’s forces on the communists, whereas in the case of apparent success, the revolutionary wing was completely disarmed and bourgeois order was consolidated.

19—All demonstrations of opportunism in the tactics imposed on European parties and carried on inside Russia were crowned during the Second World War by the attitude of the Soviet State towards the other belligerent States and by the instructions which Moscow gave to the communist parties. The latter did not deny their assent to the war, nor did they try to exploit it in order to organize class action aiming at the destruction of the capitalist State. On the contrary, in a first stage Russia concluded an agreement with Germany: then while it provided that the German section should do nothing against the Hitlerite power, it dared to dictate self-styled “Marxist” tactics to French communists who were to declare the war of the French and English bourgeoisie as being an imperialistic aggressive one, and made these parties lead illegal action against their State and army; However, as soon as the Russian State came into military conflict with Germany and its interest lay in the strength of those opposed to the Russian state, the French, English and other parties concerned received the opposite political instruction and the order to move to the front of national defense just like the socialists, denounced by Lenin, in 1914. Much more, all theoretical and historical positions of communism were falsified when it was declared that the war between the Western powers and Germany was not an imperialistic one but a crusade for liberty and democracy and that it had been so from the start, from 1939 on, when the pseudo-communist propaganda was entirely directed against the French and English.

Thus it is clear that the Communist International, which at one time had been formally wiped out in order to give extra guarantees to the imperialist powers, was at no time used to provoke the fall of any capitalist power and not even to speed on the appearance of conditions necessary for the taking over of power by the proletariat. Its only use was to collaborate openly with the German imperialist bloc, the opposite bloc having preferred to do without its help when Russia came over on its side.

It is therefore not a simple question of opportunism but rather a total abandonment of communism, proved by the haste with which the definition of the class structure of the bourgeois powers changed at the same time as did Russia's allies. Imperialist and plutocrat in 1939–40, France, England and America later became representative of progress, freedom and civilization, having a common programme with Russia for the reorganization of the world. This extraordinary turning did not prevent Russia from the moment of the first disagreements in 1946 and from the start of the cold war, to heap the most fiery accusations on the very same States.

It is no wonder therefore that, beginning by simple contacts with the social-betrayers and social-patriots rejected the day before, continuing with united fronts, *workers'* governments (renouncing to class dictatorship) and even blocs with petit-bourgeois parties, the Moscow movement fell, during the war, into total enslavement of the policy of the "democratic powers". Later it had to admit that these powers were not only imperialist but just as fascist as Germany and Italy had been before. It is therefore no wonder either that the revolutionary parties which had met in Moscow in 1919–1920 had lost any remainder of their communist and proletarian nature.

20—The third historical wave of opportunism unites all the characteristics of the two preceding ones in the same measure as present capitalism includes all forms of its different stages of development.

After the second imperialist war, the opportunist parties, united with all the bourgeois parties in the Committees of National Liberation take a part in government with them. In Italy, they even partake in monarchist cabinets, postponing the question of the Republic to more "suitable" times. Thus they repudiate the use of the revolutionary method for the conquest of political powers by the proletariat, sanctioning a purely legal and parliamentary struggle to which all proletarian pressure is to be sacrificed in view of the conquest of public power by pacific means. In the same way as during the first year of the conflict they did not sabotage fascist governments, nourishing their military strength the supply of first necessity, they postulate the participation in national defense governments sparing all trouble to the governments at war.

Opportunism continues its fatal evolution, sacrificing, even formally, the Third International to the enemy of the working class, to subsequent imperialism, in favor of the subsequent "reinforcement of the United Front of the allies and other United Nations". Thus the historical anticipation of the Italian Left made in the first years of the Third International came true. It was ineluctable that the gigantic opportunism which had gained the workers' movement would lead to the liquidation of all revolutionary instances. Consequently the reconstitution of the class strength of the world proletariat has been very much delayed, made more difficult and will require a greater effort.

21—In the same way as Russia, supported by the opportunist communist parties of other countries, had fought on the side of the imperialists, she joined them in the occupation of the vanquished countries to prevent the exploited masses from rising, and this without losing the parties' support. On the contrary, this occupation with counter-revolutionary purpose was fully justified by all the so-called socialists and communists during the Yalta and Teheran conferences. Any possibility of a revolutionary attack of the bourgeois powers was reduced to nothing in the countries that had won the war as in those that had lost. This confirms the position of the Italian Left which regarded the Second World War as imperialist and the occupation of the vanquished countries as counter-revolutionary, and foresaw that the second war could not be followed by a revolutionary revival.

22—In accordance with the counter-revolutionary past the Russian and affiliated parties have modernized the theory of the permanent collaboration between classes proclaiming the peaceful co-existence and competition between capitalist and socialist States. This position, after the former which reduced the class struggle to a so-called struggle between socialist and capitalist States, is their final insult to revolutionary Marxism. If a socialist State does not declare a holy war on capitalist States, it at least declares and maintains the class war inside the bourgeois countries, whose proletariat prepares theoretically and practically for the insurrection. This is the only position which conforms with the programme of the communist parties who do not disdain to show their opinions and their intentions (*Manifesto* of 1848) and openly urge on the violent destruction of the bourgeois power.

Hence, States and parties which admit or even assume hypothetically peaceful coexistence and competition between States instead of propagandizing the absolute incompatibility among the classes and armed struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat, are capitalist States and counter-revolutionary parties, and their phraseology only masks their non-proletarian character.

The persistence of such ideologies within the working class movement is a tragic holdback of any class revival and the proletariat must pass beyond them before the class struggle can take place.

23—Another aspect which made the political opportunism of the third wave still more shameful than the preceding ones was its shameful attitude towards pacifism, defense of guerrilla warfare; pacifism again, but spiced with the anti-capitalist phraseology of the Cold War and finally the insipid total pacifism of coexistence. All these turnings went side by side with the most scandalous variation in the definition of the English and American powers: imperialist in 1939, democratically “liberating” the European proletariat in 1942, imperialist again after the war, pacifist rivals in the competition between capitalism and “socialism” today. True Marxists know, that American imperialism has taken up since the First World War from the English “despot” the role of principal white guard of the world, as Lenin and the Third International many times emphasized during the glorious period of revolutionary struggle.

Inseparable from social pacifism, pacifism taken on its own makes the most of the workers’ hatred of imperialist wars. Defense of peace which is a common propaganda of all parties and all States, bourgeois or pseudo-proletarian is however as opportunist as is the defense of the fatherland. Revolutionaries should leave one as the other to UNO who is horror struck at the mention of class struggle, but is itself, like the League of Nations, a league of robbers.

In putting pacifism higher than any other demand, today’s opportunists show not only that they are outside the revolutionary process and have fallen into total utopia, but that they do not come within reach of the utopians Saint Simon, Owen, Fourier and even Proudhon.

Revolutionary Marxism rejects pacifism as a theory and means of propaganda and subordinates peace to the violent destruction of world imperialism; there will be no peace as long as the proletariat of the world is not free from bourgeois exploitation. It also denounces pacifism as a weapon of the class enemy to disarm the proletariat and withhold them from revolutionary influence.

24—Throwing bridges to the imperialist parties to set up governments of “national union” has now become a customary praxis of the opportunists who carry it out on an international scale in a gigantic superstate organism, UNO. The great lie consists in making believe that provided that the war between States is avoided, class collaboration can not only become reality but bring its mawkish fruits to the working class, the imperialist and class State becoming a democratic instrument for the public wealth.

Thus in the Peoples’ Democracies, the opportunists have set up national systems in which all social classes are represented, with the pretense that in this way their oppos-

ing interests can be harmonized. In China for instance where the four-class block is in power, the proletariat, far from having assumed political power, is subjected to the incessant pressure of the young industrial capitalism, having born the cost of “National Reconstruction” just like the proletariat of the other countries. The disarmament of the revolutionary forces, which was offered to the bourgeoisie by the social-patriots of 1914 and the ministerialists such as Millerand, Bissolati, Vandervelde, MacDonald and Company who were fustigated and eliminated by Lenin and the Communist International, grows blurred in the face of the scandalous and impudent collaboration of the present social patriots and ministerialists. The Italian Left which already in 1922 was opposed to the “workers’ and peasant government” (password which was given the meaning of “dictatorship of the proletariat” but which fostered a fatal ambiguity or worse meant something quite different) rejects all the more the open class collaboration which present-day opportunists do not hesitate to advocate; the Italian Left claims for the proletariat and its party the unconditional monopoly of the State, the unitary and *undivided* dictatorship of the proletarian class.

IV – Party Action

1—Since its birth, capitalism has had an irregular historical development, with alternating periods of crisis and intense economic expansion.

Crises are inseparable from capitalism, which will not, however, cease to grow and to expand so long as the revolutionary forces will not deal it the final blow. In a parallel way, the history of the proletarian movement presents phases of impetuous bounds and phases of withdrawal provoked by brutal defeats or slow degeneracy during which the renewal of revolutionary activity may be decades away. The Paris Commune was violently put down and its defeat opened a period of relatively pacific development of capitalism which gave birth to revisionist or opportunistic theories whose very existence proved the falling back of the revolution. The October Revolution was slowly defeated over a period of regression, culminating in the violent suppression of those who had fought for it and survived. Since 1917, the revolution is very much absent and today it does not look as though we are on the threshold of the renewal of revolutionary revival.

2—In spite of such recurrences, the capitalist mode of production expands and prevails in all countries, under its technical and social aspects, in a more or less continuous way. The alternatives of the clashing class forces are instead connected to the events of the general historical struggle, to the contrast that already existed when bourgeoisie begun its rule on the feudal and pre-capitalist classes, and to the evolutive political process of the two histori-

cal rival classes, bourgeoisie and proletariat; being such a process marked by victories and defeats, by errors of tactical and strategical method. The first clashes go back to 1789, arriving, through 1848, 1871, 1905 and 1917, to the present day; they gave the bourgeoisie a chance to furbish its arms against the proletariat in the same measure as its economy developed.

On the contrary, the proletariat, in the face of the gigantic extension of capitalism, has not always known how to use its class energy with success, falling back, after each defeat, into the net of opportunism and treason, and staying back from the revolution for an ever lengthening period.

3—The cycle of victorious struggles and of defeats, even the most drastic ones, and the opportunistic waves during which the revolutionary movement is submitted to the influence of the enemy class constitutes a vast field of positive experiences where the revolution matures.

After the defeats, the revolutionary comeback is long and difficult; but the movement, although it is not visible on the surface, is not interrupted, it maintains, crystallized in a restricted vanguard, the revolutionary class demands.

The periods of political depression of the revolutionary movement are numerous. From 1848 to 1867, from the Second Paris Revolution to the eve of the Franco-Prussian War, the revolutionary movement is nearly exclusively incarnated in Marx, Engels and a small circle of comrades; from 1872 to 1879, from the defeat of the Commune to the beginning of the colonial wars and the return of the capitalist crisis which leads to the Russian-Japanese war of 1905, and then to the 1914 war, the conscience of the revolution is represented by Marx and Engels. From 1914 to 1918 during the First World War, during which the Second International crumbles, it is Lenin with some comrades of few other countries, who represent the continuity and victorious progression of the movement.

1926 introduced a new unfavorable period for the revolution which saw the liquidation of the October victory. Only the Italian Left communist movement has maintained intact the theory of revolutionary Marxism and the promise of a revolutionary comeback can have crystallized in this movement alone. During the Second World War the conditions still became worse, with the whole proletariat adhering to the imperialist war and the false Stalinist socialism.

Today we are at the bottom of the depression and a come-back of the revolutionary movement cannot be envisaged in the near future. The length of the period of depression which we are experiencing corresponds to the seriousness of the degeneration as well as to the greater concentration of the capitalist forces. The third opportunistic wave unites the worst characteristics of the two preceding ones at the same time as the process of capitalist concentration, in which the enemies' strength lies, is much stronger than after the First World War.

4—Today we are in the depths of the political depression, and although the possibilities of action are considerably reduced, the Party, following revolutionary tradition, has no intention of breaking the historical line of preparation for a future large-scale resurgence of the class struggle, which will integrate all the results of past experience. Restriction of practical activity does not imply the renunciation of revolutionary objectives. The Party recognizes that in certain sectors its activity is quantitatively reduced, but this does not mean that the multi-faceted totality of its activity is altered, and it does not expressly renounce any of them.

5—Today, the principal activity is the re-establishment of the theory of Marxist communism. At present, our arm is still that of criticism: that is why the party will present no new doctrines but will instead reaffirm the full validity of the fundamental theses of revolutionary Marxism, which are amply confirmed by facts and falsified and betrayed by opportunism to cover up retreats and defeats. The Marxist Left denounces and combats the Stalinists as revisionists and opportunists just as it has always condemned all forms of bourgeois influence on the proletariat. The Party bases its action on anti-revisionist positions. From the very moment of its appearance on the political scene, Lenin fought against Bernstein's revisionism and restored the original line, demolishing the factors of the two revisions—social-democratic and social-patriotic.

The Italian Left denounced from the very start the first tactical deviations inside the Third International as being the first symptoms of a third revision, which has been fully accomplished today, uniting the errors of the first two.

Because the proletariat is the last of the classes to be exploited, and consequently in its turn will exploit no one, the doctrine which arose alongside the class can neither be changed nor reformed. The development of capitalism, from its inception until now, has confirmed and continues to confirm the Marxist theorems set out in the fundamental texts. The alleged "innovations" and "teachings" of the last thirty years have only confirmed that capitalism is still alive and must be overthrown. The central focal point of the actual doctrinal position of our movement is therefore the following: no revision whatsoever of the primary principles of the proletarian revolution.

6—Today, the Party registers social phenomena scientifically in order to confirm the fundamental theses of Marxism. It analyses, confronts and comments on recent and contemporary facts, repudiating the doctrinal elaboration tending to found new theories or to indicate the insufficiency of Marxism as an explanation of the phenomena.

The same work, demolition of opportunism and deviationism as accomplished by Lenin (and defined in *What is to be done?*) is still at the basis of our party activity, thus following the example of militants of past periods of set-

back of the proletarian movement and of reinforcement of opportunist theories, that found in Marx, Engels, Lenin and in the Italian Left, violent and inflexible enemies.

7—Although small in number and having but few links with the proletarian masses, the Party is nevertheless jealously attached to its theoretical tasks which are of prime importance, and because of this true appreciation of its revolutionary duties in the present period, it absolutely refuses to be considered either as a circle of thinkers in search of new truths, or as “renovators” who consider past truths insufficient.

No movement can triumph in the historical reality without theoretical continuity, which is the condensation of the experience of past struggles. Consequently, party members are not granted personal freedom to elaborate and conjure up new schemes or explanations of the contemporary social world. They are not free as individuals to analyze, criticize and make forecasts, whatever their level of intellectual competence may be. The Party defends the integrity of a theory which is not the product of blind faith, but one whose content is the science of the proletarian class; developed from centuries of historical material, not by thinkers, but under the impulse of material events, and reflected in the historical consciousness of one revolutionary class and crystallized in its Party. Material events have only confirmed the doctrine of revolutionary Marxism.

8—In spite of the small number of members which corresponds to the counter-revolutionary conditions, the Party continues its work of proselytism and of oral and written propaganda, it considers the writing and the distribution of its press as its principal activity in the actual phase, being one of the most effective means (in a situation where there are few and far between) to show the masses the political line they are to follow and diffuse systematically and more widely the principles of the revolutionary movement.

9—It is events, and not the desire or the decision of militants, which determine the depth of the Party’s penetration amongst the masses, limiting it today to a small part of its activity. Nevertheless, the Party loses no occasion to intervene in the clashes and vicissitudes of the class struggle, well aware that there can be no revival until this intervention has developed much further and become the main area of party activity.

10—The acceleration of the process depends not only on the profound social causes of historical crises, but also on the proselytism and propaganda of the Party, even with the reduced means at its disposal. The Party totally rules out the possibility of stimulating this process by means of devices, stratagems and maneuvers aimed at groups, leaders or parties who have usurped the name “proletarian”, “socialist” or “communist”. These maneuvers, which permeat-

ed the tactics of the Third International as soon as Lenin withdrew from political life, only resulted in the disintegration of the Comintern as the theoretical and organizational force of the movement, ever ready to shed fragments of the Party on the road of “tactical expediency”. These methods were recalled and re-evaluated by the Trotskyist movement of the Fourth International, which wrongly considered them to be communist methods.

There are no ready-made recipes that will accelerate the resurgence of the class struggle. No maneuvers and expedients exist that will get proletarians to listen to the voice of the class; such maneuvers and expedients would not make the Party appear to be what it truly is, but would be a misrepresentation of its function, to the detriment and prejudice of the effective resurgence of the revolutionary movement, which is based on the situation having really matured and the corresponding ability of the Party to respond, being fit for this purpose only because of its doctrinaire and political inflexibility.

The Italian Left has always fought against resorting to expedients as a way of keeping its head above water, denouncing this as a deviation from principle which in no way adheres to Marxist determinism.

Along the lines of past experiences, the Party therefore withholds from making and accepting invitations, open letters or agitation slogans aiming to form committees, fronts or agreements with other political organizations whatever their nature.

11—The Party does not hide the fact that when things start moving again this will not only be felt by its own autonomous development, but by the starting up again of mass organizations. Although it could never be free of all enemy influence and has often acted as the vehicle of deep deviations; although it is not specifically a revolutionary instrument, the union cannot remain indifferent to the Party who never gives up willingly to work there, which distinguishes it clearly from all other political groups who claim to be of the “opposition”. The Party acknowledges that today, its work in the unions can be done but sporadically; it does not renounce however to enter into the economic organizations, and even to gain leadership as soon as the numerical relationship between its members and sympathizers on the one hand, the union members or a given branch on the other is suitable, so long as the union in question does not exclude all possibility of autonomous class action.

12—The international current to which we belong cannot be characterized by its abstaining from voting, although the “abstentionist fraction” of the Italian Socialist Party played a preponderant part in the foundation of the Italian section of the Third International, whose struggle and opposition to

the Communist International on much more fundamental issues we vindicate.

The capitalist State taking on a constantly more evident form of class dictatorship which Marxism has denounced since the beginning, parliamentarism loses necessarily all importance. The elected organs and the parliament of the old bourgeois tradition are no more than survivals. They have no content any longer, only the democratic phraseology subsists and this cannot hide the fact that at the moment of social crises, the State dictatorship is the ultimate resource of capitalism, and that the proletarian revolutionary violence must be directed against this State. In these conditions the Party discards all interest in elections of all kinds and develops no activity in this direction.

13—The cult of the individual is a very dangerous aspect of opportunism; it is natural that leaders who have grown old, may go over to the enemy and become conformists, and there have been but few exceptions to the rule. Experience has shown that revolutionary generations succeed each other rapidly. That is why the Party accords maximum attention to the young people and makes the greatest possible effort to recruit young militants and to prepare them for political activity, without any personal ambition or personality cult. In the present historical moment, deeply counter-revolutionary, the forming of young leaders capable of upholding the continuity and revolutionary tradition over a long period is necessary. Without the help of a new revolutionary generation the starting up of the movement is impossible.

Considerations on the Organic Activity of the Party When the General Situation is Historically Unfavorable

1965

1—The so-called question of the party's internal organization has always been a subject in the positions of traditional Marxists and of the present Communist Left, born as opposition to the errors of the Moscow International. Naturally, such a topic is not to be isolated in a watertight compartment, but it is instead inseparable from the general framework of our positions.

2—What is part of the doctrine, of the party's general theory, can be found in the classical texts; it is also exhaustively summarized in more recent works, in Italian texts such as the Rome and Lyon theses, and in many others with which the Left made known its prediction on the Third International's ruin; as the phenomena the latter showed, were not smaller in gravity in respect to those of the Second. Such literature is partly being used still now, in the study on organization (meant in its narrow sense as party organization and not in the broad sense of proletarian organization, in its varying historical and social forms) and we are not trying to summarize it here, referring the reader to the above mentioned texts and to the vast work in progress of the *Storia della Sinistra*, of which the second volume is being prepared.

3—Anything concerning the party's ideology and nature, being common to us all and beyond dispute, is left to the pure theory; and the same is for the relations between the party and its own proletarian class, that can be condensed in the obvious inference that only with the party and with the party action the proletariat becomes class for itself and for the revolution.

4—We are used to calling questions of tactics—though we repeat that autonomous chapters or sections do not exist—those historically arising and going on in the relations between proletariat and other classes; between proletarian party and other proletarian organizations; and between the party and other bourgeois and non-proletarian parties.

5—The relation that exists between tactical solutions, such as not to be condemned by doctrinal and theoretical principles, and the multi-faceted development of objective situations, which are, in a certain sense, external to the party, is undoubtedly very mutable; but the Left has asserted that the party must master and anticipate such relations in advance, as developed in the Rome Theses on tactics, which

was intended as a proposal for tactics at the international level.

There are, synthesizing to the extreme, periods of objective favorable conditions, together with unfavorable conditions of the party as subject; there may be the opposite case; and there have been rare but suggestive examples of a well prepared party and of a social situation with the masses thrown towards the revolution; and towards the party which foresaw and described it in advance, as Lenin vindicated for Russia's Bolsheviks.

6—By avoiding pedantic distinctions, we may wonder in which objective situation is today's society. Certainly the answer is that it is the worst possible situation, and that a large part of proletariat is controlled by parties—hired by bourgeoisie—that prevent the proletariat itself from any class revolutionary movement; which is even worse than the crushing directly operated by the bourgeoisie. It is not therefore possible to foresee how long it will take before—in this dead and shapeless situation—what we already termed as “polarization” or “ionization” of social molecules, takes place, preceding the outburst of the great class antagonism.

7—What are, in this unfavorable period, the consequences on the party's internal organic dynamics? We always said, in all above mentioned texts, that the party cannot avoid being influenced by the characters of the real situation surrounding it. Therefore the big existing proletarian parties are—necessarily and avowedly—opportunist.

It is a fundamental thesis of the Left, that our party must not abstain from resisting in such a situation; it must instead survive and hand down the flame, along the historical “thread of time”. It will be a small party, not owing to our will or choice, but to ineluctable necessity. While thinking of the structure of this party, even in the Third International's epoch of decadence, and in countless polemics, we rejected—with arguments that are now unnecessary recalling—several accusations. We don't want a secret sect or *élite* party, refusing any contact with the outside, owing to a purity mania. We reject any formula of workerist or labour party excluding all non-proletarians; as it is a formula belonging to all historical opportunists. We don't want to reduce the party to an organization of a cultural, intellectual and scholastic type, as from polemics more than half a century old; neither do we believe, as certain anarchists and Blanquists do, being imaginable a party involved in conspirative armed action and in hatching plots.

8—Given that the degenerating social complex is focused on falsifying and destroying theory and sound doctrine, clearly the predominant task of today's small party is the restoration of principles with doctrinal value, although unfortunately the favorable setting in which Lenin worked

after the disaster of the First World War is lacking. But this does not mean we should erect a barrier between theory and practical action; beyond a certain limit that would destroy us along with our basic principles. We thus lay claim to all forms of activity peculiar to the favorable periods insofar as the real balance of forces render them possible.

9—We should go into all this in a lot more depth, but we can still reach a conclusion about the party's organizational structure during such a difficult transition. It would be a fatal error to consider the party as divisible into two groups, one dedicated to study and the other to action, because such a distinction is deadly not only for the party as a whole, but for the individual militant too. The underlying meaning of unitarism and of organic centralism is that the party develops within itself the organs suited to its various functions, called by us propaganda, proselytism, proletarian organization, union work, etc., until, in the future, there is the need for the armed organization; but nothing can be inferred from the number of comrades assigned to each function, since no comrade, as a matter of principle, should be uninvolved with any of them.

The fact that in the current phase the amount of comrades devoted to theory and the movement's history may seem too many, and those ready for action too few, is historically fortuitous. It would be totally pointless to investigate how many are dedicated to each of these manifestations of energy. As we all know, when the situation becomes radicalized huge numbers of people, acting instinctively and unencumbered by the need to ape academia and get qualifications, will immediately take our side.

10—We know very well that the opportunist danger, ever since Marx fought against Bakunin, Proudhon, Lassalle, and during all the further phases of the opportunist disease, has always been tied to the influence on the proletariat of petty-bourgeois false allies.

Our infinite diffidence towards the contribution of these social strata cannot, and must not, prevent us from utilizing—according to history's mighty lessons—exceptional elements coming from them; the party will destine such elements to the work of setting the theory to order; the lack of such a work would only mean death, while in the future its plan of propagation will have to identify it with the immense extension of revolutionary masses.

11—The violent sparks flashing between the rheophores [a wire or connector that conducts electricity—*Ed.*] of our dialectics have taught us that a revolutionary and militant communist comrade is one who has managed to forget, to renounce, to wrench from his heart and his mind the classification under which he has been inscribed in the registry of this putrefying society; one who can see and immerse himself in the entire millenary trajectory linking the ancestral tribal man, struggling with wild beasts, to the member

of the future community, fraternal in the joyous harmony of the social man.

12—*Historical party and formal party.* This distinction is in Marx and Engels and they had the right to deduce from it that, being with their work on the line of the historical party, they disdained to be members of any formal party. But no one of today's militants can infer from it he has the right to a choice: that is of being in the clear with the "historical party", and to care nothing about the formal party. Thus it is, owing to the sound intelligence of that proposition of Marx and Engels, which has a dialectical and historical sense—and not because they were supermen of a very special type of race.

Marx says: party *in its historical meaning*, in the *historical* sense, and *formal*, or *ephemeral*, party. In the first concept lies the continuity, and from it we derived our characteristic thesis of the invariance of doctrine since its formulation made by Marx; not as invention of a genius, but as discovery of a result of human evolution. But the two concepts are not metaphysically opposite, and it would be silly to express them by the poor doctrine: I turn my back on the formal party, as I go towards the historical one.

When we infer from the invariant doctrine that the revolutionary victory of the working class can be achieved only by the class party and *its* dictatorship, and then go on to affirm, supported by Marx's writings, that the pre-revolutionary and communist party proletariat may be a class as far as bourgeois science is concerned, but isn't by Marx or ourselves, then the conclusion to be deduced is that for victory to be achieved it will be necessary to have a party worthy of being described both as the historical and as the formal party, i.e., a party which has resolved within active historical reality the apparent contradiction—cause of so many problems in the past—between the historical party, and therefore as regards *content* (historical, invariant programme), and the contingent party, concerning its *form*, which acts as the force and physical praxis of a decisive part of the proletariat in struggle.

This synthetic clarification of the doctrinal question must also be quickly related to the historical transitions lying behind us.

13—The first transition from a body of small groups and leagues—through which the workers' struggle came out—to the International party foreseen by doctrine, takes place when the First International is founded in 1864. There is no point now in reconstructing the process leading to the crisis of such organization, that under Marx's direction was defended to the last from infiltration of petty-bourgeois programmes such as those of libertarians.

In 1889 the Second International is built, after Marx's death, but under Engels's control, though his directions are not followed. For a moment there is the tendency to have

again in the formal party the continuation of the historical one, but all that is broken up in the following years by the federalist and non-centralist type of party; by the influences of parliamentary practice and by the cult of democracy; by the nationalist outlook on individual sections, no longer conceived as armies at war against their own state, as wanted by the 1848 *Manifesto*; rises the open revisionism disparaging the historical *end* and exalting the contingent and formal *movement*.

The rising of Third International, after the 1914 disastrous failure of almost all sections into pure democratism and nationalism, was seen by us—in the first years after 1919—as the complete reconnection of historical party and formal party. The new International rose declaredly centralist and anti-democratic, but the historical praxis of the entrance into it of the sections federate to the failed International was particularly difficult, and made too hurried by the expectation that the transition, from the seizure of power in Russia to that in other European countries, would be immediate.

If the section arisen in Italy from the ruins of the old party of the Second International was particularly prone, not by virtue of particular persons certainly, but for historical reasons, to feeling the necessity of welding the historical movement to its present form, this was due to the hard struggles it had waged against degenerated forms and its consequent refusal to tolerate infiltrations; which were attempted not only by forces dominated by nationalist, parliamentary and democratic type positions, but also by those (in Italy, maximalism) influenced by anarcho-syndicalist, petty-bourgeois revolutionism. This left-wing current fought in particular to establish more rigid membership conditions (construction of the new formal structure), and it applied them fully in Italy; and when they gave imperfect results in France, Germany etc., it was the first to sense the danger to the International as a whole.

The historical situation, in which the proletarian State had only been formed in one country, whilst the conquest of power had not been achieved in any of the others, rendered the clear *organic* solution, that of leaving the helm of the world organization in the hands of the Russian section, highly problematic.

The Left was the first to notice that whenever there were deviations in the conduct of the Russian State, both in relation to domestic economy and international relations, a discrepancy would arise between the policies of the historical party, i.e. of all revolutionary communists throughout the world, and those of the formal party, which was defending the interests of the contingent Russian State.

14—Since then the abyss has deepened to the extent that the “apparent” sections, which are dependent on the Russian leader-party, are now involved, in the ephemeral sense, in a vulgar policy of collaboration with the bourgeoisie that

is no better than the traditional collaboration of the corrupted parties of the Second International.

This has produced a situation in which the groups derived from the struggle of the Italian Left against Moscow’s degeneration have been given the chance (we don’t say the right) to better understand the road which the real, active (and therefore formal) party must follow in order to remain faithful to those features which distinguish the revolutionary, historical party; a party which has existed, at least in a potential sense, since 1847, whilst from a practical point of view it has established itself in key historical events as a participant in the tragic series of revolutionary defeats.

The transmission of this undeformed tradition into efforts to form a new international party organization without any historic breaks, may not, in an organizational sense, be based on men chosen because they would be best at it or most knowledgeable about the historical doctrine, and yet, in an organic sense, such a transmission nevertheless has to remain totally faithful to the line connecting the actions of the group which first gave expression to it forty years ago to the line as it exists today. The new movement should expect neither supermen nor messiahs, but must be based on a rekindling of as much as it has been possible to preserve over the long intervening period, and the preservation cannot be restricted to just theses and documents but must also include the living instruments who constitute the old guard, entrusted with the task of handing on the uncorrupted and powerful party tradition to the young guard. The latter rushes off towards new revolutions, that might have to wait not more than a decade from now the action on the foreground of historical scene; the party and the revolution having no concern at all for the names of the former and the latter.

The correct transmission of that tradition beyond generations—and also for this beyond names of dead or living men—cannot be restricted to that of critical texts, nor only to the method of utilizing the communist party’s doctrine by being close and faithful to classical texts; it must be related to the class battle that the Marxist Left—we don’t want to limit the revival only to the Italian region—set out and carried out in the most inflamed real struggle during the years after 1919, and that was broken, more than by the force relations with respect to the enemy class, by the dependence on the centre, degenerating from centre of the historical world party to that of an ephemeral party, destroyed by opportunist pathology, until such dependence was, historically and de facto, broken.

The Left actually tried, without breaking from the principle of globally centralized discipline, to wage a revolutionary defensive war by keeping the vanguard proletariat immunized against the collusion of the middle classes, their parties and their doomed-to-defeat ideologies. Since this historic chance of saving, if not the revolution, at least the

core of its historical party was also missed, today it has started again in a situation which is objectively torpid and indifferent, in the midst of a proletariat riddled with petty-bourgeois democratism; but the nascent organization, using its entire doctrinal tradition and praxis, verified historically by its timely predictions, also applies it in its everyday activity too, through its efforts to re-establish ever wider contact with the exploited masses; and it also eliminates from its own structure one of the parting errors of the Moscow International, by getting rid of the thesis of democratic centralism and the application of any voting mechanism, just as it has eliminated from the thought processes of every last one of its members any concession to democratic, pacifist, autonomist or libertarian tendencies.

It is in this sense that we attempt to take further steps, by using the many long years of bitter experience to head off further attacks on the historical party's political line, by obliterating all the misery and pettiness we have seen in the comings and goings of the many, unfortunate, formal parties. By doing so, we are also heeding the warnings of the first, great masters about the difficulties of combating those influences emanating from the bourgeois commercial environment, such as personal adulation, and a vulgar chasing after supremacy and a dunce's popularity, which so often bring to mind those who, with serene indignation, Marx and Engels budged aside to stop them fouling their path.

Theses on the Historical Duty, Action and the Structure of the World Communist Party

That for more than half a century form the historical heritage of the Communist Left

Theses of Naples; July 1965

1—The questions that were historically enunciated as referred to the party's ideology and doctrine, to its action in the various historical situations, and therefore to its programme, its tactics and its organizational structure, are to be regarded as a single body; thus, in the course of the Left's struggle, they have several times been set to order and enunciated without ever introducing changes. The party press will be committed to the reproduction of texts; for now, it is sufficient to recall some of them, cornerstones of our doctrine:

- (a) Complete Theses of the Abstentionist Communist Fraction of the Italian Socialist Party, of 1919;
- b) Rome Theses, i.e. of the II Congress of the Communist Party of Italy, March 1922;
- (c) The positions taken by the Communist Left in the International Congresses of 1922 and 1924 and in the Enlarged Executive of 1926;
- (d) Theses of the Left at the illegal Conference of the Communist Party of Italy, May 1924;
- (e) Theses introduced by the Left at the III Congress of the Communist Party of Italy, Lyon 1926.

2—In the above and in many other texts that will be utilized, and which will be included, in a perfect continuity of positions, in the volumes of the *History of the Communist Left*, are constantly vindicated and reaffirmed certain former results, considered as heritage of revolutionary Marxism; it is there also that its classic and programmatic texts, such as the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* and the Statutes of the First International of 1864, are set store.

The programmatic cornerstones of the First and Second Congresses of the Third International founded in 1919 are likewise vindicated, as well as the fundamental and preceding theses of Lenin on the imperialist war and on the Russian Revolution. At the same time the Left, having taken a clear stand, has as part of its heritage the historical and programmatic solutions that stemmed from the dénouement of great crises faced by the proletarian movement; in them the theory of counter-revolutions and the doctrine of the struggle against the ever reviving opportunist danger is summarized.

Among these historical cornerstones bound, both to the sound theoretical outlook and to the great battles of the masses, are, for example:

(a) The ridding, wanted by Marx, of petty-bourgeois and anarchist currents, which endangered the basic principles of centralization and discipline to the centre of the organization, and the condemnation of the harmful concepts of autonomy of local section and of federalism among the sections of the world party; in such deviations lies the cause of the shameful ruin of the Second International, founded in 1889 and shattered in the 1914 war.

(b) The judgment of the glorious experience of the Paris Commune, given in the texts that Marx wrote on the International's behalf, which confirmed the parliamentarist methods being obsolete, and applauded the insurrectional and terrorist vigor of the great Paris movement.

(c) The condemnation from the true revolutionary Marxist Left, on the verge of the first great war, not only of revisionist and evolutionist reformism, risen in the whole International with the aim of dismantling the vision of a revolutionary catastrophe, peculiar to Marxism; but also of the reaction to it—apparently proletarian in the “workerist” sense and in perfect agreement with far-right Labourism—that was the revolutionary syndicalism of Sorel and others. Such a current, on the pretext of getting back to the violence of direct action, condemned the fundamental Marxist position on the need for a revolutionary, centralized party and of a dictatorial and terrorist proletarian State; which are instead the sole instruments able to lead the class insurrection to victory, and to strangle any attempt at revenge or corruption by the bourgeois counter-attack, thus laying the foundations of the classless and Stateless communist society which will crown the victory on an international scale.

(d) The criticism and the relentless demolition, made by Lenin and by the Left of all countries, of the ignoble betrayal of 1914; the most lethal and ruinous form of such betrayal not being so much the shift under the patriotic national flags, as the return to deviations—contemporary with the birth of Marxist communism itself—according to which both programme and action of the working class are to be framed within the limits of the bourgeois canons of freedom and of par-

liamentary democracy, boasted as eternal conquests of the early bourgeoisie.

3—As regards the subsequent period in the life of the new International the enduring heritage of the communist Left is the correct theoretical diagnosis and historical prediction of the new opportunistic dangers that emerged over the course of the first years of the International. Avoiding heavy intellectual theorizing, this point needs to be developed using the historical method. The first manifestations denounced and opposed by the Left occurred in the tactics regarding the relations to be established with the old socialist parties of the Second International, from which the communists had become organizationally separated as a result of splits; and consequently also in erroneous measures in the realm of organizational structure.

The Third Congress had correctly established that it wasn't enough (already in 1921 one could see that the great revolutionary wave that came after the war in 1918 was petering out, and that capitalism would attempt a counter-offensive on both the economic and political fronts) to have formed communist parties strictly committed to the programme of violent action, to the proletarian dictatorship and to the communist state if a large part of the proletarian masses remained under the influence of opportunist parties, which all communists now considered the worst instruments of bourgeois counter-revolution, and whose hands were covered in the blood of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. At the same time, the communist Left did not accept the formula that made revolutionary action conditional (to be denounced when the Blanquist initiative of small parties) on the conquest of the "majority" of the proletariat (besides which one never knew if this meant the "majority" of the actual waged proletariat, or of the "people", including propertied peasants and micro-capitalists, artisans and all other petty bourgeois layers). With its democratic allure, this formula of the "majority" triggered the first alarm bells, unfortunately confirmed by history, that opportunism could be reborn in the new International under the familiar banner of homage to the dead concepts of democracy and electoral counts.

From the Fourth Congress, which took place at the end of 1922, the Left stood by its pessimistic prediction and its vigorous struggle to denounce dangerous tactics (united front between communist and socialist parties, the slogan of "workers' government") and organizational errors (attempts to increase the size of the parties not simply through an influx of those proletarians who had abandoned the other parties with a social-democratic programme of action and structure, but by means of fusions that accepted entire parties and portions of parties after negotiations with their leadership, and also by admitting to the Comintern, as national sections, parties claiming to be "sympathizers", which was clearly an error in its drift towards federalism).

Taking the initiative on a third issue it was from this time that the Left denounced, and ever more vigorously in the years that followed, the growth of the opportunist danger: this third issue was the international's method of internal working, whereby the centre, represented by the Moscow executive, resorted not only to the use of "ideological terror" in its dealings with the parties, or the parts of them that had made political errors, but above all to organizational pressure; which amounted to an erroneous application, and eventually a total falsification, of the correct principles of centralization and absolute discipline with no exceptions.

This method of working was tightened up in all countries, but especially in Italy after 1923—when the Left, with the whole party behind it, displayed exemplary discipline by handing over the leadership to the comrades of the right and centre appointed by Moscow—where the spectre of "fractionalism" was being seriously abused, along with constant threats to expel a current artificially accused of preparing a split from the party, with the sole aim of allowing dangerous centrist errors to prevail in the party's politics. This third vital point was discussed in depth at the international congresses and in Italy, and it is no less important than the condemnation of the opportunist tactics and the federalist type organizational formulas. In Italy for instance the centrist leadership, while accusing the Left leadership of 1921 and 1922 of dictatorship over the party (which instead several times demonstrated to be in total agreement with the Left), kept using the spectre of Moscow's orders, even daring to exploit the formula of "international communist party"; as was done in 1925 during the pre-Lyon polemics by Palmiro Togliatti, real champion of the Communist International's liquidationism.

4. It is worth showing how the demonstration of the correctness of such criticisms and diagnoses is to be found in historical events; although it was then easy to object to the Left, which denounced the warning signs of a mortal crisis, that it was merely based on doctrinal worries.

As for the tactical question, it is enough to recall that the united front was born as a method to "ruin" the socialist parties, and to leave their leaders and headquarters deprived of the masses which supported them; while such masses were supposed to come over to us. The evolution of such tactics demonstrated that it contained the danger of leading to a betrayal and to an abandonment of the classist and revolutionary bases of our programme. The historical sons of *the united front* of 1922 are today well known: the popular fronts, created in order to support the second war of democratic capitalism; the anti-fascist "liberation fronts", which led to the most open class collaboration, extended to declaredly bourgeois parties; and in the above is summarized the monstrous birth of the last opportunist wave, upon the corpse of the Third International. The first organizational maneuvers of the 1922 fusions laid the bases

of the total confusion existing in the present parliamentary and democratic policy of all parties, including the communist party, which thus tore to pieces Lenin's theses on parliament, of the Second Congress. Since the Russian party's 20th Congress of 1956, while getting rid of the world organizational unity in order to admit the various socialist, workers, and even popular parties in this or that country, what the Left foresaw was done, that is the abandonment of the programme of proletarian dictatorship, reduced to a peculiarly Russian phenomenon; and the introduction of democratic and "national ways" to socialism, which only indicate a relapse into the same infamous opportunism of 1914; or rather, as it is operated in the name of Lenin, into a much more base and infamous one.

Finally, the accusation of the method of work in the International and of the wrongful pressures from above, while seeing in 1926 the misleading offer made by centrists of "a bit more democracy within both party and International"—which was rightly rejected by the Left, which remained on its opposition positions, though without threatening until then (1926) to leave the International or to split parties—is historically confirmed by the ferocious Stalinist terror, employed in order to devastate the party from the inside, by means of State forces; that is in order to crush, through tens of thousands of murders, a resistance which was led in the name of a return to revolutionary Marxism and to the great Leninist and Bolshevik traditions of the October Revolution. All those positions outlined a correct prevision of the future course of events, although unfortunately the balance of forces were such as to allow the third infamous opportunist wave to overwhelm everything.

The Left indicated in time the right terms of the relations between parties and International, and between the Russian party and State. The reversal of such positions is to be historically related to the issue of the relations between Russian state policy and proletarian policy in all other countries. When, under Stalin, who in the Enlarged Executive of Autumn 1926 laid all his cards on the table, it was declared that the Russian State would give up the idea of making its future conditioned on a general class engagement, able to overthrow the power of capital in all other countries; and when it was stated that the watchword in internal social policy was that of "construction of socialism"—which in Lenin's language only meant construction of capitalism—then the further course was a foregone conclusion; and it was confirmed by the bloody conflict through which the opposition, too late arisen in Russia and crushed just in time under the loathsome accusation of fractionist work, was exterminated.

The above is to be related to the delicate question that—once a suffocating apparatus was imposed, in the name of a falsified centralism, on all parties which had in their

ranks fervent revolutionaries—it was relied, not so much on the influence of huge names like Bolshevism, Lenin, October, as on the common economic fact that Moscow's State had the means by which the officials of the apparatus were paid. The Left saw all these shames in a remarkable silence, because it knew what other tremendous danger would have been the petty-bourgeois and anarchist deviation, with its chatterings: You may see that the end is always the same; where there is the State, where there is power, where there is a party there is corruption, and if the proletariat wants to free itself, it has to be done with no parties and with no authoritarian State. We knew that too well, though Stalin's line meant, since 1926, the delivery of our victory to the bourgeois enemy, such aberrations of middle-class would-be intellectuals are always—we can now refer to an experience more than a century old—the best guarantee for the survival of hateful capitalism, by snatching from the hands of its executioners the only weapon able to kill it.

Along with the awkward influence of money, which will disappear in communist society, but only after a long chain of events in which the achievement of the communist dictatorship is but the first step, was added the wielding of an instrument of maneuver which we openly declared to be worthy of parliaments and bourgeois diplomacy, or of the extremely bourgeois League of Nations, that is, the encouragement or inculcation, according to the circumstances, of careerism and vain ambition amongst the swarming ranks of petty government officials, so that each of them would be faced with an inexorable choice between immediate and comfortable notoriety, after prostrate acceptance of the theses of the omnipotent central leadership, or else permanent obscurity and possible poverty if he wished to defend the correct revolutionary theses which the central leadership had deviated from.

Today, given the historical evidence, it is beyond dispute that those international and national central leaderships really were on the path of deviation and betrayal. According to the Left's unchanging theory, this is the condition that must deprive them of any right to obtain, in the name of a hypocritical discipline, an unquestioning obedience from party members.

5—The work carried on to reconstitute everywhere the class party after the end of the Second World War, found an extremely unfavorable situation, with the international and social events of such a tremendous historical period in every possible way favoring the opportunist plan of wiping out the policy of conflict among classes; thus emphasizing before the blinded proletarians the need of supporting the restoration on the whole world of democratic-parliamentarian constitutionalisms.

In such a terrible position, worsened by the diving of big proletarian masses into the stinking practice of elec-

toralism—which was apologized by false revolutionaries in a much more shameless way than that of Second International revisionists—our movement, though compelled to go against the stream, appealed to its whole heritage coming from the long and unfavorable historical event. Having adopted the old watchword “on the thread of time”, our movement devoted itself to setting before the eyes and minds of the proletariat the meaning of the historical results inscribed along the route of a long and painful retreat. It was not a matter of restricting our role to cultural diffusion or the propagandizing of petty doctrines, but of demonstrating that theory and action are dialectically inseparable fields, and that teachings are not book-learned or academic, but are derived from—not *experiences* exactly, a word we wish to avoid as now fallen prey to Philistines—but from the dynamic results of confrontations between real forces of considerable size and range, with use made also of those cases in which the final result was a defeat of the revolutionary forces. The latter is what we refer to, using the old classical Marxist criteria, as “the lessons of the counter-revolutions”.

6—Other difficulties, for the setting of our movement on its own bases, arose from overly optimistic prospects; according to which, having the end of the First World War bring a great revolutionary wave and the condemnation of the opportunist pest—thanks to the action of the Bolsheviks, of Lenin, and of the Russian victory—the end of the Second World War in 1945 would give rise to parallel historical phenomena, and make easy the constituting of a revolutionary party in conformity to the great traditions. Such a prospect might be judged generous, but it was greatly wrong because it did not take into account the “hunger for democracy” that had been instilled among proletarians, not so much by the more or less truculent exploits of Italian and German fascisms, as by the ruinous relapse into the false hope that with the recovery of democracy everything would in a natural way come back on the revolutionary lines; while the central position of the Left is the consciousness that the biggest danger lies in the populist and social-democratic illusions, which are not the basis for a new revolution, supposed to make the Kerensky-Lenin step, but of opportunism, the most powerful counter-revolutionary force.

For the Left opportunism is not a phenomenon of a moral nature, caused by the corruption of individuals; it is instead a phenomenon of a social and historical nature, owing to which the proletarian vanguard, in place of drawing up in the array that opposes the reactionary front of bourgeoisie and of petty-bourgeois strata—the latter much more conservative than the former—gives way to a policy welding the proletariat with the middle classes. In this sense the social phenomenon of opportunism does not differ from that of fascism, as it is in both cases a matter of

subjection to the petty-bourgeoisie, of which the so-called intellectuals, the so-called political and bureaucratic-administrative class, form part—and which naturally are not classes able of historical vitality, but only base, marginal, and bootlicker strata, who are to be recognized, not as the deserters of the bourgeoisie of whom Marx describes the fatal passing to the ranks of the revolutionary class, but as the best servants and select knights of capitalist conservation, living on salaries that come from the extortion of surplus value from workers. The new movement showed even signs of falling into the illusion that there would be something to do within bourgeois parliaments, although with the aim of giving new life to the plan contained in the famous theses of Lenin; thus not taking into consideration the fact that an irrevocable historical result had demonstrated that such tactics could not end—however noble and grandiose they would be in 1920, when history seemed poised—with the perspectives of a revolutionary attack aiming to blow up parliaments from the inside; while instead all was reduced to the vulgar revenge against fascism of Modigliani’s cry “Long live parliament!”.

7—It was a matter of a transition from one generation to another, of the generation which had lived through the glorious struggles of the first post-war period and the Livorno split handing over to the new proletarian generation, which needed to be delivered from the mad elation about the collapse of fascism in order to restore its awareness of the independent action of the revolutionary party, which was opposed to all other parties, and especially the social-democratic party, in order to re-establish forces committed to the prospect of the dictatorship and proletarian terror against the big bourgeoisie along with all its rapacious instruments. This being the case, the new movement, in an organic and spontaneous way, came up with a structural form for its activity which has been tried and tested over the last fifteen years. The party fulfilled aspirations which had been expressed within the Communist Left since the time of the Second International, and afterwards during the historic struggle against the first manifestations of opportunist danger within the Third. This long-standing aspiration is to struggle against democracy and prevent this vile bourgeois myth from gaining any influence; it has its roots in Marxist critique, in the fundamental texts and early documents of the proletarian organizations from the time of *Communist Manifesto* onwards.

If human history is not to be explained by the influence of exceptional individuals who have managed to excel through strength and physical valor, or by moral or intellectual force, if political struggle is seen, in a way which is wrong and diametrically opposed to ours, as a selecting of such exceptional personalities (whether believed to be the work of divinities or entrusted to social aristocracies, or—in the form most hostile to us of all—entrusted to the

mechanism of vote-counting to which all elements in society are eventually admitted); when in fact history is a history of class struggles, which can only be read and applied to real battles, which are no longer “critiques” but are violent and armed, by laying bare the economic relations that classes establish between themselves within given forms of production; if this fundamental theorem has been confirmed by the blood shed by countless fighters, whose generous efforts had been violated by democratic mystification; and if the heritage of the Communist Left has been erected on this balance sheet of oppression, exploitation, and betrayal, then the only road worth following was the one which over the course of history had freed us, more and more, from the lethal machinery of democracy, not only in society and the various bodies organized within it, but also within the revolutionary class itself, and above all in its political party.

This aspiration of the Left, which cannot be traced back to a miraculous intuition or rational enlightenment on the part of a great thinker, but which emerged under the impact of a chain of real, violent, bloody, and merciless struggles, even when it ended in the defeat of the revolutionary forces, has left its historic traces in a whole series of manifestations of the Left: from when it was struggling against electoral coalitions and the influence of Masonic ideologies, against the supporters firstly of the colonial wars and then the gigantic first European war (which triumphed over the proletarian aspiration to abandon their military uniforms and turn their arms against those who had forced them to take them up, mainly by agitating the lubricious phantom of a fight for liberty and democracy); from when finally in all the countries of Europe and under the leadership of the Russian revolutionary proletariat, the Left threw itself into the battle to bring down the main immediate enemy and target which protected the heart of the capitalist bourgeoisie, the social-democratic right-wing, and the even more ignoble centre which, defaming us just as it defamed Bolshevism, Leninism, and the Russian Soviet dictatorship, did everything it could to place another trapdoor between the proletarian advance and the criminal idealizations of democracy. At the same time the aspiration to rid even the word “democracy” of any influence is evidenced in countless texts of the Left hurriedly indicated at the start of these theses.

8—The working structure of the new movement, convinced of the importance, difficulty and historical duration of its task, which was bound to discourage dubious elements motivated by career considerations because it held no promise, indeed ruled out, any historical victories in the near future, was based on frequent meetings of envoys sent from the organized party sections. Here no debates or polemics between conflicting theses took place, or anything arising out of nostalgia for the malady of anti-fascism, and

nothing needed to be voted on or deliberated over. There was simply the organic continuation of the serious historical work of handing on the fertile lessons of the past to present and future generations; to the new vanguards emerging from the ranks of the proletarian masses, beaten down, deceived, and disappointed over and over again but eventually destined to rebel against a capitalist society now in a state of purulent decomposition; they will at least feel in their living flesh how the extreme and most poisonous enemy are the ranks of populist opportunism, of bureaucrats of big unions and parties, and of the ridiculous pleiad of alleged cerebral intellectuals and artists, “committed” or “engaged” in earning some loaves for their harmful activity, by entering through the traitor parties the rich classes’ service like bootlickers, and by serving as well the bourgeois and capitalist soul of the middle classes posing as “people”.

This work and this dynamic is inspired by the classic teachings of Marx and Lenin, who presented the great historical revolutionary truths in the form of theses; and these reports and theses of ours, faithfully grounded in the great Marxist tradition, now over a century old, were transmitted by all those present—thanks partly to our press communications—at the local and regional meetings, where this historic material was brought into contact with the party as a whole. It would be nonsense to claim they are perfect texts, irrevocable and unchangeable, because over the years the party has always said that it was material under continuous elaboration, destined to assume an ever better and more complete form; and in fact all ranks of the party, even the youngest elements have always, and with increasing frequency, made remarkable contributions that are in perfect keeping with the Left’s classical line.

It is only by developing our work along the lines indicated above that we expect to see that quantitative growth in our ranks and of the spontaneous adhesions to the party, which will one day make it a greater social force.

9—Before moving on from the topic of the party’s formation after the Second World War, it is worth reaffirming a few outcomes which are today enshrined as characteristic party positions; insofar as they are de facto historical results, despite the limited quantitative extension of the movement, and neither discoveries of useless geniuses nor solemn resolutions made by “sovereign” congresses.

The party soon realized that, even in an extremely unfavorable situation, even in places in which the situation was absolutely sterile, restricting the movement’s activity merely to propaganda and political proselytism is dangerous and must be avoided. At all times in all places and with no exceptions, the party must make an unceasing effort to integrate its own life with the life of the masses, and participate in its protests as well, even when these are influenced by directives in conflict with our own. It is an old thesis of

left-wing Marxism that we must work in reactionary trade unions in which workers are present, and the party abhors the individualistic positions of those who disdain to set foot in them, and who go so far as to theorize the failure of the few, feeble strikes that today's unions dare to call. In many regions the party already has a remarkable record of activity in the trade unions, although it always faces serious difficulties, and opposing forces which are greater than ours from a statistical point of view. It is important to establish that, even where such work has not really got off the ground, we must reject the position in which the small party is reduced to being a set of closed circles with no connection with the outside world, or limits itself just to recruiting members in the world of opinion, which for the Marxist is a false world if not treated as a superstructure of the world of economic conflicts. Similarly it would be wrong to divide the party or its local groupings into watertight compartments that are only active in one field, whether theory, study, historical research, propaganda, proselytism or trade union activity. This is because the very essence of our theory and of our history is that these various fields are totally inseparable, and in principle accessible to each and every comrade.

Another position which marks a historical conquest for the party, and one which it will never relinquish, is the clear-cut rejection of all proposals to increase its membership through the calling of congresses to bring together the countless other circles and grouplets, which since the end of the war have popped up everywhere elaborating distorted and disjointed theories, or whose condemnation of Russian Stalinism and all of its local variations is the only positive thing they have to offer.

10—Returning to the early years of the Communist International, we will recall that its Russian leaders, who had behind them not only a thorough knowledge of Marxist doctrine and history, but also the outstanding outcome of the October revolutionary victory, conceived of theses such as Lenin's as binding on all, although acknowledging that in the course of the international party's life there was room for further elaboration. They never asked for them to be put to the vote because everything was accepted by unanimous agreement and spontaneously confirmed by everyone on the periphery of the organization; which in those glorious years was living in an atmosphere of enthusiasm and even of triumph.

The Left didn't disagree with these generous ambitions, but held that, in order to achieve the outcomes all of us dreamt about, the communist party, sole and undivided, needed to have some of its organizational and constitutional measures tightened up and made more rigorous, and likewise its tactical norms clarified.

As soon as a certain relaxation in these vital areas started to emerge, denounced by us to the great Lenin him-

self, it started to produce harmful effects, and we were forced to meet reports with counter-reports, theses with counter-theses.

Unlike other opposition groups, even those formed in Russia and the Trotskyist current itself, we always carefully avoided having our work within the International take the form of calls for democratic, electoral consultations of the party membership as a whole, or for the election of steering committees.

The Left hoped to be able to save the International, and its vital core rich of traditions, without organizing scissionist movements, and always rejected the accusation of being organized, or of being about to organize itself, as a fraction, or as a party within the party. Nor did the Left encourage or approve the practice of individual resignations from the party or from the International, even when the displays of the rising opportunism were becoming more and more undeniable.

Nevertheless dozens of examples from previously cited texts evidence that the Left, in its underlying thinking, has always rejected elections, and voting for named comrades, or for general theses, as a means of determining choices, and believed that the road to the suppression of these means leads likewise to the abolition of another nasty aspect of politicians' democratism, that is, expulsions, removals, and dissolutions of local groups. On many occasions we have openly argued that such disciplinary procedures should be used less and less, until finally they disappear altogether.

If the opposite should occur or, worse still, if these disciplinary questions are wheeled out not to safeguard sound, revolutionary principles, but rather to protect the conscious or unconscious positions of nascent opportunism, as happened in 1924, 1925, 1926, this just means that the central function has been carried out in the wrong way, which determined its loss of any influence on the base, from a disciplinary point of view; and the more that is the case, the more is phony disciplinary rigor shamelessly praised.

In the very early years the Left hoped the organizational and tactical concessions might be justified by the fecundity of the historical moment and have only temporary value, since Lenin's prospect was one of major revolutions in central and maybe western Europe, and after these the line would return to the clear and all-encompassing one which was in keeping with the vital principles. But the more that such a hope came to be gradually replaced by the certainty we were heading for opportunistic ruin—which inevitably assumed its classic form of glorification and exaltation of democratic and electoral intrigue—the more the Left conducted its historical defense without undermining its mistrust of the democratic mechanism. Such a distrust was maintained even when we were forced, by elec-

toral *combines*, within parties, to accept the game; and, while such tricks had to be welcomed when made by fascism, which thus enabled workers to reply to the provocation by taking up arms, they had to be repudiated when impudently perpetrated by the fathers of the new opportunism, on the point of reconquering both parties and International; though if in theory it could give ironic satisfaction hearing them say: We are ten and we want to submit you, who are a thousand; as we were far too sure they would end their shameful career by cheating workers' votes by the million.

11—It has always been a firm and consistent position of the Left that if disciplinary crises multiply and become the rule, it signifies that something in the general running of the party is not right, and the problem merits study. Naturally we won't repudiate ourselves by committing the infantile mistake of seeking salvation in a search for better people or in the choice of leaders and semi-leaders, all of which we hold to be part and parcel of the opportunist phenomenon, historical antagonist of the forward march of left-revolutionary Marxism.

The Left staunchly defends another of Marx and Lenin's fundamental theses, that is, that a remedy for the alternations and historical crises which will inevitably affect the party cannot be found in constitutional or organizational formulae magically endowed with the property of protecting the party against degeneration. Such a false hope is one amongst the many petty-bourgeois illusions dating back to Proudhon and which, via numerous connections, re-emerge in Italian *Ordinovism*, namely: that the social question can be resolved using a formula based on producers' organizations. Over the course of party evolution the path followed by the *formal* parties will undoubtedly be marked by continuous U-turns and ups and downs, and also by ruinous precipices, and will clash with the ascending path of the *historical* party. Left Marxists direct their efforts towards realigning the broken curve of the contingent parties with the continuous and harmonious curve of the historical party. This is a position of principle, but it is childish to try to transform it into an organizational recipe. In accordance with the historical line, we utilize not only the knowledge of mankind's, the capitalist class and the proletarian class's past and present, but also a direct and certain knowledge of society's and mankind's future, as mapped out by our doctrine in the certainty that it will culminate in the classless and Stateless society, which could in a certain sense be considered a party-less society; unless one understands by "party" an organ which fights not against other parties, but which conducts the defense of mankind against the dangers of physical nature and its evolutionary and eventually catastrophic processes.

The Communist Left has always considered that its long battle against the sad contingencies of the proletariat's

succession of formal parties has been conducted by affirming positions that in a continuous and harmonious way are connected on the luminous trail of the historical party, which continues unbroken along the years and centuries, leading from the first declarations of the nascent proletarian doctrine to the society of the future, which we know very well, insofar as we have thoroughly identified the tissue and ganglia of the present avaricious society which the revolution must sweep away.

Engels' proposal to adopt the good old German word *Gemeinwesen* (common being, i.e. social community) in place of the word State, was connected to Marx's judgment on the Commune, which was no longer a State, just because it was no longer a democratic body. After Lenin, such a theoretical question does not require any further explanations, and there is no contradiction in his brilliant remark that, *apparently*, Marx was much more of a "champion of the state" than Engels, as the former better explained the revolutionary dictatorship being a true State, provided with armed forces and repressive police, and with a political and terroristic law, which does not tie its own hands with legal traps. The question is also to be referred to the two masters' unanimous condemnation of the German socialists' revisionist idealization, in the foolish formula of "free people's State"; which not only sends out a stench of bourgeois democratism, but above all reverses the whole notion of inexorable conflict between classes, which involves the destruction of the bourgeoisie's historical State and the erection on its ruins of the more unmerciful, aversive proletarian State, indifferent to eternal constitutions.

It was not therefore the matter of finding a "model" of the future state in constitutional or organizational features; which is just as stupid as the attempt to erect, in the first country won to dictatorship, a model for other countries' socialist States and societies.

But equally futile, maybe more so, is the idea of constructing a model of the perfect party, an idea redolent of the decadent weaknesses of the bourgeoisie, which, unable to defend its power, to maintain its crumbling economic system, or even to exert control over its doctrinal thinking, takes refuge in distorted robotic technologisms, in order, through these stupid, formal, automatic models, to ensure its own survival, and to escape scientific certainty, which as far its epoch of history and civilization is concerned can be summed up in one word: Death!

12—Among the doctrinal processes, that we can for a moment name philosophical, included in the tasks of the Communist Left and of its international movement, is the development of the above mentioned thesis, that we supplied with quite a few contributions, by carrying out a research that demonstrates its consistency to the classic positions of Marx, Engels, and Lenin.

The first truth that man will be able to gain is the notion of future communist society. Such a structure does not require any material coming from the present infamous society, with its capitalist, democratic, and paltry Christian features, and does not regard the alleged positive science, created by the bourgeois revolution, as a human heritage on which to be founded; as for us it is a class science, to be destroyed and replaced piece by piece, just as well as religions and scholastics, belonging to previous forms of production. In the field of the theory of economic transformations that from capitalism—the structure of which we well know, and official economists completely ignore—lead to communism, we do as well without the contributions of bourgeois science; the same contempt we have for its technology, which is highly praised, above all by the imbecile opportunist traitors, as on the path of great conquests. In a totally revolutionary way we set up the science of society's life and future outlet. When such a work of human mind will be perfect—which won't be possible before the killing of capitalism, of its civilization, of its schools, of its science, and of its technology worthy of thieves—man will, for the first time, be able to write also both science and history of physical nature, and to know the great problems of the universe's life, to start with what is still called creation by the scientists won back to the dogma, till all its infinite and infinitesimal implications, in the so far undecided future.

13—The above and other problems are the field of action of the party we keep alive, not unworthy to get into the same line of the great historical party. But such concepts of high theory are not resources, able to solve petty disputes and small human doubts, which will unfortunately last as long as the presence of individuals—surrounded and dominated by the barbarian environment of capitalist civilization—among our ranks will last. Thence such developments cannot be used to explain how the opportunist-free party's way of living takes place, as it lies in organic centralism and cannot arise from a "revelation".

Such an evident Marxist thesis can be found, as a heritage of the Left, in all polemics against the Moscow Centre's degeneration. The party is at the same time a factor and a result of situations' historical course, and can never be seen as an extraneous and abstract element and able to dominate the surrounding environment, without falling again into a new and faint utopianism.

The fact that within the party there may be an inclination to give life to a fiercely anti-bourgeois background, widely anticipating the character of communist society, is an old enunciation, made also, for instance, by the young Italian communists in 1912.

But such a worthy aspiration cannot lead us to consider the ideal party as a phalanstery, surrounded by insurmountable walls.

The screening of party members in the organic centralist scheme is carried out in a way we have always supported against the Moscow centrists. The party continues to hone and refine the distinctive features of its doctrine, of its action and tactics with a unique methodology that transcends spatial and temporal boundaries. Clearly all those who are uncomfortable with these delineations can just leave.

Not even after the seizure of power has taken place can we conceive of having forced membership in our ranks; which is why organic centralism excludes terroristic pressures in the disciplinary field, which can't help but adopt even the very language of abused bourgeois constitutional forms, such as the power of the executive power to dissolve and reassemble elective formations—all forms that for a long time we have considered obsolete, not only for the proletarian party, but even for the revolutionary and temporary State of the victorious proletariat. The party does not have to display, to those who want to join it, any constitutional or legal plans for the future society, as such forms are only proper to class societies. Those who, seeing the party continuing on its clear way, that we attempted to summarize in the these theses to be set out at Naples' general meeting (July, 1965), do not yet feel up to such a historical level, know very well that they can take any other direction turning away from ours. We do not have to take any other steps on the matter.

Supplementary Theses on the Historical Task, the Action, and the Structure of the World Communist Party

Theses of Milan; April 1966

1—The Theses of Naples vindicate the continuity of the positions which, since more than half a century ago, are the Communist Left's heritage. Both their understanding and their natural and spontaneous application will never come from consultations of codes' articles or regulations; and they won't even be secured—according to the praxis we had as a goal and which we finally adopted—by numerical referendums of assemblies, or, even worse, by colleges or judging courts dissipating all doubts of less enlightened individuals. The work we are carrying on, in order to achieve such difficult aims, cannot be successful if we don't utilize the abundant historical material arising out of the lively experience, made by the revolutionary movement in long historical cycles; which we actually prepared and made known, through an assiduous, common work, before and after the theses' publication.

2—The existing small movement perfectly realizes that the dreary historical phase it has traversed makes it very difficult, at such a great historical distance, to utilize the experiences of the great struggles of the past, and not just those of resounding victories but also those arising from bloody defeats and inglorious retreats. The forging of the revolutionary programme, shaped by the correct and un-deformed outlook of our current, isn't confined to doctrinal rigor and deep historical criticism; it also needs, as its vital life-blood, to connect with the rebellious masses at those times when, pushed to the limits, they are forced to fight. Such a dialectical connection is particularly unlikely today, with the thrust of masses dampened and assuaged, due both to the flaccidity of senile capitalism's crisis, and the increasing ignominy of the opportunist currents. Even accepting the party's restricted dimensions, we must realize that we are preparing the true party, sound and efficient at the same time, for the momentous period in which the infamies of the contemporary social fabric will compel the insurgent masses to return to the vanguard of history; a resurgence that could once again fail if there is no party; a party that is compact and powerful, rather than inflated in numbers, the indispensable organ of the revolution.

Painful as the contradictions of this period are, they can be overcome by drawing the dialectical lessons from the bitter disappointments of times past, and by courageously signaling the dangers that the Left warned about, and denounced as they appeared, along with all the insidi-

ous forms in which the ominous opportunist infection reveals itself time and time again.

3—With this objective we will further develop our work of critical presentation of the past battles of the revolutionary and Marxist Left and their ongoing responses to the historical waves of deviation and disorientation which have blocked the path of proletarian revolution for more than a century. By referring to the phases in which the conditions for a really bitter class struggle were present, but in which the factor of revolutionary theory and strategy was lacking, and above all by referring to the historic events which nullified the Third International (just when it seemed that the crucial tipping point had finally been reached) and the critical positions that the Left assumed in order to ward off the towering danger, and the disaster which unfortunately followed, we will be able to consecrate lessons that are not, nor claim to be, recipes for success, but rather serve as stern admonitions to help us protect ourselves against those dangers and weaknesses, and the pitfalls and traps they gave rise to, from a time when history often caused the downfall of forces which seemed devoted to the cause of the revolutionary advance.

4—The brief, exemplified points that follow are not to be seen as directly referring to errors or difficulties that may menace the present day work; they only want to be another contribution to the handing over of past generations' experience, built up in a period when already there existed a very good restoration of the right doctrine (proletarian dictatorship in Russia; work of Lenin and of his followers in the theoretical field; foundation of the Third International in the practical field) and the revolutionary battle of communist parties, with a wide participation of the masses, was in the whole world like in Italy in its full course. Those results play today with a strong "phase shift" in the historical and chronological sense, but their correct utilization still remains a vital condition, both today and in the certain and more fertile tomorrow.

5—A fundamental feature of the phenomenon that Lenin named, branding it with a red-hot iron, with a term that is also in Marx and Engels, opportunism, is a preference for a shorter, more comfortable and less arduous way, to the longer, uncomfortable one fraught with difficulties; on which alone the matching of the assertion of our principles and programmes, i.e. of our supreme purposes, with the development of the immediate and direct practical action, in the real current situation, may take place. Lenin was right when he said that the tactical proposal of renouncing from that moment (end of the First World War) electoral and parliamentary action, should not be supported by the argument that communist and revolutionary action in parliament was tremendously difficult, as much more difficult were both armed insurrection and the following long-last-

ing control of the complex economic transformation of the social world, violently torn away from capitalism. We maintained being all too evident that the preference for using the democratic method method derived from the tendency to choose the comfortable rites of legalitarian action, rather than the tragic harshness of illegal action; and that such a praxis would not have failed in leading the whole movement back into the fatal social-democratic error, of which by heroic efforts we had just come out. We knew like Lenin that opportunism is not of a moral or ethical nature, but instead indicates the prevailing among workers (as Marx and Engels noticed in nineteenth-century England) of positions proper to petty-bourgeois middle strata, and more or less consciously inspired by the mother-ideas, i.e. social interests, of the ruling class. Lenin's powerful and generous position on parliamentary action, in order to support the violent destruction of the bourgeois system, and of the democratic framework itself, by substituting to it the class dictatorship, instead gave rise, under our very eyes, to the subjection of proletarian MPs to the worst influences of petty-bourgeois weaknesses, resulting in repudiation of communism and even in venal betrayal, in the service of the enemy.

Such an historical examination, carried on in the space of an immense historical scale (though it may seem that such a broad generalization is not contained in Lenin's teaching, as he was like ourselves a pupil of history), warns the party to avoid any decision or choice, when suggested by the will to obtain good results with less work or sacrifice. Such a feeling may seem innocent, but it well represents the slack nature of the petty-bourgeoisie, and obeys the fundamental capitalist norm of obtaining maximum profits with the slightest cost.

6—Another constant and recurring aspect of the opportunist phenomenon as it rose within the Second International and as it triumphs today after the even worse ruin of the Third, is that of showing at the same time, both the worst deviation from party principles, and a pretended admiration for the classical texts, for the words and work of big masters and chiefs. A constant character of petty-bourgeois hypocrisy is the servile praise of the power of the victorious leader, of the greatness of famous authors' texts, of the eloquent speaker's fluency; while in practice the most despicable and contradictory degenerations are displayed. A body of theses is therefore worthless, if those who welcome it with a literary-type enthusiasm are not able afterwards, in practical action, to understand its spirit and to respect it; and try to disguise their deviation from it, through an emphasized but platonic adherence to the theoretical text.

7—Another lesson we can draw from events in the life of the Third International (in our writings these are repeatedly

recalled in contemporary denunciations by the Left), is that of the vanity of "ideological terror", a horrible method in which it was attempted to substitute the natural process of diffusing our doctrine's via contact with harsh reality in a social setting, with forced indoctrination of recalcitrant and confused elements, either for reasons more powerful than party and men or due to a faulty evolution of the party itself, by humiliating them and mortifying them in public congresses open even to the enemy, even if they had been leaders and exponents of party action during important political and historical episodes. It became customary to compel such members (mostly with the threat of demotion to less important positions in the organization's apparatus) to publicly confess their errors, thus imitating the fideistic and pietistic methods of penance and *mea culpa*. By such totally philistine means as these, smacking of bourgeois morality, not a single party member ever improved, nor was a cure found for the party's impending decadence.

Within the revolutionary party, as it moves inexorably towards victory, obeying orders is spontaneous and complete but not blind or compulsory. In fact, centralized discipline, as illustrated in our theses and associated supporting documentation, is equivalent to a perfect harmony of the duties and actions of the rank-and-file with those of the centre, and the bureaucratic practices of an anti-Marxist voluntarism are no substitute for this.

The importance of this lesson in the correct outlook of organic centralism, is pointed out by the tremendous memory of the confessions, in which great revolutionary leaders were compelled, before being killed in Stalin's purges; and of the useless "self-criticisms" to which they were forced by the blackmail of being expelled by the party and dishonored as sold to the enemy; such infamies and absurdities never being repaired by the not less sanctimonious and bourgeois method of "rehabilitations". The growing abuse of such methods just marks the disastrous triumphal path of the latest wave of opportunism.

8—Due to the requirements of its own organic action, and to ensure a collective function that goes beyond and leaves behind all personalism and individualism, the party must distribute its members among the various functions and activities that constitute its life. The rotation of comrades in such functions is a natural fact, which cannot be regulated by rules analogous to those concerning the careers within bourgeois bureaucracies. In the party there are no competitive examinations in which its members compete for ever more prestigious positions and a higher public profile; rather we aim to achieve our goals organically. This is nothing to do with aping the bourgeois division of labour, but rather a case of the complex and articulated party organ naturally adapting itself to its function.

We know well that historical dialectics leads all fighting organisms to improve their offensive means, by utiliz-

ing the enemy's techniques. In the phase of armed struggle, communists will therefore have a military organization, with precise hierarchical schemes, which will assure the best result to the common action. Such a truth will not be uselessly aped in every party's activity, with reference also to the non-military ones. The transmission of directions must be unambiguous, but this lesson of the bourgeois bureaucracy cannot make us forget how it can be corrupted and degenerated, even when adopted within workers' organisms. The party's organicity does not at all require that every comrade must see in another comrade, specifically appointed to pass on instructions coming from above, the personification of the party form. Such a transmission among the molecules composing the party has always at the same time a double direction; and the dynamics of each single unit is integrated in the historical dynamics of the whole. Abuse of organizational formalisms without a vital reason has been and will always be a defect and a suspicious and stupid danger.

9—Capitalism, the present historical form of production, with its myth of private property as a right of men, that mystifies and disguises the monopoly of a minority-class, needed to mark the knots of its structures and the stages of its evolution—and today's involution—with big names of growing notoriety. In the long epoch of the bourgeoisie, the inauspicious history of which lies heavy like a yoke on our shoulders of rebels, at the beginning the most valiant and strongest man used to win great fame and to aspire to the maximum powers; today, in this predominant petty-bourgeois philistinism, those who become important are perhaps the most cowardly and weak ones, thanks to the dirty publicity method.

Amongst the many tasks within the party's difficult brief is its current effort to free itself, once and for all, from the treacherous impulse that seems to emanate from well-known people, and from the despicable function of manufacturing, in order to attain its aims and victories, a stupid fame and publicity through other big names. The party in every one of its various twists and turns must never waver in its decision to fight courageously and decisively for such an outcome, considering it to be the true anticipation of the society of the future.

Document layout by International Communist Party

www.international-communist-party.org

icparty@interncommparty.org