

WIRFI Message at Miroslav Vodslon's funeral, Berlin, December 2018

Mirek was a comrade in the truest sense of the word; a fighter side by side with us for a socialist future for the human race.

He was a convinced and profoundly thoughtful Marxist. His theoretical stature towered above that of others because he was highly intelligent, very thorough and took Marxism very seriously indeed. He was never satisfied with superficial or half-baked formulations of it.

Mirek also possessed a wry, dry and self-deprecating sense of humour which showed deep appreciation of the contradictions that arise in life and which moreover enabled him to reveal defects in another person's reasoning without massaging his own ego. This is something that we will especially miss.

Mirek came into contact with us UK Trotskyists as a militant of the Group of Opposition and Continuity of the Fourth International (GOCQI), in the late 1980s. Having just dealt with an abusive leadership in the Workers' Revolutionary Party, we were looking for contacts with activists around the world who had gone through experiences parallel to ours and who had similar ideas to ours about the way ahead.

Comrades like Balazs Nagy, Miroslav, Radoslav Pavlovic and Janos Borovi had paid the price of resisting Stalinist rule in their home countries. They had been forced to leave behind families and comrades and go into exile or face death or imprisonment. Based on their own experiences and difficulties in the Trotskyist movement, they joined with the insurgent Workers Revolutionary Party members and contacts in Namibia, South Africa and Latin America to set up the Workers'

International to Rebuild the Fourth International in 1990.

The GOCQI, including Mirek, quickly showed their theoretical mettle, contributing powerfully to the theoretical publications which prepared for the new foundation.

But the development of the new international collided with the collapse of the workers' states in the USSR and Eastern Europe and the Thatcher-Regan onslaught on all the things workers had gained in the class struggle. This was also a development which sought – where it could – to drive back the movements against imperialist oppression around the world and to corrupt them where it could not.

The workers' movement in western Europe and North America was undermined by de-industrialisation and re-location of industries, automation and the introduction of new technologies and the political collapse of Communist and Socialist parties.

Significant numbers of our already small group left, in some cases abandoning the very idea of an organised Marxist International, in others abandoning political activity completely.

Mirek stood out against the quitters, but for a while was unable to contribute personally to the struggle of the Workers' International.

Nevertheless, physically isolated as he was from other comrades, Mirek instinctively sought out footholds in the revolutionary Marxist movement and in the struggles of industrial workers. He worked within these circles to encourage the study of fundamental questions of Marxism, in particular political economy, and he deliberately participated in the shop-floor organisation of Daimler-Benz trade unionists.

The international situation for Marxists became extremely

gloomy. The first big break in the clouds was the determined struggle of the platinum miners at Marikana in South Africa, followed by a widespread mass-movement of workers in a large number of industries and trades for a big increase in wages. Twenty years after the end of apartheid and the rise to power of the African National Congress in South Africa, the deliberate murder of 35 strikers at Marikana by the South African Police acting under the instructions of the mine-owners with the collusion of ANC ministers marked the outbreak of a political crisis which faced revolutionary Marxists with a serious challenge.

It also brought Mirek back into activity in the Workers International. Together, we fought for the understanding that the way forward after Marikana is work towards the establishment of a socialist party of the country's working class, and that this could not be achieved by isolated sectarian groups, however courageous and devoted. The decisions and resolutions of the December 2013 Special Congress of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) sketched the plans for the re-foundation of the country's working-class movement, and Workers International pledged its support for this process.

Meanwhile the leading comrades of the Workers' Revolutionary Party of Namibia, founded in 1989, had been working for years through the Workers Advice Centre in Windhoek providing legal advice and representation to individuals and groups suffering abuses at the hands of employers and government. They had placed themselves in an excellent position to take forward new (or newly-resumed) mass struggles, such as:

- the campaign of former TCL miners for their stolen pensions
- various ethnic groups defending their land
- the matter of wholesale miss-appropriation of the assets of the former TLC in the course of official bankruptcy of the company.

- the question of whether German compensation for imperialist oppression, land-theft and atrocities during the occupation of “South-West Africa” would go to the victims’ communities or be stolen by government ministers,
- the campaign for a real reckoning over the crimes of South West Africa Peoples’ Organisation (SWAPO) during the liberation struggle,
- against the theft of people’s homes through legal chicanery
- Stood in the 2014 election and won two Assembly seats
- new industrial struggles such as that of the fishery workers.
- This meant that by late 2015, the WRP of Namibia was able to convene a conference with over 100 delegates to re-launch the party

Mirek devoted himself to assisting the development of the WRP of Namibia, spending considerable time in the country and brimming with advice to assist its development, both practical and theoretical.

Mirek did all he could to bring a lifetime’s experience of political struggle to bear fruitfully in the training of a new generation of political leaders in the continent of Africa. In the process, he designed a series of lectures to try to explain Marxism and the Fourth International to members of a party which contained representatives of pretty well all the ethnic groupings in the country, from bushmen to descendants of German settlers, and certainly all the oppressed groups, rural or urban.

The precious outcome is a pamphlet: [*Why we must rebuild the Fourth International*](#), which will undoubtedly play a major role in the political training of new generations. It is written in a very straightforward style, using everyday language in a way that makes complex questions easier to understand and does not set up the author as some sort of ivory-tower intellectual.

In a movement which has no lack of flamboyant, even abrasive, characters, Mirek was exceptional for his gentleness (not without firmness!) towards all and for the modesty and simplicity with which he wrote and spoke.

Back in Europe, Mirek keenly followed political event in online discussions. Topics included how Marxists should react to the discussion around mass migration and a sharp intervention on the outcome of the UK referendum on leaving the EU.

Mirek engaged in a lengthy online discussion earlier this year on the question of Catalonian independence.

He was keen to write-up his own experiences of the development of events in Czechoslovakia before and during the “Prague Spring” of 1968, and we were hoping to provide him with an opportunity to talk about this at an event in the UK on the fiftieth anniversary.

Sadly, things turned out otherwise. We were utterly shocked by news of Mirek’s death.

We pass on our condolences to Adrien and the rest of the family – Mirek was enormously proud of his son and his grandson – and also to Senta, who has been his companion and bedrock for so many years and whose companionship clearly meant so much to him.

We join with many rank-and-file IG Metall trade unionists, activists in the political movement in the Trotskyist left in Germany, the UK and elsewhere, and above all many Namibians in treasuring what he was worth and mourn his loss.

Why we must rebuild the Fourth International by Mirek Vodslon 14/09/15

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1. The question posed

The Namibian working class – all the active elements in it – is now creating its own party. This party will represent workers and other exploited people in the parliament and soon also in the local authorities. This is already an important step. It will make workers more confident to fight for their demands.

Several movements of working class resistance against

capitalist exploitation now converge under the banner of the Workers Revolutionary Party in order to fight together and achieve important partial improvements.

For instance, banks in cahoots with SWAPO officials have stolen the pensions of former press-ganged SWATF recruits and of miners who worked for the now bankrupt TCL corporation. The thieves must be forced to give back what they stole and be punished! The Southern Peoples have long been oppressed. Their legitimate demands which will enable a real development for them must be satisfied. These are just two examples, but there are many. In fact every oppressed section of society has legitimate demands and for each one there is only one party with which they can hope to achieve their satisfaction: the WRP.

However, a lasting improvement of the material situation of the working class requires a fundamental change in the whole society. All the groups and individuals who are now becoming part of the WRP have already understood that. And they expect the WRP as their party to arm itself with a programme that will allow them to achieve such a fundamental change.

All over the world we live under a regime, capitalism, where a tiny minority appropriates and accumulates the lion's share of the wealth that the vast majority, the toiling classes, produce. But that is not all. The capitalists only allow the toilers to produce anything at all if the products can generate private profit for capitalists. This puts a straitjacket on production of wealth. That straitjacket is becoming ever tighter, as can be seen from the growing number of unemployed.

All these unemployed workers and young could be producing useful things for their own needs and those of others. But not under capitalism. Modern means of production could assure that the vital needs of everybody in the world are satisfied and his or her individual personality can develop freely and

fully. Instead, we live in a world where a tiny minority swims in abundance and the vast majority lives in ever-worsening poverty.

Capitalism has entered a phase of final decline, its death throes, where capitalists find it ever more difficult to serve their purpose in life, the core principle of capital: making profit in order to increase capital. And since production of useful things for the needs of working people is allowed only under the condition that such production serves to increase capital, those needs are ever less satisfied.

The systematic theft of public money and resources, the theft of pensions and other assets of the working class is not limited to Namibia, it is endemic in all of Africa and common also in other parts of the world. A feature of capitalism since its beginning is that its ruling class is composed of an increasing number of criminals who do not respect their own stated sacred principle of private property. In the death agony of their regime they are pushed ever more to open theft and fraud as their opportunities to make legal (according to their own laws) profit diminish.

So the real, historic task is not just to correct the worst abuses of capitalism, the corruption, the oppression of nations or races, the oppression of women. It is not just to stop the ever-worsening wars and the deterioration of the environment which threatens to destroy the conditions of life itself. It is not even just to redistribute wealth from the rich to the poor.

All these can be achieved only if the working class is able to produce wealth directly both for its collective needs (like, for instance, railroads, hospitals and schools) and for its individual needs (like bread and medicine). Workers themselves must achieve that situation, nobody can do it in their place. They need to seize the private property of the capitalists, take over factories and other facilities, machines, and raw

materials. Workers need to become the collective owner of all these means of production. Then they need to use them to organise production for their own needs as a class and for the needs of all other working people. To accomplish that, the corrupt SWAPO state in this country, like all other capitalist states, must be replaced with a state that belongs to the working class and is fully under its command. Only a radically new state composed of organised workers themselves from bottom to top can be fully a workers' state.

Only such a workers' state can start cleaning up the material and moral mess created by capitalism and building a new society: socialism and communism.

We build the Workers Revolutionary Party under a red flag with an emblem that consists of a hammer, a sickle and the number four. All the elements of that symbol express the foundations of our programme.

Before I get to the main question – why the number four – I need to mention the meanings of the other elements of our flag. Each of them needs to be examined in greater depth than we will be able to do this time. In fact everything we will talk about in this short pamphlet needs deeper consideration. So I hope that there will be many more education initiatives and that every present or future member of the WRP will get a chance to deepen his or her understanding of all of our programme.

2. Productive forces and modes of production

Humans are very special beings. Other life forms just adapt to the conditions that nature offers for their life. Humans produce the conditions of their own life by working in cooperation. They possess productive forces: the tools and the collective knowledge needed to produce all they need, food, shelter, medicine and nowadays also roads, books, bibles, aeroplanes and computers. Workers themselves are of course the

main productive force. People beg the heavenly Father to give us this day our daily bread, but everybody knows that there would be no daily bread without the work and the cooperation of farmers, millers and bakers.

Humanity went through several stages of development of its productive forces. At the beginning, producers lived in small groups that owned their means of production and shared the products. This was the time when the community had just enough tools and knowledge to survive, but only if everybody worked for it all day. Such communities still live in some regions of Namibia. Anybody who wants to talk to such a community must bring enough food to feed everybody while they are talking, because during that time they can't be searching for food, as they would do normally.

But people invent ever better tools and eventually, starting with some areas of the world like the Middle East, they were able to produce more than they needed to survive. This is when the big separation became possible. Some could stop working and have leisure to think and rule. The others worked to maintain both themselves and the rulers. Society became divided into classes, and the first "class society" was born. Each class had a very different position in production than the other. Some classes ruled and organised production, others were the actual producers. Human society was turned around completely. The result of this first social revolution was that the original equality of all people was replaced by inequality. At the same time, the division of work between man and woman developed into a domination of woman by man.

Further developments brought several successive types of class society. For instance, the mode of production of the ancient Roman republic and later the Roman empire divided society fundamentally into slaves and slave owners. This was replaced with the feudal mode of production, where the ruling class were the feudal lords, the owners of land. With the land, they also owned the peasant population settled on that land. Each

type of society corresponded to a specific degree of development of the productive forces, each was based on a distinct mode of production, and each was brought about by a social revolution that had to destroy the previous society.

3. Capitalism and democracy

Finally, the development of industry and the democratic revolutions of the 17th and 18th century brought a type of society whose members are all traders, people who buy and sell goods for money. Those who have no money are not fully members of human society. The only way to cooperate in this society is by buying and selling privately produced goods. Where this type of society is fully realised, all its members are equal (as traders) and therefore also have equal rights in the eyes of the law. This equality in the eyes of the law is, as we know, a democratic ideal. Its highest expression is political democracy in which the people, by means of individual votes, choose their government. In most countries this ideal is not fully realised and in countries like Namibia it is mostly an empty pretence.

But for all its formal equality, even where it does exist, this society generates profound and increasing social, that is real, inequality. The reason is that it separates producers from their means of production. The baker, for instance, no longer owns his kneading trough. He or she works in a huge bread-producing factory that belongs to somebody else, the capitalist. While the worker works, he or she has no freedom at all. In exchange for a wage, every worker must surrender his or her freedom for the whole working day and must follow orders given by the capitalist or usually a lieutenant of the capitalist. In summary, the worker becomes a slave under the dictatorship of the capitalist for the duration of every working day.

The capitalist starts with some money. With that money he buys means of production and labour power. Having bought them, he

becomes the owner of both. The product of labour – bread in our example – therefore also belongs to the capitalist, although he did not make it – and this is what he sells. As a result, he gets more money than he had at start. The difference is called the profit. Then he uses most of the money he now has to buy more means of production and more labour power, in order to produce even more products and sell those, again with a profit. So the capitalist accumulates enormous wealth. This seemingly self-increasing wealth is called capital.

Of course it is the workers who produce capital, all of it. The capitalists only owns and therefore commands it. But he cannot do with it as he pleases. In fact, any capitalist who does not do his best to increase his capital, will be overtaken by other capitalists. So in fact it is the capital that commands the capitalist, telling him what to do in order to increase the capital. So, in effect, workers are being bossed around by the accumulated results of their own work!

Being owners of the whole product of the society, capitalists form the upper class. This type of society is therefore called capitalism. Capitalists are often called “bourgeois”. That is a word borrowed from the French. Originally, it meant simply inhabitant of a town. That is where the capitalists developed. Accordingly, the class of capitalists is often called the “bourgeoisie”.

Capitalism with rule of law equal for all and with democratic rights and freedoms is much better for the working class than capitalist rule without them. In a democracy, the working class can organise openly in trade unions and parties. Without it, working class organisations become illegal and have to go underground.

But among all its rights and freedoms, the only one which this regime enforces ruthlessly is the right of capitalists to own the means of production, that is the right to exploit the

working class. This right of the capitalists takes precedence over all other rights and freedoms. This democracy is therefore not just “democracy” for all people. It is limited, bourgeois democracy. Its essence is the dictatorship of the capitalists. So this democracy is only the best form of a bad thing: the dictatorship of the capitalists.

4. The red flag and the hammer

The hammer symbolises our class, the working class.

But what exactly is the working class? It is not all toilers. It is the class of those who need to buy their means of subsistence – food, shelter, education, health care – for money, in order to live and raise children, but own nothing that they could sell – except one thing: their own capacity to work, their labour power! This class is also called the proletariat and wage-workers are called proletarians. That word is very old and meant originally people whose only wealth consisted of their children.

Labour power (the capacity to work) is a very special commodity. The worker goes to the factory and surrenders eight hours or more of his daily life to the capitalist. The capitalist pays the value of that labour power as a daily wage to the worker. That value is determined by that of all the products needed to sustain workers’ life and reproduce their labour power, not only for the next day or month, but also to enable them to have children, the next generation of workers.

The capitalist consumes the worker’s labour power by employing him or her to do actual work – and there something strange happens: that work produces much more value than that of the worker’s wage. This is why the owner of the bakery can sell the bread produced by the bakers at a higher price than the sum of the prices of the flour needed to make the dough, the electricity needed to bake it, the amortisation of all the machines and buildings and the wages of the bakers. The profit

of the capitalist comes from this difference. This is the basis of capitalist exploitation. We owe this discovery to Karl Marx.

There is much more to learn about this. Marx lived in the 19th century at the time when capitalism developed. He lived mostly in the country that pioneered that development, England. Marx wrote several books about capital. The main one is called simply: Capital. I hope that we can have more discussions that make clear to every member of the WRP how exactly capitalist exploitation comes about in this organisation of society which is called the capitalist mode of production – the society we live in.

Wage workers form the principal lower class in society. That class has existed for over 180 years in Europe and for at least 100 years in every country of the world. The capitalist organisation of society constantly produces both classes, the capitalist and the working class. Formal equality of rights cannot hide this increasing social inequality.

As long as it has existed, the working class had to fight against the capitalist class for such conditions of exploitation as allow it to survive. The capitalist's interest is to increase its profit by paying ever-lower wages, making workers work ever longer hours and always speeding up the pace of work. So capitalists and workers have fundamentally opposed interests. Each class must fight the other. Therefore, never believe a capitalist who pretends that he and his workers "are in the same boat", as capitalists often say. On the contrary, workers must unite against their own employer and against all capitalists.

If workers don't unite, each worker remains just an individual trader who trades their labour power. All those worker-traders compete against each other and, even worse than that, they compete against an army of unemployed workers ready to take up any work in any conditions. Disunited workers undercut one

another on wages and other working conditions.

So workers must unite, form trade unions and fight collectively for their working conditions simply to prevent capitalists from starving them and from working them to premature death.

In the past and in some countries like Germany, where I live, workers' organisations were quite successful in this everyday struggle, so there are well-off workers who may possess a house or a car and have enough money to be able to send children to university to let them become skilled workers. But even a house, a car or university education are still only means of reproduction of labour power, be it at a much higher standard than the means available to the inhabitants of the shanties of Windhoek. Even a well-off German worker is therefore still just a wage-worker. He does not belong to the middle classes as some people pretend. He belongs to the same class as a super-exploited Namibian miner because he has the same fundamental interest in defending his working and living conditions against the capitalist class and in replacing the whole capitalist regime by a society without exploitation of human beings by other human beings. Being wage-workers is the solid foundation of workers' solidarity; regardless of important differences in living standard and even regardless of whether they actually have work at the moment. It does not matter where they live, what skin colour they have, whether they are men or women, which beliefs or faith they hold or which local customs they follow.

Moreover, the capitalist class all over the world has started a huge attack on the living standards, working conditions and rights of the working class with the objective of aligning them with the worst of existing conditions, those of super-exploited workers without rights in many countries of Asia and Africa.

Even in Germany, the past conquests of the working class are

threatened and a growing part of the working class sinks into the uncertain existence of contract labour and unemployment. Most unions traditionally unite only the fully employed in the fight for their wages and conditions. They are losing this battle everywhere because of the downward pressure of competition from the growing crowd of defenceless precarious and unemployed workers.

So unions must change in order to unite all layers of the working class. Some unions are becoming conscious of this necessity and as they try to realise it, they also start to realise that they cannot defend the working and living conditions of the working class with any prospect of a lasting success – and keep capitalism. So they must support the struggle to overcome capitalism itself. Workers must unite to defend themselves and fight off the multiform divisions constantly introduced by capitalists. But all experience shows that it is a losing fight unless the unity has the goal of uprooting the whole system of exploitation of humans by humans. This is a political goal which requires workers to form their own political party.

The workers' party cannot replace unions, which are vital for the everyday struggle. But neither can there be a tight barrier between trade unions and the workers party. The political struggle must be rooted in everyday struggles and many everyday struggles can only be won on the political level. For instance, capitalists more and more often break the resistance of their workforce to a worsening of its conditions by forcing large sections of that workforce out of the enterprise and into a new one, where they do the same work and produce the same things under much worse conditions. Unions have to fight against this so-called "outsourcing". In some cases they manage to fight off an "outsourcing" attack. But "outsourcing" is a right of capitalists, flowing from the fundamental right to private ownership of enterprises which is guaranteed by all capitalist constitutions. So without a

political change, any particular success against “outsourcing” is short-lived.

Since its origins, the most far-sighted elements of the working class have seen beyond the never-ending elementary struggle for survival. They have understood that a definitive liberation of their class was necessary and also possible by overthrowing the capitalist class and its state and making the modern, large-scale means of production the property of all those who work. They have also understood that the only way for workers to become owners of today’s means of production is to own them in common, as the working class. These workers have therefore called themselves “communists” and for a very long time they have organised in international communist associations and parties. Their only difference from the rest of the working class is the clear understanding of this overall aim and that the international unity of the whole working class must take precedence over national or particular interests. In all struggles of their class they have promoted these principles.

The red colour of our flag symbolises the workers’ blood which has been shed in all those struggles over many decades.

5. The sickle

As indicated before, besides the working class, there are other toilers. Some belong to intermediate layers. Some work for a wage but all they do is manage production on behalf of some capitalist. Top level managers have very large “wages” that are in reality parts of the capitalist profit, bribes. Moreover, they own large shares of capital, so they are capitalists. Others administer the top level of the capitalist state on behalf of the capitalist class as a whole in order to maintain the overall conditions for the capitalist regime to persist. All these belong to the capitalist class.

Still other toilers do produce commodities, or work in the

distribution of commodities, but not as wage workers. They work, but are different from wage workers in that they possess their means of production or of other work. They are craftsmen and small retailers in cities who still possess their workshops or shops.

Yet others, most important in a country like Namibia, are peasants in the countryside who possess their plot of land.

All these latter classes are often lumped together and called "petty-bourgeois". That means simply that they may be owners of some means of production or just wish to become owners of some means of production, but those means are so small that they do not constitute capital.

Most of these classes are being squeezed out by large capitalist production. The peasants especially, all over Africa, are being starved, forced off their land and obliged to look for a living in the cities, usually as the lowest layer of the working class.

New urban layers that are intermediary between the capitalist and the working class are still created. Many are self-employed but their social condition differs from that of the working class only in their imagination, where they deem themselves superior to the working class.

The peasantry still exists. Like the working class, the peasantry too must struggle for its living and working conditions.

Some peasants' land doesn't provide enough for them to live, or they may have no land any more. They have to work for a wage for richer farmers or in factories. In fact they are already part of the working class. They have the same demands as we have, such as higher wages and better working conditions. Of course we support these demands.

Poor peasants usually want to get enough land to sustain

themselves and their families. The working class supports the demand for the expropriation of landlords possessing large amounts of land – and sometimes not even exploiting it. Such land must be distributed especially to landless peasants. They themselves should decide if they want to use these lands collectively as a cooperative or individually.

The life of the poorest layers of peasantry mostly lacks even the one relative freedom which capitalism affords to the urban worker, that of choosing his or her master. Instead, a poor peasant often depends on a powerful, irremovable master, a landlord, a capitalist or, mostly, both. That master appears irremovable because he is supported by a corrupt, autocratic state. This is true even in countries like Namibia, which is formally a republic and a democracy, but its state is not a normal capitalist state. It is a corrupt autocracy like the old kingdoms were, except that the role of the autocrat at the top is taken by anonymous, foreign representatives of imperialist powers, like the bureaucrats of the International Monetary Fund. It is they who make sure that peasants and other poor classes at the bottom of society are forever imprisoned in rotten dependency relations. The whole SWAPO state, including its “parliament”, its president and its “Father of the Nation”, are the local executive apparatus of imperialist (international capitalist) powers that loot the country.

Capitalists exploit peasants by forcing them to sell their products too cheap and by selling the necessary machines and tools to the peasants at too high a price. Banks deny them the necessary credit. This can change only if the “commanding heights” of the economy – big industry and all credit institutions – belong to the working class.

But to the peasantry the question often appears as that of gaining a true democracy, of removing their immediate masters and becoming full citizens equal to others. This is not limited to the peasantry. The working class, especially its

lowest layers, are also deprived of their elementary democratic rights by a regime like that of SWAPO in Namibia.

Imperialism foisted a capitalist constitution on Namibia. It made sure that it guarantees the irremovable principle of private ownership of the means of production. This made the constitution undemocratic as it creates a barrier to making land available to those who work on it or need it to live on it and so it maintains peasants and poor people in towns and cities in dependency. By instituting the principle of a "unitarian state" it violates the democratic right of peoples of Namibia, such as, Caprivians, Herreros, Basters and Namas, to self-determination. For example, Caprivians who tried to practice that right have been in prison for 15 years. A real unity can be only voluntary but the peoples concerned were not asked. The whole constitution was concocted by capitalists using a ready-made template elaborated by imperialist powers, acting behind the backs of the people of Namibia. Therefore the immediate demands in any revolution must include that of a Constituent Assembly to install a democracy in a truly independent Namibia.

Since peasants live in small communities disseminated over large distances, it is very difficult for them to organise as a class on their own. Sometimes they do succeed in that. They form a party or an army to push their demands. But very soon they find out that they cannot formulate a programme for the whole of society. So they have to ally themselves with one of the two main urban classes, either with the working class if the working class is able to organise itself and become strong, or with the bourgeoisie.

The latter alliance was the only possibility in the epoch of the great bourgeois revolutions in England and France in the 17th and 18th centuries, when the modern working class had not yet been developed by capitalism. During the French revolution of 1789, activists of the bourgeoisie visited peasants in their villages and helped to write up their demands for

independence from aristocratic and ecclesiastic landlords, for equality before the law and for a Constituent Assembly to realise those demands. The bourgeoisie of that epoch had genuinely common interests with the peasantry.

This is nowhere the case today, and has not been for a long time. The bourgeoisie cannot be a genuine ally of the peasantry and where it lures the peasantry into such an alliance, it will betray them. Only the working class can help the peasantry to realise its social and political demands. Only the working class, if it takes power, will be able to offer peasants acceptable conditions for the sale of their products, and credit for the purchase of their tools and machinery. Only the working class can help realise full democracy but the only way to do so is not to stop at formal, limited, bourgeois democracy, which leaves the capitalists in control of society and still running things in their own interests. The working class must carry on to expropriate the capitalists and install a workers' state. So the Constituent Assembly of all classes in society will necessarily and rapidly give way to the rule of councils of workers and poor peasants.

The hammer and sickle in our emblem symbolises the alliance of the working class with the peasantry in struggle against the capitalist class and against the remnants of old oppressive relations that flourished before capitalism.

But alliance does not mean fusion! We build a party of one class, the working class. This does not mean only that we aim for a party composed mainly of workers. It means above all that its programme is the programme of the working class and any person, worker, peasant or intellectual, who wants to become member, has to accept all of that programme. Moreover this programme stipulates which of the two classes must lead the alliance. That leading class is the working class.

6. The number four: the International

This number stands for the international character of our party. It may seem strange at first that the International can be symbolised by a particular number. There is a powerful reason for it but it can be understood only in connection with the history of all the efforts to build the International. So I am forced to make yet another long detour.

The working class has, since its origins, understood that it is fundamentally an international class. Its fight starts on a national level but can be won only if it becomes international.

It is impossible to achieve socialism in one country. Especially in a small (by population), entirely dependent country, like Namibia. Greece in Europe is another obvious example. But it is in the long run impossible even for a large country or a group of countries. The experience of the USSR shows it.

Because socialism and communism are possible only on the world scale, the social revolution of the working class must be a world revolution. This does not mean that the revolution can happen at the same time everywhere. But the working class itself is international; therefore so must be its party.

What we call the International is not a corrupt club that exists only to concoct or cover hideous plots against the working class and oppressed peoples, like the so called Socialist International to which SWAPO and ANC belong. Neither is it a federation of national groups which pursue their own independent, often conflicting policies and meet only to proclaim a token unity from time to time. There are many of these but often they hide their true nature quite well.

The International the working class needs is one international party. Of course it must have national sections able to decide how to tackle quickly national and local issues as they arise.

As the Communist Manifesto puts it: "Though not in substance,

yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie.”

The International must have an international life involving all members directly, a unified internal discussion process on the most important issues of strategy and tactics, both on international and on national issues.

7. The Manifesto

The efforts of the international working class to organise as such, that is as an international party, have a long history full of rich lessons. The first thing to understand about it is that it was determined by the development of capitalism itself. Capitalism, as I said, produces the working class. During the nineteenth century the capitalist mode of production went from strength to strength and it produced a mighty working class, above all in Europe.

This working class was from the start a danger for the capitalists. In 1848 several revolutions shook Europe. They were all democratic revolutions led by the bourgeoisie. Through them, the bourgeoisie wished to exert political power in the name of the people, instead of leaving it in the hands of emperors, kings and lords. But in the most important country of that time, France, the revolution was, at its highest point, already a workers' revolution. In all countries of Europe, the working class existed already and threatened not only the kings and aristocrats but also the bourgeoisie. Therefore the bourgeoisie preferred to stop and betray all these revolutions, and renounce political power, rather than risk that this power be contested from below by the working class.

Just before that revolution, in 1847, German workers who had emigrated from the oppressive regimes of that country formed

an international association, the League of the Communists. Two young German intellectuals, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, were members of the League and were charged with writing its Manifesto. It was published in February 1848, just before the revolution started.

It was not the first programme of the working class. Previous programmes had already established the goal: a society without exploitation, a society where the means of production are common property of the workers. But these programmes were not scientific. They were projects based on the clever ideas of some inventor who thought out in his head a proposal how society might be organised better. Then he usually submitted his project to influential people of the ruling class, appealing to their supposed benevolence. Such projects go by the Greek name "Utopia", meaning an imagined organisation of society that exists in "no place".

Marx's and Engels' Manifesto of the Communist Party was the first programme with a scientific underpinning. It made clear that this new form of society, communism, was the necessary next step for humanity not because it was a better idea than the existing society, but because it was a step required by the material productive forces developed by capitalism itself. It made also clear that capitalism was creating a whole class of people, the working class, who had to lead a new social revolution in order to make communism happen. Capitalism itself started a process which would enable this class, through its own movement and education, to rise to this historic task. So everybody should read the Manifesto, it is still our programme! There is no better, more forceful or more beautiful explanation of our overall aims.
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/>

But of course capitalism has developed further. The situation has changed a lot in the 167 years since the publication of the Manifesto. Our programme has had to be adapted and

specified further. Our programme is a living thing that has to evolve.

The League of Communists was only a precursor of the International. The working class itself was not yet fully developed and accordingly the League consisted not of industrial workers as we know them but mostly of skilled craftsmen.

8. The first and the second Internationals

8.1. First International

In 1864, the first real international party of the working class was constituted in London: the International Workingmen's Association. The police of every state kept them under close surveillance and estimated that they had five million members. But the International itself counted eight million. Many of them were already industrial workers in big factories.

This International played a leading role in the most important revolution of the 19th century, the Paris Commune of 1871 which for the first time in history brought the working class to power, although only in one city. The Commune was defeated and the International did not survive that defeat for long. It split, became weak, and in 1876 it dissolved itself.

But the First International left a legacy on which we build today. Marx and Engels were part of it and they were able to persuade the majority of the other member of their programme and of the scientific foundations of it. It was not easy, they had to have many discussions especially with the anarchists who at the outset had had the majority in the International. Anarchists were communists who thought that it was possible to install communism immediately, without having to build it first. This is because their idea of communism was in fact a return to some long forgotten age of small communes that would function in completely autonomous ways, without the need for

any centralisation. This backward-orientated idea ignored the centralised nature of modern industry. Consequently, they saw no problem in replacing the capitalist state immediately by a regime of no government at all. Such a regime is known by the Greek name "anarchy" and that is why this current in the working class are called "anarchists".

But we know that the working class will have to do the opposite of anarchist notions. It will have to redirect existing industry towards production for human needs and develop it further. That means, among other goals, that the working class will have to establish democratically a plan of development and correct it frequently and democratically according to an honest evaluation of its results. Only through this path of development can real, modern Communism be achieved, an organisation of society where everybody is entitled to the satisfaction of his or her needs and everybody contributes to production according to his or her ability. This presupposes that the productive forces of humanity are so developed that lack of basic means of subsistence will be replaced by their abundance. Only then will the need for the state as the guardian over scarce means of subsistence gradually disappear. The final result will be that there will be no rule of humans over other humans. In this final goal, Marxists and anarchists agree.

Marxism prevailed but anarchism persisted, especially in Italy and in Spain. Much later, during the workers revolution in Spain, in 1936-1937, it got an opportunity to make political proposals to the working class in order to defeat fascism and overthrow capitalism. Anarchists saw that their conceptions were not workable, and they had then no better idea than to become part of a government of the capitalists in Barcelona in 1937 and so to help protect the capitalist state against the insurrection of the workers, whom they helped to disarm and demobilise. This final lesson about anarchism can and should be studied in the works of Leon Trotsky and other Marxists who

participated in that revolution.

Through its participation in the Paris Commune of 1871 the International gained a very important insight: the revolution of the working class cannot use the old state of the capitalists and just fill its parliament, its government and other organs with workers. To that extent, the International agreed with the anarchists. But the International under Marx's guidance drew a positive lesson completely opposite to the notions of the anarchists. Namely, the working class must install an entirely new, workers' state in order to start building communism.

Dutifully, Marx and Engels acknowledged this lesson. They did not change the Communist Manifesto which by that time had become a historic document, but all subsequent programmes of the working class had to include that lesson.

This example of Marx and Engels teaches us another important lesson. Their teaching cannot be considered as finished. We must develop it on the basis of experiences of the working class. We must acknowledge inaccuracies and errors, in order to be able to correct them, like Marx and Engels did in their lifetimes.

8.2. Second International

In 1889 the Second International was founded. This was an immense advance because it was based on mass revolutionary workers parties in Germany, in France, the Austrian empire and in many other countries. They were called socialist or social-democratic parties. But they were revolutionary parties, quite unlike most of the parties that use the same names today.

These parties were linked to trade unions. In most cases the parties promoted or founded the unions, like in Germany and France. In Great Britain, it was the unions who came, a bit later, to the conclusion that they needed a political wing and so they founded a Labour Party. The Second International led

great, victorious struggles, for instance for the eight hour working day or for the universal right to vote. It gave its support to the struggle of working class women for equal rights with men and so contributed mightily to the first advances in that field. Among other conquests, it established the First of May as the international day of struggle of the working class.

These material conquests of millions of workers in the developed countries could never have been achieved if the working class had limited itself to purely "economic", day-to-day struggle.

What made them possible was that the Second International allowed them to understand and adopt the programme of scientific socialism and communism.

In other words it was a Marxist International which educated millions of workers as Marxists.

But there were flaws.

Its leading members tended to forget the most important lesson from the experience of the First International – the one about the state! The Marxism of the majority of the leaders of the Second International was not quite the original teaching of Marx and Engels. It was distorted in that its revolutionary consequences seemed far away and abstract.

8.3. Imperialism and its impact on the Second International

During this period of rise of capitalism in Europe and also in the United States of America, the whole world was increasingly subjected to capitalist conditions of exploitation. Capitalist exploitation was introduced into huge countries, like Russia, India and China and to whole continents like Africa, through colonisation.

Most people in the Second International saw the enormous

exploitation of the colonies by their colonial masters and protested against it. But they also expected progress to come out of it. Many thought that colonies and other latecomers to capitalism would soon follow a similar path of glorious capitalist development as Great Britain, France, Germany, the USA and Japan had done.

In fact world capitalism entered a new stage: imperialism. This is the highest stage of capitalist development. In it, a new entity emerged: finance capital. This results from the merger of financial institutions (such as banks and other money lenders and money makers) and industrial capital under the leadership of the money lenders. Finance capital dominates over all smaller capitals, limits them or squeezes them out. Imperialist countries export goods and capital and exploit natural resources, including cheap labour, from the rest of the world. This is called the imperialist relationship. For instance, Great Britain had an imperialist relationship with India and later also with South Africa, among others. Germany was able to establish an imperialist relationship with South-West Africa. Around the beginning of the twentieth century it became apparent that the imperialist relationship in general did not allow the dependent countries to develop. This is still the case, even though most colonies liberated themselves politically. The imperialist relationship persists. Under it, Africa's natural resources are being plundered as savagely as in previous periods. Its masses are descending into horrible poverty, and are subjected to barbaric dictatorships and barbaric wars. Capitalism itself has become an absolute barrier to the development of humanity, which means to the development of its productive forces. Therefore the imperialist stage is the last stage of capitalism.

All humanity is faced with the choice between passing to a new, socialist and communist mode of production, or a long descent into ever more barbaric conditions of life. This alternative was already formulated by Friedrich Engels in 1878

and then again in the middle of the first world war by the Polish comrade Rosa Luxemburg who wrote: "Bourgeois society stands at the crossroads, either transition to Socialism or regression into Barbarism". All subsequent history has confirmed this prediction. Both world wars and fascism represented huge outbreaks of barbarism.

After the destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991, which (especially in its beginning) had represented the hope for a socialist future, we are already experiencing an acceleration of the worldwide descent into ever-deeper barbarism. For over a hundred years the working class has been trying to make the transition to socialism. In the present period of a new rise of the working class we have perhaps the last opportunity to do it. But already some revolutions in the Middle-East, and in northern Africa have been defeated. This has favoured yet another big slide into barbarism not just there, but also, in Central Africa for example. Europe is also sliding rapidly into mass poverty, authoritarian rule and wars. So we do not have much time. The working class must now learn quickly and act, or perish.

In the late 19th century, capitalism was still in its ascending phase. A thin layer of relatively well off workers developed at that time in the leading capitalist countries of Europe and a little later also in the USA. They had won relatively high wages and good working conditions. The capitalists of these countries were able to afford these conditions to some of "their" workers due to the extra profits they were making by exploiting the rest of the world, especially colonies. This thin layer is called the "labour aristocracy". The labour aristocracy had an enormous influence on the parties of the Second International. A bureaucracy expressing the contentedness of the labour aristocracy developed inside these parties and in the unions. This was (and still is) a layer of leaders who did not object to others talking about the social revolution in some far future.

Sometimes they themselves made such Sunday speeches. The socialist revolution was the so called "maximum" programme of social-democracy. Words are cheap. But in everyday life they were content with what they had and wanted to keep capitalism, with some improvements. Such improvements, like the eight-hour working day, were called "reforms" and they were the contents of the so called "minimum" programme. The people who limited the movement to the minimum programme were (and still are) called reformists.

But there was a strong left wing in the Second International around such people as Rosa Luxemburg in Germany and the Russian Vladimir Ulyanov. Ulyanov had to hide from the police of his country and therefore adopted another name: Nikolai Lenin. Later he became known as Vladimir Lenin.

Unfortunately, the left wing was not well organised. That was a big mistake because the reformists held the leadership of most of the parties of the International. Only in one country did the left wing organise strongly. That was Russia. The left there called themselves "Bolsheviks". Bolsheviks organised themselves into a faction and shortly before the world war that faction became in fact a party independent of the reformists who were called "Mensheviks". I omit the explanation of those strange names because the origin of the names is rather accidental. The origin of the Russian factions themselves is not accidental. I'll come back to it.

9. The failure of the Second International

In 1914 the first world war started. The world as prey of imperialist powers had become too small for their expansion. The main imperialist powers of that time: Great Britain, France, Japan, Russia and the United States allied themselves on one side, Germany, Austria and the Ottoman empire (Turkey) on the other side. Each alliance tried to win a greater share of colonies as markets for its goods, sources for its raw materials and targets for profitable investment.

During the war, in 1916, Lenin published a pamphlet to explain to workers what imperialism is and why it is the highest and last stage of capitalism. The title of the pamphlet declares this insight. It is called: "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism". Members of the WRP should study this pamphlet, too, it is still valid.

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/>

Millions of workers killed each other in this war in the interests of "their" capitalists. The international working class could have prevented this. That would have required defying the marching orders, calling a general strike and taking power in every country. Before the war, congresses of the Second International had decided to call a general strike in the event of a war. But its reformist leadership had not prepared it at all for such an eventuality. When it came to doing it, they did the contrary: each national party took the side of its own capitalists. The Second International collapsed. Its leaders went over to the capitalist enemy.

The left had to do under terrible war conditions what it had failed to do in peacetime: organise. It started to propagate the idea of a new, Third International.

10. Russian Revolution and Bolshevism

Then, after three years of terrible suffering during the war, the Russian working class overthrew the old rotten imperial state of the Tsar in February 1917. Unfortunately, the Russian bourgeoisie was able to take power. In only a few months it completely revealed its reactionary character by refusing to stop the war or to distribute land to the peasant masses. In October, the working class led the masses to get rid of the bourgeoisie and install a completely new, workers' state. It was based on workers' councils in the cities and on councils of poor peasants in the countryside. These councils decided everything in Russia. One of the first thing they did was to stop the war unilaterally, nationalise all the land, hand it

to poor peasants for long-term use, and expropriate the whole capitalist class. Because the Russian word for "council" is "soviet", the new state was called the "soviet state". The Soviets immediately held a congress, and appointed a new government. Lenin became the head of the new state, and another well-known revolutionary, Leon Trotsky, was charged with forming a completely new army, the Red Army. The capitalist governments of 14 countries sent armies to destroy the republic of workers' councils in Russia and reintroduce a dictatorship of the capitalists. They fomented a civil war. But all these enemies were defeated by the new revolutionary army.

We speak of the Russian revolution but in fact it was victorious in a much larger area than Russia. It included most of the countries of the old Empire of the Tsars; for instance, Ukraine, several large countries of central Asia and smaller countries in the Caucasus region. All these countries soon federated to form the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the USSR. When it was founded, this Union was not strong because of coercion exerted by its largest member, Soviet Russia on the other republics, but precisely because it was a free Union. The Bolshevik Party and the Third International under Lenin's leadership made the right of self-determination of all peoples, up to and including their right to separation, into a principle.

For the first time in history, the working class of a whole country, and a very large one at that, was able to get rid of the rule of the capitalists, install its own state and start with the practical realisation of the socialist programme. The imperialist war, the intervention of the 14 states and the civil war left the country exhausted. Almost all industry, railways and other infrastructure were destroyed. As in other countries, it was the working class – who else? – which had to rebuild the country. But in Russia it could do it on a completely different basis. It no longer worked for capitalist

profit. It worked for its own needs. That was the main achievement of the revolution in Russia. This conquest brought social advances, like a free health service, free access to education and many others. Superficially, these social conquests resemble some partial conquests later achieved by the working class of some capitalist countries, like Great Britain. But in reality they were socialist conquests because they set the whole working class of a huge country on the path to build socialism. That path could not be followed to its end without an international revolution. There can be no socialism in one country. But the international working class was encouraged to follow the Russian example. Rightly, the international working class considered the Russian revolution and its socialist conquests as its own and the Russian working class considered its state as just the first success of the world revolution.

In 1991, after 74 years, the October Revolution was finally defeated. The USSR collapsed under the pressure of imperialism, because of its isolation. That was due to an enormous delay in the world revolution, itself due to a series of defeats and betrayals over many years. Capitalists, their politicians, their press, their historians and other ideologists heap slanders on the achievements of the October Revolution. But these achievements will never be forgotten. The working class will always learn from them.

Many books have been written about the October revolution. Leon Trotsky himself wrote one, "The History of the Russian Revolution". Everybody should read that book and we should discuss all the rich lessons of the Russian revolution as part of the building of the WRP and formation of its members.
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/hrr/>

Here just a few of the main points about the Russian Revolution.

The victory of the Russian October revolution was only

possible because there was a well organised party of dedicated and well educated workers who understood what Capitalism-Imperialism is, the concrete situation of the masses in Russia and were able to act in unity to propose the socialist revolution to the masses as the way out of their plight. In other words, the Bolshevik party was a genuine Marxist workers party.

Here is where I have to come back to its origin in 1903, because such a party is the necessary condition for the working class to be able to take power even today. So we must look carefully at the only example of such a party in history.

The Russian social-democratic party really formed only at its second congress which had to be held outside Russia in Brussels, then in London, because of police repression. At the congress, suddenly there appeared a difference about the conditions of membership. Mensheviks thought that party members should be those who accepted the party programme and supported it by regular personal assistance under the direction of one of the party's organisations. Bolsheviks, with Lenin, demanded that members "recognise the Party Programme and support it by material means and by personal participation in one of the party's organisations". So Lenin and his followers in the party required a much more serious engagement of party members than the others, but was that so important? Everybody, including Lenin, was surprised that the two factions could not unite because of such a seemingly small detail. After all, both factions were followers of Marx's school of scientific socialism/communism. But later history proved that the difference was indeed fundamental. In fact, the laxness of the Mensheviks in this question was just the beginning of the influence of petty-bourgeois ideas. Later, this became apparent, as the Mensheviks became a particular kind of reformist. In 1917 the socialist revolution became an immediate task and the Mensheviks refused to accomplish it.

We are against petty-bourgeois laxness. The conditions of

membership in the Workers International and in its Namibian section, the Workers Revolutionary party, are those written down by Lenin: "recognise the Party Programme and support it by material means and by personal participation in one of the party's organisations". We want to build a fighting organisation with a clear shape, not a soft cloud. There is much more to be learnt from the history of the Bolshevik party and members of the WRP should study that history.

Another point: the October Revolution was only the first victory of the international, world revolution. The Bolsheviks understood that, the masses in Russia understood that; and what is more, very soon the majority of the working class of the world understood that! Old parties of the Second International began to break up because workers, their members, wanted to imitate Russia. Outright revolutions broke out in Germany and Hungary. In several other countries, there were revolutionary movements.

During most of the war, the Third International was the proclaimed aim of a small minority of courageous opponents to that war. After the October Revolution, in 1919, the Third International was actually founded. In several important countries, big chunks of the old social democratic parties demanded to be part of the new International. In Germany, France, Italy and Czechoslovakia it was even the majority in those parties!

11. Third International

The Third International had a huge task on its hands. In the epoch of imperialism, the world revolution has become the immediate task. But the leaders of the working class were not up to that task. Even the leadership of those parties who were sincerely in favour of the revolution were not up to it.

Some of them continued to preach socialism in Sunday speeches but in everyday life they remained reformists. They remained

prisoners of the distorted version of Marx's teachings that was current in the Second International. Already in 1917, Lenin published a pamphlet to correct that, above all to refresh and develop the lesson drawn by Marx from the Paris Commune, that the working class cannot take over the bourgeois state but must sweep it away and install a new, workers' state. The title of the pamphlet is "The State and Revolution". It should be read and understood by every member of the WRP.

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/>

In order to make clear how different it was from its predecessor, the Second International (which called itself socialist), the Third returned to the old name used in Marx's and Engels' time: "communist". It called itself the Communist International. Russians at that time liked abbreviations a lot and called it simply the "Comintern".

Other factions of the Comintern ignored the fact that the socialist revolution must be an act of the whole working class. They were so impatient that they started minority actions all of which ended in disaster. They called themselves "left-wing communists". They wrote up whole theories that communists need not bother to go into bourgeois parliaments or work with workers in trade unions because of their rotten leadership.

In fact, both factions operated with the old notions of a minimum programme and a maximum programme. For both there was no connection, no bridge between the two programmes and so some stuck to the minimum programme and ignored the maximum programme, while others did the opposite.

The true task of the communists is to raise the level of comprehension of the whole of the working class until that class becomes capable of taking power into its hands. That requires a programme that combines both the minimum (reforms) and the maximum (revolution). It must contain intermediate,

transitional demands that lead from reform to revolution and in the process help the masses to acquire experiences with struggle and draw the right lessons from them.

In 1920, Comrade Lenin published a whole book to explain that and to criticise the “left-wing communists”. It is called ‘“Left-Wing” Communism: an Infantile Disorder’, and is yet another very important book that every member should read. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/lwc/>

So the situation was that the new, imperialist epoch required a completely new approach to struggle. But none of the new communist parties was prepared for it. Despite their best intentions, all were still fraught with conceptions and habits acquired in the calmer previous epoch of rising capitalism. All parties except one: the Russian party of the Bolsheviks. That party, because of the peculiar conditions of Russia, had understood what was required for a revolution to succeed. Indeed, it was the party that had led the October Revolution to victory. But it is important to know that even that party had followed a line of supporting its own bourgeoisie at the beginning of the year 1917. Fortunately it had a very good leader, Lenin. Lenin had formed the party and the party had formed him and many other thoughtful revolutionaries. The party listened to Lenin and so was able to rearm itself to become the leading party of the revolutionary process that was already taking place.

In effect, the whole Third International needed to start a political formation of millions of socialists (who now called themselves communists) to rearm them theoretically and politically. Only in this way could they become really fit for the period of imperialism and of world revolution. They could not simply learn what to do by reading books and taking classes, they had to learn by doing. During the process many mistakes were made which had to be theoretically understood and practically corrected.

The necessity of a transitional programme was one major difference between the Second and the Third International. The other was a concrete understanding of the world revolution as a living process. The majority of the Second International had assumed that socialist revolution would be victorious first in one of the countries where the working class was most numerous and powerful because their capitalism was most mature: Great Britain, France or Germany. But the Russian Revolution proved them all wrong. It was victorious in a backward country which had not attained full capitalist development, whose immense majority of toilers were peasants and whose working class was a tiny minority. A country which had not even arrived at the stage of a bourgeois democracy. In the history of Europe, the class "normally" responsible for leading the democratic revolution to overthrow kings and other tyrants, was the bourgeoisie. Yet in Russia the bourgeoisie proved completely incapable of accomplishing that task. The working class had to take power in order to achieve bourgeois democratic rights and freedoms. Then it would not and could not stop at this. It went directly on to expropriate the capitalists and advance towards socialism.

The imperialist relationship between advanced capitalist countries and dependent, backward countries produces this situation where the capitalist class proves incapable of realising its task of installing democracy. So the working class has to take up both the democratic and socialist tasks in one and the same revolution. Leon Trotsky recognised this necessity well before the October Revolution of 1917. For this process of advancing from democratic to socialist revolution in one movement he used the term "permanent revolution" which had already been used by Marx.

Permanent revolution characterises the whole process of the world revolution in our epoch of imperialist relationships. At the time of the growth and enthusiasm of the Third International, Trotsky's theory was known as such, under this

name, only to a minority. But the International was aware of the fact of permanent revolution, if not of the term. It turned towards the dependent, oppressed countries which had been almost completely neglected by the Second International. Communist parties were set up in backward countries such as China.

Unfortunately, all the promising developments of the Third International were stopped after the Comintern's Fourth Congress in November 1922. Our comrade Balázs Nagy of the Workers International wrote an article which shows the limits of the work of both of the Third International and the Fourth International and how we, Workers International, must take up these unavoidable tasks. The article's title is "Some Problems of the Fourth International – and the tasks involved in rebuilding it". I suggest that we read and discuss it in one or more training sessions dedicated to these problems. <http://workersinternational.info/2014/08/some-problems-of-the-fourth-international-and-the-tasks-involved-in-rebuilding-it/>

The reason the Third International's work could not be completed is that the Russian revolution remained isolated. The process of German revolution of 1918-1923 ended in a defeat. That happened because the leadership of the German communist party felt uncertain, became indecisive, hesitated and that hesitation of the leadership weakened the whole party of a million members. After that, Capitalism was able to stabilise for several years. It had been shaken by the war and the revolutionary uprisings after the war. But since none of these uprisings had led to the working class taking power in one of the advanced countries, the capitalists prevailed globally.

12. Stalinist bureaucracy

The Russian working class, though victorious, was exhausted by years of war, revolution and civil war. Its international isolation led to the development of an uncontrolled caste of

parasites that came to rule the country in the name of the working class. It first appeared through an alliance between the party apparatus of the Bolshevik party and the well-off peasants and other smaller capitalists that the Bolsheviks had to allow because of the international isolation of the revolution. Then the caste consolidated into a real monster that ruled not only in the name of the working class but more and more over the working class and against the working class.

The foundations of the workers' state installed by the October Revolution still persisted. There was still no capitalist ruling class. Workers still produced for human needs instead of producing for profit, as they must in capitalist countries. But the ruling caste controlled both production and distribution and directed both to satisfy above all its own needs. The whole apparatus of the state no longer consisted of councils (soviets) of workers. Its organs were still called soviets, but they were entirely in the hands of the ruling caste. So it was still a workers' state but a deeply damaged, degenerated workers' state.

This ruling caste is known as the Kremlin bureaucracy after the old imperial palace in Moscow from where its leaders ruled the whole country. More frequently, it is called the Stalinist bureaucracy because its leader was an old Bolshevik named Stalin. He was not a remarkable man except that he was an outstanding schemer and able to rule with an iron fist. But the new caste needed no great leader and educator of the working class like Lenin had been (he died in 1924). It needed an unscrupulous dictator and Stalin exactly fitted the job description.

Soon, after 1933, this caste became great friends with the bourgeoisie of France and Great Britain. Then with that of Hitler's Germany. Then again with that of France, Great Britain and the USA. Stalin and his caste became sworn enemies of the working class of the world. They did not allow the working class of any country to take power. After the 2nd

world war, the working classes of Yugoslavia and of China were able accomplish social revolutions in their countries only against the will of the Kremlin.

But at the same time, though this reactionary bureaucracy wanted to be friends with the capitalists abroad, the capitalist were never friends of the workers state, the USSR. Soon after the war, the British and American capitalist "friends" of the Kremlin put so much pressure on the USSR that the Stalinist bureaucracy felt it had to allow the communist parties to carry out social revolutions in several countries of central and eastern Europe. Because of this, some people started to think that this bureaucracy could not be entirely reactionary. They were completely wrong.

In fact, it was the beginning of a period of systematic worldwide collaboration between the Kremlin and the leading imperialist power, the USA. This collaboration had two names, "peaceful coexistence" and "cold war", but both are wrong. The coexistence was not peaceful, nor was the war always "cold". The aim was to maintain the rule of imperialism globally. Therefore, all movements of the working class, of other oppressed classes and of oppressed peoples against imperialism had to be terminated and their leaders either corrupted or killed. The real, comprehensive history of this horrible collaboration has yet to be written.

It is of great importance also for southern Africa. It was Henry Kissinger, an envoy of the USA-Imperialism, who orchestrated the reining in of all the bourgeois liberation movements, such as those led by the ANC, SWAPO, MPLA and FRELIMO in the 1970s. This entailed the massacre of leaders and militants whose democratic and socialist goals were incompatible with the continued rule of imperialism in this region. But Kissinger was able to do his bloody work only with the collaboration of the Kremlin bureaucracy. It was all part of the functioning "peaceful coexistence" or "cold war".

At the time it formed, in the 1920s, the Stalinist bureaucracy took advantage of the great prestige of the USSR among the workers of the world to take over the leadership of the Third International. From 1929 onward, all leaders of the communist parties were hand-picked by Stalin for their obedience to all his directives, sudden turns and whims. Neither Stalin nor these local lieutenants of his were able or willing to get on with the great historic task of the Third International. Instead, they used it as an instrument of pressure in the service of their diplomacy. In 1943 they dissolved it but by then it had been dead for ten years as a workers' organisation.

With some exceptions, Stalinist parties remained workers' parties. Apparently, these parties remained "communist", continued to propagate Marxism as the scientific theory of the working class and above all, defended the heritage of the October Revolution. So millions of workers remained their enthusiastic members because they thought these parties still represented the interests of the working class. But this appearance of Stalinist parties did not agree with their true nature at all. This "Marxism" of the Stalinist bureaucracy propagated "socialism in one country" (the USSR). That was in complete contradiction to the real scientific insights of Marx and Lenin. It was however very suitable for the purposes of the Stalinist bureaucracy whose very existence was based on the isolation of the USSR. But critique and discussion was not allowed in any of these parties and so the real nature of Stalinism has remained undiscovered for the majority of members of the Stalinist parties to this day.

13. Left opposition and Fourth International

The decisive point of no return in this negative development of the Third International was the year 1933. Hitler came to power in Germany. The Stalinist party in Germany had helped to divide the working class and prevent its resistance to Hitler's fascism. Even after the defeat, the Stalinist

Communist International drew no lessons from it. This International, completely dominated by the Stalinist bureaucracy and its international apparatus, was dead for the purposes of the working class.

So the Third International degenerated, was later even formally dissolved and left behind a reactionary international apparatus with its centre in the Kremlin. But this did not happen without resistance. Almost immediately after the Stalinist bureaucracy began its rise in 1923, a Left Opposition arose against this bureaucracy, first in Russia, then internationally, in most parties of the Communist International. Lenin himself gave the first impulse to resist Stalin's takeover of the Bolshevik party. After his death, it was the other most prominent leader of the October revolution who led the Left Opposition: Leon Trotsky.

The Left Opposition recognised after 1933 that it had to build a new International, the Fourth International. It was proclaimed in 1938 in France on the eve of the second world war. It inherited all the positive experiences and insights of the Third International before its capture and destruction by the Stalinist bureaucracy. These experiences and insights are gathered in the Programme of the Fourth international.
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1938/tp/>

It was written by Leon Trotsky after many discussions with other members of the Fourth International. Trotsky conceived it consciously as the programme of the imminent revolution which he predicted to come after the second world war. Its main idea is that capitalism-imperialism attacks the very existence of the working class – the only class in this society capable of opening a positive outcome to the crisis of the whole humanity. But to do so, this class needs a programme of demands leading to this revolution, a programme of transition.

For instance, ever-growing unemployment throws whole layers of

the working class, especially the youth, out of the production process, with no hope of ever becoming part of it again. This divides the working class and puts pressure on all working conditions, both wages and working hours, of those who still have work. So on the one side, there are those who are not allowed to work at all, on the other side those who work must work ever longer hours and ever more quickly.

The Programme of the Fourth International seeks the unity of both parts of the working class by demanding the distribution of all available work among all capable hands without loss of wages. On the one hand, this demand must be satisfied in order to stop the destruction of the working class. On the other hand it runs dead against the need of capitalists to make a profit. So it is both indispensable and not realisable under capitalism. It is in fact a demand to overthrow capitalism and start building socialism, but it makes this theoretical necessity accessible as a result of the experience of millions of workers in their practical struggles for their very existence. The programme of transition is a whole system of such demands both economic and political, leading up to the socialist revolution. Those demands cannot be just thought up by a clever person at his or her desk. They originate from the deeply felt needs of the masses, and often are formulated by the masses themselves.

This is the programme of the Workers International adopted at its founding conference in Budapest, 1990. Its full title is "Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International. The Mobilisation of the Masses around Transitional Demands to Prepare the Conquest of Power."

Every member of the WRP must read and understand our programme.

So this is how the number four in our emblem represents the International. It does not represent an abstract appeal or desire for an International but the engagement to rebuild the

Fourth International.

Now the question arises: where is this Fourth International, 77 years after its foundation? Why must it be rebuilt?

14. The fate of the Fourth International

The Fourth International was proclaimed and founded on the eve of the Second World War out of a historic necessity. The Fourth International predicted that this world war would be even more terrible than the first one and that it would be followed by mighty revolutions. The task the International set itself was to build the parties that would lead these workers revolutions to victory over capitalism. These revolutions did take place but it turned out that the International was not ready to lead them.

Sections of the International were part of the resistance against fascism in occupied Europe and promoted the internationalist line in it against the dominant nationalism propagated by all Stalinist parties. But the International ceased to function as a world party. The Stalinists and Fascists assassinated many of its leaders during the war.

The most experienced section of the Fourth International was the soviet section. All of its members knew and used Marx's scientific method and many had learnt how to apply it in practice in the Russian October Revolution of 1917. So it was mainly this section and its leader, Leon Trotsky, that could teach the other sections all the theoretical and practical knowledge acquired by the Russian communists before and during the October revolution of 1917.

Unfortunately, in the the 30s almost all members of this party were incarcerated in Stalin's prisons and concentration camps. They organised clandestinely inside the camps, but around 1940 Stalin ordered their physical liquidation and that of Leon Trotsky himself, who lived in exile, in Mexico. Only a few survived and were not liberated until 1953. By this action and

by lies and slander, physical violence and murder, Stalin's international apparatus deliberately isolated the Fourth International from the workers' movement. This damage inflicted by Stalinism on the Fourth international led to an unhealthy isolation and lack of growth and ultimately led to the emergence of sects acting in the name of the Fourth International but unable to learn the lessons of Leon Trotsky.

So it came about that after the war, the International did not understand its task – which was to lead the revolution. Its leaders had not understood the main lesson of Marxism: that there can be no revolution without the leadership of a revolutionary party. Instead they observed how the revolutionary movements that took place in Italy and in France at the end of the war were led to their defeat by completely counter-revolutionary Stalinist parties. After that, a majority of these leaders declared that the prediction of revolutions was proven wrong and turned their backs completely on the task of building revolutionary parties. They themselves fell under the influence of Stalinism.

However, as a result, there have also been continual efforts by the most conscious elements of the class to resist Stalinism's dead end diversions of the march towards socialism. That resistance organised itself in 1953 to rebuild the Fourth International. But even inside this resistance the influence of Stalinism was strong and all the stronger for not being conscious. As a result, the movement is now in a state of dispersion with a myriad of sects all claiming the "tradition" of the Fourth International for themselves and all pretending to grow at the expense of other such sects and, most importantly, at the expense of the living movement of the working class, whom they all consider as just building material for their own sect, just like the Stalinist parties did. Most of them have undemocratic internal regimes and this is another aspect of the unconscious influence of Stalinism on them. Marx, Engels, Lenin or Trotsky never favoured such

attitudes and behaviour which do not belong in the working class movement. Our organisation, Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International, was founded in 1990 as the continuation of the ongoing organised effort to overcome these problems. Some of us have been part of it for decades.

To learn more about the crisis of the Fourth International, comrades should study Balázs Nagy's book "Marxist considerations on the crisis" and his already mentioned article "Some problems..."

<http://workersinternational.info/2014/08/some-problems-of-the-fourth-international-and-the-tasks-involved-in-rebuilding-it/>

15. The defeat of 1989-1991

In 1991, the Stalinist bureaucracy dissolved the Soviet Union. In each of its constituent republics, the national branches of the Stalinist bureaucracy stole most of the state's assets, in fact anything that could be transformed into capital. The current capitalist classes in Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and the other republics formed on the ruins of the USSR originate from this theft. The state founded by Lenin, Trotsky and by millions of revolutionary workers and peasants in 1917 was lost. So were the workers' states in Central and Eastern Europe, with the same methods (theft) and results. The worst aspect of this bare-faced theft was that the working class was unable to oppose it, because it no longer recognised that these states belonged to the working class. Generations lived under the oppression of the Stalinist bureaucracy in a degenerated workers' state in the USSR. Similar states in Central and Eastern Europe even came into existence with that oppression and with the deformation of the state. The social revolutions that installed them in 1948-49 were themselves deformed by their Stalinist leadership. In the end, the workers' nature of these states became unrecognisable even to their rightful owners – the working class. But when these states disappeared, all the other, more palpable socialist conquests also disappeared! Suddenly, state enterprises went

bankrupt and stopped paying workers. Unemployment and humiliating poverty appeared, access to health care and education became difficult and so on. Workers fought against some of these consequences but they lacked a party that would unify all these struggles in a mass resistance to the cause – the restoration of capitalism.

This defeat was not only that of the working class of the USSR. The working class of the whole world suffered a historic defeat. Everywhere the capitalist classes were encouraged to deepen their so called neo-liberal “reforms” whose meaning is to increase exploitation in order to save their profits. At the same time, they were able to restrict the rights of the working class to resist through its unions and politically through its parties. Social democratic and Stalinist parties were thrown into disarray and most responded by becoming bourgeois parties and striving to resemble other bourgeois parties as closely as possible, officially renouncing their working class origin. So the working class of most countries was deprived of its own political expression: representation on the political arena and leadership in political struggles.

Imperialism felt triumphant. Its leaders proclaimed socialism dead and the leader of these leaders, George Bush senior, the president of the USA, even proclaimed a capitalist “new world order”. But it became apparent very quickly that capitalism-imperialism had reached a degree of decomposition where the only “order” it had to offer was in fact chaos and increasing barbarism.

In South Africa this negative turn was represented by the transformation of the South African Communist Party into an openly bourgeois party, although recent events there show that sincere communists will resist these reactionary developments.

16. Turn to new workers' parties

Some of these sincere communists have now recognised the

nature of the SACP and were initiators of the turn of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) in December 2013 to start exploring ways to build a new socialist party of the working class and to constitute its true programme. NUMSA is the largest union of South Africa and perhaps of the whole continent. It sets an example to be followed by the working class in the whole world. There is now a new uprising of the working class of the world. There were revolutions in North Africa and the Middle-East, led by inexperienced and unorganised youth. They stalled or were defeated. But the working class in several countries now tries to rebuild its unions and re-found its political parties. NUMSA's turn in this direction is not isolated, it is only the most decisive part of a worldwide turn.

In Namibia, the working class must participate in NUMSA's turn but the situation here is different in two ways: there has never been a workers' party in Namibia and the Namibian working class is now seizing the opportunity to build the Workers Revolutionary Party, section of Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International, as that much needed and overdue workers' party.

So the working class of Namibia can make an original contribution to the world turn towards new socialist parties of the working class initiated by NUMSA. The main contribution is that these parties must be built as revolutionary parties in the process of rebuilding a world party, the Fourth International. This is a very important contribution not only for Africa, but also for countries at the other end of the imperialist relationship. Especially in Europe, where several of the new parties of the working class that have formed during the last decade are now arriving at a crossroads. Recent events in Ukraine and the Balkans tested their reformist conceptions and proved them wrong. A large international debate has started as working class activists are looking for alternatives.

17. The International that must be built

The defeat of 1991 created a very new situation for the international working class. Its oldest and most experienced section, the European working class, has lost its leading role. It was weakened by deindustrialisation in the old imperialist countries of Great Britain, France and Italy. Its long domination by Stalinist and reformist ideas produced a limited and unsuccessful resistance to the capitalists when they moved industries and diverted investments to countries providing cheap labour on other continents.

Everywhere in the world, the working class became divided into the unemployed, precarious contract workers and the dwindling section still in permanent employment. These sections have been pitted against each other and against workers of foreign origin. Workers became less conscious of their immediate interests as unions (with a few exceptions like Unite in the UK) failed in their task to unite all these parts of the working class. The political consciousness of being one international class with the historical mission to overthrow capitalism and replace it with socialism declined even more.

So, to a large extent, the educational work of the four Internationals (First, Second, Third and Fourth) was undone and has to be recommenced. To some extent, we are back in 1864 when the First International was formed. As then, the working class now needs to form an International with all genuinely working class currents, and Marxists have to do as Marx did: patiently argue for the scientific method and programme.

Some people draw from this the conclusion that we must really build a new edition of the long defunct First International, as if the history of the working class of the last 151 years had not taken place.

Others express the same desire to erase history by wishing to build a Fifth International without even bothering to draw a

serious balance-sheet of the so far unsuccessful efforts to build the Fourth International. A prominent representative of these was the late President of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez, who even called an international conference to debate this idea a few years ago.

Still others go as far as proclaiming that the working class has to build an International without a number. By saying that numbers and labels do not matter, they express the most radical negation not just of the necessity to learn from history, but even of the fact that the working class has a living history. We know that there is no other way than to continue that history by learning its lessons so we can overcome our weaknesses. The number 4 in our emblem symbolises the responsibility we take towards our own history as the working class!

Concretely, all those who reject this approach have in common that they propose some "International" that will – permanently or for the time being – ignore the main theoretical achievements of the Third and Fourth Internationals: the theory of permanent revolution, the need for a programme of transitional demands and the knowledge of the nature of imperialism as the latest stage of capitalism which is the theoretical basis of the first two. By running away from history such people immediately fall into the traps of reformism and Stalinism. They prove the truth of the saying: those who have no past, have no future.

The number 4 in our emblem stands concretely for all these theoretical achievements. These achievements are precisely the main subjects of the great and very positive discussion about the way forward which is now taking place among worker activists in this country, in South Africa, in the USA, in Greece and in many other countries. We would be great fools to drop these achievements by dropping our goal to rebuild the Fourth International.

Even more profoundly, without the political and theoretical achievements of the Third and Fourth Internationals, there would be no material conquests of the working class. All these conquests were, in the last analysis, only won as products or by-products of the struggle for the proletarian revolution. If many of these material conquests have now been destroyed, this has been possible only because the theoretical achievements have been forgotten or falsified by organisations of the working class in a retrograde movement on both fronts, theoretical and practical. But the working class now defends itself. We are part of this resistance. Our task is to inform it with Marx's, Lenin's and Trotsky's school of thought and of workers' politics.

In conclusion: To fully understand all the symbols of the flag, we have to understand our programme. The programme is not just a collection of demands plus an overall aim. That would just reproduce the old division between a maximum and a minimum programme. Our programme is the summary of what the working class is and how it fights. It summarises the aim of our class, the conclusions it has drawn from its dearly bought experiences, its disappointments in the past and its hopes for the future. This is why the programme cannot be declared finished once and for all. The conditions of working class struggle have changed a lot since 1990 and we need a programme taking into account all those changes. It will be based on the old programme of 1938 but at the same time it will be a new programme. The programme that the WRP of Namibia will elaborate in preparation for and during its special congress will be an important contribution to this new international programme of the Fourth International.

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From the Archive: The Way Forward in North Africa and the Middle East

Theses by Balazs Nagy, January 2011

Workers International To Rebuild the Fourth International

Biased, fragmentary and very incomplete as the media reports are, some things are clear:

1. These movements are desperately short of revolutionary leadership. The long years of ruthess dictatorship have strangled even the more or less petty-bourgeois parties. There is no sign even of any bourgeois leadership independent of the

ruling authorities, apart from groups and individuals tied to the dictators whom the workers have thrown out.

2. We offer the following considerations to Tunisian, Egyptian Libyan and other groups in Europe and by any means available to people in the countries affected. Workers in those countries are in a real state of confusion, not knowing what to do or how to do it. In general what they want is real democracy.

3. Indeed, that is not a bad place to start. But before thinking about what to do and how to do it, first a few words about the general situation. There is no doubt that this is a revolution, or rather several revolutions. Now, a revolution is a whole process, more or less long, and we are just at the start. That is the first thing we must explain to these workers who clearly believe those who tell them that it is already over. They have got rid of the dictators, but these were merely the personification of a whole economic and social system – imperialism – as it exists in these countries. To maintain its domination almost unchanged (in a different form from the old colonial regime the workers long since rejected) imperialism has succeeded, with the help of reformists and the Stalinist bureaucracy, in turning these young independent states into military dictatorships and medieval monarchies by delegating its direct power of oppression to native political regimes. In its first phase the revolution has thrown out the dictators in two countries and started the same battle in many others (Yemen, Libya, Algeria, etc.). But in these first two countries, the revolution is now marking time. The politico-economic regime remains more or less intact and is preparing, at this moment, to demobilise, push back and repress the workers. It dare not go too far in the direction of bloody repression because it is weakened and does not yet feel strong enough. Soldiers would probably refuse to fire on the people. The army's apparent neutrality, as the fruit of this uncertainty, forces the generals in power to negotiate with

the workers over their demands. The situation is a little different in Tunisia but remains essentially the same.

4. In this situation workers should push forward with their desire to achieve democracy. In continuing the revolution in that way and by concretising their demands, they can transform into facts their obvious vigilance and their distrust of the new people on power – both expressed loud and clear not least by their determination to stay put where they mobilised their movements. But all that is very fragile. If they are demobilised, it would certainly mean the first step towards a defeat and the re-installation of a new dictatorship, possibly veiled for a time.

5. We should propose to them that they continue their movement towards real democracy – a battle that is not even half won yet. Progress in this the only guarantee against a turn backwards in the situation: if you do not go forward you are condemned to retreat. The general slogan should be the conquest and strengthening of real democracy based on winning and securing democratic rights, as well as on the organisation of the movement.

6. We can only sketch several essential points of a democratic programme which workers in those countries themselves, their political and trade union organisations, would need to work out in detail.

a. Immediately lift the state of emergency which has been in force for many years in all these countries (in Egypt, the new – military – authorities have only promised to lift it in 6 months time!)

b. Besides that it is important to demand and secure freedom of speech and of the press; freedom of assembly, freedom for workers to organise together democratically and, finally, freedom to demonstrate. At the moment the masses have spontaneously exercised these rights, but it is necessary to

guarantee and codify them.

c. Complete and total separation of the church and the state (of all churches)

d. Immediate freedom for all political prisoners (already started in Egypt)

These are the immediate measures that directly flow from the current situation.

Beyond that, it is important to make progress towards complete democratic freedom for the working masses in the towns and the countryside. For this, political democracy must go hand-in-hand with economic democracy.

1. It is vitally important for the life of the country to nationalise the factories, mines and banks, particularly those owned by foreign capital.
2. One fundamental democratic measure is a radical agrarian reform, with the re-distribution of land to the poor farmers and their co-operatives without compensation to the present owners. This is the very bedrock of democracy in the countryside and at the same time it breaks the power of the big landed proprietors who are pillars of support for the dictatorship, as well as of those leaders currently in power. All the generals in Egypt, like Mubarak and his family, are big landed proprietors, and the same is true elsewhere.
3. Democratic rights for workers at their workplace, codified in progressive social legislation (collective bargaining, defined working times, the right to strike, unemployment benefits, etc.)
4. Freedom to form trade unions and trade union rights. At the same time democratisation of existing trade unions, holding fresh elections to renew them..

5. Progressive social legislation for all workers (sickness insurance, laws protecting workers' housing, etc.)
6. Confiscation of all the material goods of the cronies of dictators already fallen and yet to fall: land, factories, buildings, businesses, wealth stolen from the people and monopolised during the decades of dictatorship.

But the most urgent task of the day, and therefore the main slogan, is – organise working people

1. So that they can make progress towards real democracy, guarantee the freedom which has been won and achieve all their demands, the most determined and conscious and therefore the most active elements must set up their political party, a workers' party, a sort of Labour Party. The job of this party from the very moment it is set up would be to work out and promote in practice the whole democratic programme, raising it in all workers' movements.
2. All of these movements in the country should unite in a political process aimed at setting up a new regime in line with the wishes and desires of workers. It would be a terrible mistake to put faith in the promise of elections. The whole country (all the countries), the whole of the working people, have rejected the dictators' bogus constitution. They need a new one, a constitution of the working people. They need to fix and codify the new order, i.e. the most highly democratic measures, rules and laws, which alone conform to the will of the people and its dynamism. They need also to prevent the possessing class, the pillars of the dictatorship, from cheating the people through a fraudulent electoral farce. Therefore workers need to prepare and hold a Constituent Assembly of the country.

It is for the creation of that type of assembly that elections should be held, to select delegates drawn from candidates of the truly democratic parties, first and foremost of the workers' party.

3. Both to run the the elections – and to make sure they are run properly – and to prepare the Assembly to bring about their demands and under popular supervision, workers urgently need to form local committees of action and supervision in the workplace and in the local areas. In the countryside, one vitally important task for such committees would be to push forward agrarian reform and land re-distribution energetically. Poor farmers and agricultural labourers would form the majority of these committees in the countryside. Everywhere these committees, with the participation of housewives, should keep an eye on prices at markets and in the shops. This is all the more necessary since the international bourgeoisie could strangle and starve the infant workers' democracy through present and future speculation in cereals and other agricultural products.
4. One extremely important political task for workers and their organisations is a radical and immediate break with national isolation. A main condition for the success of their movement is to bring about an effective and living alliance
 1. with the other peoples engaged in similar movements in North Africa and and the Middle East. The people of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Algeria, can already form permanent contacts and synchronise their demands and activities through their movements and political parties (once the latter have been established).
 2. also with the workers in the countries of Europe and their organisations, demanding their

solidarity and collaboration to establish a broad united front against the forces of restoration in their countries and internationally.

5. Separately, I would like to make a particular point about the enormous importance of the following problem: Fraternisation with the army soldiers, especially in Egypt, has already born fruit fruit in the apparent neutrality of the army. But this is very fragile. It is necessary to continue and extend this fraternisation (which is a very important task in the other countries too), with the aim of forming stable contacts so that ultimately, at a stage which cannot be determined from here, soldiers' committees can be set up, especially since the soldiers are workers in uniform, or very often farmers willing to discuss a programme for the re-distribution of the land.

Here in broad terms and hastily sketched, are a a few points, hints rather, to serve as the basis of an programme for these movements. The determination and the dynamism are there. But about the aims of their struggle and the means available to them almost total confusion reigns. That is where we should at least try to help.

January 2011

New Issue of the Journal, No. 15, Feb 2016,

Inside [this issue](#):

of Workers' International Journal we reproduce a selection of

the tributes paid to our founding secretary Balazs Nagy (Michel Varga) by present and former comrades.

Freedom for the Peoples of Africa! No to intervention!

By **Balazs Nagy** February 2013 (First published in *Workers International Journal* No. 1)

It would be very wrong to judge France's military intervention in Mali on the basis of the deafening and unanimous press and television chorus. They think this act of war was inevitable and celebrate it. It galvanised them unhesitatingly and pompously to laud President Hollande as a great leader – the very same politician they used to dismiss as flabby.

But it would be even worse to put any trust this “leader's” own pronouncements, or those of his aides and their allies in Europe and across the world.

And yet ... you cannot actually blame Hollande and co. directly for the long-drawn-out deterioration in Mali and the region, culminating in the present utter decay. But nor can you exonerate them either, since as loyal inheritors of the whole mess they took it on entirely and without a second thought. And in that specific sense the intervention was indeed as inevitable as the – joyful but perhaps over-optimistic – claims of “victory” and a job well done.

Despite the – to say the least – simplistic presentation of the situation in the Sahara and the Sahel as goodies vs. baddies, reality turns out to be incomparably more complex. Understanding it requires a brief review the more outstanding

aspects of the historical development which prepared, shaped and conditioned the political and social scene – and the actors – which led to the current situation.

A glance at history

For a start, the immense revolutionary wave which swept across Europe in the second half and aftermath of World War II generally speaking hit the African continent a dozen or so years later. Within Europe, the leaderships of working class parties did everything they could to channel revolutionary movements into shoring up the bourgeoisie through conventional democracies. In contrast, French (and other) imperialisms had been deeply shaken and weakened by the war and were unable to withstand the colonial peoples' irresistible independence movement. After a shaky early start, first Tunisia and Morocco (in 1956) and then the Algerian people won independence in 1962 after eight years of gruelling armed struggle. The revolutionary shock wave travelled south, and De Gaulle, more clear-sighted than other leaders of an exhausted possessing class, was forced to accept the obvious need to re-vamp old-style imperialism and grant independence to a series of countries in the region – almost all of them by 1960 (Senegal, Mauretania, Mali, Burkina-Faso, formerly Upper Volta, Niger, Chad, Ivory Coast – Guinea from 1958).

Hopes of a promising new start roused and inspired these countries. Borrowing from Algeria and even Tunisia in their search for a path towards a system leading to socialism, Guinea, Senegal and Mali all chose more or less the same route. After Bourguiba in Tunisia and Ben Bella in Algeria, Sekou Toure in Guinea and Modibo Keita in Mali and their governments carried out a series of nationalisations of property of the colonial power and its nationals. On this basis they initiated a policy of taking charge of their respective countries. Distrustful of the continually obstructive colonial power, they turned squarely towards the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe for desperately needed support

and assistance. Senegal, too, worked towards a kind of socialism, but its president L. Senghor, whose attachment to the republican bourgeoisie in France was well-known, rejected the orientation towards the USSR, preferring a kind of panafricanism and so-called "third worldism". The national struggle, first for independence and then for this take-over by a kind of "anti-feudal" socialism by Modibo Keita in Mali was particularly powerfully nourished by young people, who had previously languished in the kind of semi-slavery affecting a quarter of the population of the Sahel.

But these initial hopes and efforts and fruitful initiatives quickly came to grief on obstacles born of these countries' extreme poverty and the cruel shortages of resources imposed on them by the former colonial power. On the other hand, the inadequacies and material shortages in the so-called "socialist" countries, trapped in the impoverishing constraints of "socialism in one country" and hampered by an oppressive Stalinism increasingly in debt to its capitalist creditors, meant that they could not provide the necessary assistance even if they had wanted to. Far from it. And so, disappointed and discouraged, most of these Arab and African "socialist reformers" turned back to the former coloniser and towards a policy of oppression. This was all the easier since their origins and education separated them from the working masses, and in any case they could model themselves on how it was done in Eastern Europe. Not everybody can boast the strength of character or consistency of view of a Keita, a Lumumba or a Sangare. Nor is it a co-incidence that these three were all assassinated.

As for the leaders of the powerful workers' movement of the day in Europe, they did everything they could to bog these movements down in the swamp of deepening degradation, particularly since they everywhere resolutely drew this entire workers movement into the false and fatal path of "parliamentary cretinism" and collaboration with the

bourgeoisie.

But from the outset, this bourgeoisie went in completely the opposite direction, determined to maintain and even reinforce its prerogatives and arrangements as a class. Forced to abandon the colonial methods of its imperial system, it adapted to the new situation through the bonapartist rule of De Gaulle. Run in secrecy by his secretary, Jacques Foccart, the General's shadow organisations worked feverishly to re-organise France's political, administrative and military networks and adapt them to the new political configuration. And so the wild beast of colonial imperialism clothed itself in the post-colonial lamb's skin of "co-operation". And that is how a whole system was forged, the sadly famous "Françafrique" which (under all Presidents!) continued the old imperialist practices under the cover of close collaboration with the African countries and lightly disguised within the forms required by the "independence" of the respective states.

A whole series of military coups very quickly expressed and made manifest the limits of "independence" in most of the African countries concerned. Even in countries which had been better prepared by a long struggle, the dissident colonels Ben Ali and Boumediene resolutely put an end to the democratic scruples of Bourguiba and Ben Bella. Everywhere the military putschists installed a dictatorship resting on an oversized army and a single party, African regimes corresponding to the "Françafrique" system and symmetrically replicating it. Almost everywhere, independent regimes of the older generation of more radical bourgeois fighters gave way to corrupt regimes of dictators. Where the old guard did stay in power, their degeneration became inevitable.

This series of African countries was independent but had been impoverished and systematically, mercilessly, plundered in the course of the long preceding period of colonial rule. In the way of things, "co-operation" between them and a highly-developed great power like France simply maintained and

exacerbated the monstrous economic and social inequality between such “partners”. A hungry wolf in a sheep-fold comes to mind. It is very characteristic that from the end of World War II onwards the straitjacket that was the Franc zone tied the African countries to close dependence on France. On 25 December 1945, a special Franc of the African Financial Community (CFA) was created for use in these countries (including some further south) and its value was set outrageously low by the French government: 1 CFA Franc was only worth 0.02 metropolitan Francs. (N.B. following Sekou Touré of Guinea, Keita of Mali also took his country out of this Franc zone system in 1963. But faced with economic difficulties, he had to re-join it, shortly before he was overthrown).

These decisions to leave were fully justified, since the CFA Franc embodied the crying inequality between these economies – often kept excessively backward – and bourgeois France, one of the most highly-developed countries. Trade imposed by this “benevolent” France provided the latter with agricultural products and raw materials of all kinds at derisory prices, even below world prices which themselves are traditionally low. Conversely, her own industrial products were sold off virtually risk-free at guaranteed high prices on these markets. So this system not only maintained flagrant inequality, but intensified it intolerably. Need we add that this imposed and legalised inequality has continued right up to the present? To be more accurate, it was pushed by the Balladur government (under President Mitterrand in 1994) to the point of an explosion when the CFA Franc was devalued by 50%! The French bourgeoisie carefully retained this shamefully super-exploitative rate when the euro was introduced: in 2011, 1 euro equalled 655.957 Francs CFA. And they insult our ears with fairly stories about the end of imperialism!

In this re-vamped framework of imperialism, these countries were put under pressure – both directly and through successive

dictatorships – to abandon dreams of progress. But worse was to come. Within the modified political configuration of the imperialist system, they still had to maintain their traditional role as providers of very cheap agricultural products and raw materials. Open, violent force had been replaced with sly economic constraint. In this sense, these countries objectively contributed, kicking and screaming, to the ability of a thus reinvigorated world bourgeoisie to take on and sustain its “thirty glorious years”. And so the relative “social peace” that prevailed in the course of that expansion secured by that same bourgeoisie’s pact with powerful (reformist and Stalinist) bureaucracies, which kept the workers movement under lock and key, was largely paid for by super-exploitation of the former colonies. It led inevitably to colossal indebtedness on the part of these poor “independent” countries, over which even the bourgeoisie’s various nerve centres shed copious crocodile tears.

Economic, social and political deterioration

The situation got even worse when the bourgeoisie set its neo-liberal agents to work to reduce these debts overall. Starting in the early 1980s, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank forced all the countries concerned to adopt massive “structural adjustments” in the form of drastic budget and expenditure cuts and extensive privatisations in return for “aid” in reducing these debt levels. French (and other) firms bought up a great number of local enterprises for peanuts, while huge companies like Total, Areva and a multitude of others made themselves at home. Catastrophic results quickly followed. (It is a remarkable fact that what is going on in Europe at present is not some novelty arising out of the crisis; the Latin Americans had painful experience of it even before the Africans).

In Africa, too, the first victims were the education and health systems, whose often remarkable initial achievements had been a source of legitimate pride to these young nations.

Ever tighter budgetary constraints laid waste to these promising beginnings.

Merciless cuts in expenditure also deprived agriculture – bankrupt state farms as much as independent farmers ruined by lack of access to credit – of all aid. Across Africa, already low rural wages saw a general fall of 30% in those years. Mali's agriculture, for example, which at the end of the 1980s contributed 67% of the country's exports through cotton production, saw the latter smashed up and the peasantry crushed. Moreover, from the 1960s onwards a series of terrible droughts hit the whole region, resulting in a regular desert encroachments. The funds needed for big irrigation networks and effective water supplies were cruelly lacking, as were the cheap credits essential for small farmers.

These calamities led on the one hand to the terrible famines which periodically descend on the region and on the other to the massive rural exodus which drives tens and hundreds of thousands of people into the terribly overpopulated slums in the cities. The inhabitants of Nouakchott in Mauretania, extremely poor as they are, describe the slums in "their" shanty-town as "rubbish dumps". As for famines, the hypocrisy of successive food-aid campaigns launched and supported by the bourgeoisie and beloved of right-thinking petit-bourgeois barely masks neither the formers' direct responsibility for these disasters and their organic inability to do much about them, nor the latters' deferential complicity. Having said that, no one would want to prevent good souls from helping the starving, but reality puts us on guard against this rather unreliable substitute which in no way attacks the root of the problem.

Chronic unemployment also affects the whole population, which has undergone geometrical growth in the period in question. By 1989 it exceeded 22% of the active population, including more than half of young people in Algeria, for all that this country is better off than Mali or other countries in the

Sahara or the Sahel. A significant proportion of the population has persistently sought a way out of this social catastrophe in emigration. This explains the very high number of Malians (2 million) living in France around 1990, as many as a quarter of the whole population of the country! But vigilant France kept a close watch on the situation, and Charles Pasqua – a worthy successor to “Françafrique’s” organiser Foccart – started forcibly repatriating hundreds of thousands of Africans. His successors, also under all Presidents, have virtually institutionalised this into a regular procedure. Following the regular expulsions organised by Guéant, Manuel Valls has most recently filled an aeroplane with several dozen immigrants. A veil is drawn over how they carry this out. Be that as it may, journalists estimate that there are currently still 120,000 Malians living in France. But who knows exactly how many of these working class pariahs there are who have escaped utter poverty over there only to be hounded and persecuted here for the lack of an all-important piece of paper?

While the people – especially the young – are fleeing the country, businesses large and small, French and other, are settling in there as a kind of Eldorado to exploit the natural wealth of the country and its cheap labour. Apart from the odd kick-back, these businesses *repatriate the whole of their profits* and operate above the law. According to studies by comrades at *Survie* (a French NGO founded in 1984 to fight hunger and corruption in the “third world”), France’s trade surplus with Mali was over 300 million euros in 2010-2012, five times more than the derisory public “aid” she grants to that country!

Alongside these destructive activities went a long drawn-out process of reducing these states to subservience, adapting them more and more to the needs of capitalists in the French “protector”. Metropolitan agents of “Françafrique” carefully guided this convulsive change by remote-control. Enriched

local cliques devoured each other in order to establish, in an endless series of coups, which one would seize control of a state which itself was reduced little by little to its repressive apparatus. Having laid its hands on the manna from the "co-operation" community and other so-called "development" loans, the winning group would set out to fulfil its role as a substitute for the former colonial power. As poverty grew in these states, their role was more and more reduced to one essential: securing, preserving and reinforcing power in order to consolidate France's economic and political position and influence while maintaining a repressive regime against working people. Those currently holding power, such as the puppets Deby (Chad), Compoaré (Burkina Faso) and Touré (Mali) have nothing in common with the independent figures of the first generation of leaders. They are even the opposite of someone like Keita, for example. The most important, if not the only, means they use to achieve their objectives has been and is the army. Now, the rapid overall worsening of the situation has provoked a series of coups in which the impoverished masses' role of detonator has become increasingly visible, reflecting the economic and social deterioration that has been eating away.

Unpicking the tangled politics of North Africa

Above all we must reject the simplistic way the interventionist power presents the context and conditions in this part of Africa. Even if – and this goes without saying – it is so constantly and noisily parroted in the media that certain political tendencies and individuals, while uttering reservations about "neo-colonial ulterior motives", nevertheless give this military action guarded support as a necessary "pre-requisite". These include the French Communist Party parliamentary deputy François Asensi (*L'Humanité* newspaper 18 January 2013) who swallows the intervention whole but hastens to add: "...France must state clearly her aim to rebuild a democratic state". He actually seems to think that is

possible on the basis of this intervention!

Despite all the resounding statements and those who are taken in by them, there is no way that trends and programmes in this region of Africa, or the political formations and groupings to which they give rise, can be reduced to isolated groups of Islamic fanatics on the one hand and loyal government supporters on the other. Reality is much richer and more complicated. Before even attempting to sketch a few lines, with no claim at all to presenting the whole picture, it is enough to describe the interventionists and their accomplices as the famous bull in a china shop, especially given the brutal military aggression and lack of concern for "details" that are innate and natural characteristics of so-called "neo-colonial" imperialism.

As described above, after a very short period of national awakening in the aftermath of World War II, successive economic setbacks in the newly independent countries turned into a sustained social regression. The vast majority of the popular classes (workers, farmers, stock-breeders, pastoralists, etc.) have become considerably poorer, particularly the many peoples and ethnic groups at the bottom of society. Their degradation provided the ground for the astonishing explosion of a whole series of programmes and the most varied social and national movements. It is impossible to list them all here, but in general they rested on previous currents and movements, some of them going back to the nineteenth century. Several great traditions of thought and social movements have remained alive to this very day. In the majority of cases, social and national demands have overlapped inextricably. The roots of some movements are to be found in the distant past.

The European workers' movement of the twentieth century in particular inspired by example a powerful trade-unionism among workers in these countries, as well as the appearance of labour and communist parties. The present-day UGTT union

confederation in Tunisia, which opposes the Salafists, is one of the fruits of this co-operation whose powerful resurgence can be considered as an important opposition factor to the government of religious people, but also of a positive political change. We also know that Sekou Touré of Guinea (secretary of the CGT federation of black Africa in 1948!) rested on the Guinean trade unions for support in the national independence movement and spiced up his conceptions with socialism of a kind. The Algerian independence movement was also in large part influence by the French workers' movement.

It would therefore be unforgivable to look down on the movements for the social and national liberation of these countries from the heights of some imagined European supremacy. Often centuries-old traditions and a wealth of ancient experience also nourish the struggles of workers and people in Africa and its northern part. These movements exist, despite the extremely difficult situation they are in because they pay the price of the backwardness imposed upon their countries, suffering from isolation and repression which are bound to mark the immediate future of the region.

This social and national situation was essentially what we had in mind when we published the press release from the comrades at "Survie" in issue no. 1 of our journal, expressing the desire to "look at certain important aspects of the rebellion in a different light". Of course the comrades from "Survie" not only bravely condemn the intervention, but are also well-known for having brought together a mass of precious facts in relation to this part of Africa. But in the indignation which informs their timely and correct condemnation of the intervention, we believe they erred in losing sight, behind the inflated bubble of religious fanatics, of precisely these movements and their national and social base. But that is precisely the direction in which to look for the key to the situation, and a way out, and not at all the "armies" of corrupt regimes or their UN protectors. The "Survie" comrades

talk about French intervention as “significant pressure on the Malian authorities” as if the latter actually existed independently of the former. They also say France “must respect UN resolutions as soon as possible”.

But in the first place, rather than acting as “pressure”, French intervention is **necessary to save** these “authorities”. And not only the Malian authorities, but all the rest in the region, too! The comrades should not just see French (state) authorities, but also those of these countries, these African states, as the agents and representatives of a quite definite social class – the bourgeoisie. With the significant difference that the latter do not exist and act on behalf of their own bourgeoisie, since even the feeble shreds of that native class are merely a subaltern appendix of the metropolitan (and world) bourgeoisie. These states, therefore, exist and act as the local organ of the latter, even though they are endowed with the fig-leaf of independence.

From the 1980s onwards, when the capitalist-imperialist system started moving over to so-called ultra-liberalism, this remarkably intensified the exploitation of these countries and revived all the traditions of struggle, and their direct and indirect heirs started moving. The great liberating risings of 2011 which journalists called “Arab revolutions” are also manifestations of these struggles, at the same time acting as a significant precursor to the European and world revolution that is gestating. The outstanding role of the UGTT union in the Tunisian revolution and the overthrow of the regime – even though it was itself contaminated by the latter – is well known. Less well known, perhaps, is the decisive action the Egyptian working class developed in its revolution, organising strikes and renewing its unions. Today its sporadic but incessant struggles constitute a significant element in defending and advancing that revolution. As for the UGTT, we can all see its decisive participation in the current mobilisation.

While the “Arab spring” is an integral component of the European revolution currently gestating and undeniably contributed to the still stuttering awakening of young people in Europe, it also lived on in the convulsive but still disorganised movements of the despoiled and deracinated masses of that region, of which islamist movements form a large but unfortunately distorted and adulterated part. Be that as it may, certain ancient and modern political movements and organisations have raised their heads again, often inspired by the European workers’ movement of former days, but also by their own old traditions, and – closer to home – by the revolutionary overturns of 2011.

“A people which oppresses another cannot emancipate itself”(Engels)

For centuries the immense Sahara and the Sahel regions of north and west Africa have constantly been disturbed by movements and rebellions of this or that nation or ethnic group living there. Its artificial division into separate countries by colonial powers only served, in the majority of cases, to reinforce national oppression by devastating and wrenching apart ethnic or national units. During independence, some of these peoples, like the Kabyles in Algeria and their Berber relatives, the Touareg in Mali (and more or less everywhere) hoped to achieve national recognition in return for their participation in the anti-colonial struggle. But right from the outset, all of the newly independent states, based on the primacy of the dominant ethnic group (or tribe), refused to allow any concessions at all, still less any form of autonomy, to ethnic or national minorities. This serious defect left a profound scar on the democratic awakening of the bourgeois revolutions which shook these countries, even those who ventured furthest into a kind of proto-socialism. We do not have the space here to examine all these national movements in detail. Nevertheless the most important ones must be mentioned.

Categorically turned down by the new Algerian government, the Kabyle people started a prolonged struggle for autonomy. Not only was this refused from the very start, but the Kabyle people suffered repeated bloody repressions and a national oppression which continues to this very day.

Far away from there, in another region steeped in prolonged national-ethnic struggle, Casamance in Senegal has battled against oppression. The region has been demanding autonomy ever since Senegal achieved independence. However, despite L.Senghor's evasive promises, it has not been forthcoming. The region went into open armed struggle in the early 1980s, when Senegal was trying to ward off a massive debt crisis (almost 2 million dollars). The cultivation of ground nuts appeared to offer a way out, but when the government assigned land to colonists from the north for this, the inhabitants of Casamance, traditionally rice-growers, revolted. Ever since, cease-fires have alternated with fresh confrontations and the conflict has persisted, particularly since the Senegalese state, exactly like all the others also in its constantly growing poverty, has shown itself less and less able to resolve the situation and has even imposed further burdens on the region.

When one considers the vast Sahara and Sahel territory from the point of view of the many different peoples inhabiting it, what becomes evident is a profound interweaving of the social degradation of the peoples – often linked to sudden changes in their mode of life also imposed by the neglect of nature – and the subordinate or even oppressed character of their ethnic or national lives. History teaches us that those who try to separate them from social difficulties, or with more reason to oppose them, have paid a high price.

For a long time now the nomadic Saharoui of the western Sahara have undergone a veritable calvary. While they struggled for autonomy, Franco's Spain would not allow them any rights. In 1975, following a call by King Hassan of Morocco, hundreds of

thousands joined a "green march" to invade what they thought was "Moroccan Sahara". In reaction to this the Polisario Front, founded in 1973 by young Saharoui students, proclaimed the "Democratic Arab Saharoui Republic" under Algerian protection. The Algerian and Moroccan armies have confronted each other in a rivalry that has nothing to do with the interests of any peoples whatsoever. Algeria has protected the new Saharoui republic since Spain left in 1976, whereas she has never allowed Kabylia or the Touareg movement the slightest degree of autonomy.

Following a cease-fire in 1991, Morocco has controlled 80% of this territory, leaving 20% to the Polisario Front. But despotic King Hassan has installed a 2,500km (!) security belt called the "Moroccan Wall". (This is the nth "wall" built to contain some people to disfigure the world and bring the powerful into disrepute!) As for the new Saharoui Republic, what with recognition by a few countries and rejection by the majority of others – including the UN! – it has no legal existence at all.

The Touregs' problem is even more complex. Because of the arbitrary and fantastic division of this great region by the great colonial powers, the almost 2 million Touareg find themselves artificially split up between five different countries. They are just one of many peoples who, carved up between several countries, have no right to a legal existence and are often persecuted. When discussing them, one inevitably thinks of the Kurds or the Palestinians in the Middle East. If you want a shameful image of imperialist reality dragged down to the level of simple banality, then look no further. The Basques divided up between the north of Spain and the south of France might have a thing or two to say about this, or the Irish, with the north of their country still under the iron heel of Britain.

On the other hand, the break-up of several multi-national countries and the revival of virulent national feelings also

testify to the growing contradiction between capitalism-imperialism and the facts of national existence. (To say nothing of the inability of the Stalinist bureaucracy to solve this problem in the former USSR and its criminal role in the break-up of several multi-national states it used to govern, like Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia).

Be that as it may, the Touareg people were among the losers in the post-war anti-imperialist wave of liberation. In a way, their fate contains just about all the problems of the national question in this part of the world in compressed form: – the capitalist nature of the states in which they live and the role played in this by religion, particularly Islam.

It is really remarkable that even the leaders of the first wave of bourgeois-democratic revolution just could not grasp this problem at all. And so as early as 1963 Modibo Keita severely repressed and Touareg revolt in Mali. He was helped by his Algerian colleague Ben Bella, who handed over to him the Touareg leaders who had fled to Algeria. One Touareg author wrote: “The thousands of deaths caused by repression were met with general indifference”.

But we lack the space here to tell the full story of the many rebellions by this people, their lengthy negotiations with this or that state in the region, and the massacres and flights of thousands of their members which punctuate the life of these states which have degenerated into vassals of imperialism.

As a result of general economic decline and collapse and the consequent successive setbacks to the Touaregs' national struggles, they toughened up their behaviour and adopted a more radical attitude. All states in the area felt the effects of imperialist super-exploitation, but the Touareg people suffered it twice over (and they were not alone in that). Besides the dismantlement of services, there was no investment to assuage sufferings which were made greater by massive

unemployment exacerbated as the introduction of lorries and the severity and frequency of drought put an end to caravans. Hundreds of thousands of them fled Mali and lived under extremely precarious conditions in Niger, Mauretania, Algeria, Burkin-Faso, etc.

As we know, after the overthrow of Ghadaffi, who enlisted many of them among his "protectors", a significant number of these armed men returned to Mali. But this detachment did not start the armed struggle of the already strongly-radicalised Touregs. All they did was to contribute a considerable force to a movement which had been present for a long time but, hardened by serial disappointments, was only waiting for the right opportunity. The extreme fragility of the Malian state, made worse army Captain Sanogo's attempted coup fell apart, furnished the signal and the opportunity for attack. The "Azawad Liberation Movement", formed some months previously, allied itself with armed islamist groups to bulk out its numbers. And so they were able quite rapidly to pulverise the Malian army and occupy the north of the country as far as the River Niger.

Of course this was a mistake, but a very understandable one, as the Touareg movement was very contaminated by its own islamist faction. Mistake though it is, this movement as a whole should not be confused with its islamist faction "Ansar Eddine", even if the latter has undoubtedly pushed the movement a long way in a radical direction. But it should never under any circumstances be identified with it, as French imperialism and its lackeys strive to do.

Contrary to all the claims of the propaganda machine, political islam – even the most radical kind – is not a recent foreign import to Africa. Even in the nineteenth century, locally-based islamists inspired great anti-colonial struggles. Exploited peoples sought refuge and consolation against all kinds of oppression in religion. Since Engels wrote *The Peasant War in Germany* we have known that religion

serves to encourage and stimulate the resistance and struggle of oppressed classes when they are still insufficiently developed or – we may add – when their elder sister, the world working class, is on the back foot constantly.

If Islamism has in recent years – sometimes aggressively–taken the place of secular leaderships of social and national movements, it is a consequence of the considerable weakening and retreat of the international workers' movement. Over the last fifty years or so, the emphatic way social democratic parties have gone over from being supporters of the bourgeoisie to being its direct and settled political representatives has been one of the most outstanding features of this historic collapse. The other is the destruction of the Soviet Union and the dominant role played by the Stalinist bureaucracy played within it, followed by workers massively deserting communist parties and their inevitable retreat. A whole series of communist and non-communist parties and groups which used to lead social and national struggles have been marginalised across the world as a result. In their place, religious islamist movements have emerged from Afghanistan to Morocco, by way of Palestine, Egypt, Tunisia, etc.

Obviously this “opium of the people” works like any other drug. While bringing temporary consolation and relief, it cannot cure the ailment but poisons the organism even further. The muslim religion (like any other) brings no improvements but on the contrary preserves the backward and desperate situation working people are in, as we see very clearly in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Tunisia, too. Moreover, this religion contain within itself, as the cloud carries the thunderstorm, its radical Salafist wing with its medieval customs. The people of Tunisia have recently started to struggle even more powerfully against this “opium”, as have the people of Egypt. We should also note that there has recently been a significant internal split in the Touareg salafist group “Ansar Eddine”.

The situation is bound to get worse

Only recently forced to accept cuts in its material resources, the French army has become trapped in an inextricable tangle of intertwined difficulties which it cannot overcome. It is no coincidence that Hollande's European and American allies have very parsimoniously calibrated their own symbolic rather than real "contributions". They obviously have a better grasp of the implications and extent of their devastating setbacks in Iraq and Afghanistan. They are more than happy to let the French bourgeoisie and its puppet Hollande have the more than dubious glory of pulling their shared chestnuts out of the fire. In fact the French "Socialist" Party has suddenly revealed itself to be the advance-guard not just of its "own" bourgeoisie but of world imperialism as a whole. Only recently the US vice-president conferred a metaphorical knighthood on Hollande, confirming him in this role with a lordly "well done!"

Obviously the forward patrols of world imperialism didn't have a clue what they were getting into. Incredible but true: neither the army nor its political bosses had any idea of what a simmering cauldron they were involving themselves in. Hollande kept saying they only wanted to stay in Mali a few days, then various unpleasant experiences made them change that to "... an indefinite period". It was brought home to these ardent interventionists that they would have to re-make the state and army, not just in Mali, but more or less across the whole region – a massive task far beyond the capacity of the French state.

The colossal expenditure such an undertaking entails massively exceeds the meagre resources of a French bourgeoisie mired in persistent crisis. There will be a growing contradiction between the no-doubt long-term financial cost of these involvements and their categorical refusal to allow even the slightest relief of the ever-increasing burdens placed on working people. Obviously, the latter will not tolerate the government making them bear not just the cost of the crisis,

but also of the considerable expense of patching up the system oppressing their African brothers. If you believe the French Ministry of Defense (and their figures are almost certainly an under-estimate) the cost of the army alone up to 5 February 2013 is 60 million euros.

This will hardly scratch the monumental cost required by a situation of total breakdown. Everything has had to be re-created: all the machinery of administration, not to mention the health and education systems – all far beyond the reach of a French exchequer swamped and riddled by debt.

As for the army itself, it is quite unable to tackle even such priorities as safeguarding the civilian population. Journalists report several massive lynchings perpetrated by the depraved Malian army, protected by its French army “big brother”.

These facts demonstrate not only the hatred and lust for revenge the country's ruling strata cherish for all Arabo-Berber peoples, but also the appalling values and moral standards of the French army, which must have looked demurely away while these lynchings were being committed, as it did a few years earlier in Rwanda, so as not to notice the massacre of the Tutsi people. And as the Dutch UN Battalion did in former Yugoslavia, which let General Mladic's soldiers execute 7000 Bosnians in the town of Srebrenica without lifting a finger. Such are the execrable political and ethical standards of both these armies and the UN, swathed in hypocritical high-flown phrases.

There is not the slightest doubt that this intervention will get even more catastrophically bogged down than that in Afghanistan. The inevitable consequence will be that the situation in Europe and internationally will get even worse, with the recrudescence of an even fiercer international class struggle. For what is happening in and around Mali and concretely also in the mobilisation of working people in

Tunisia and Egypt prefigures not only a considerable deterioration in their conditions of life but also, and above all, the mobilisation and emergence on the scene of masses of working people, broadening their activity and toughening up their struggle.

But when one reads the statements of those groups and parties which oppose French intervention, one is struck by their purely declamatory character. Of course given the massive number of dupes, the very fact that they condemn it at all is commendable, and we stand with them. But even when they resolutely condemn the military intervention, they confine themselves to verbal protest. To put it another way, almost all of these organisations (Communist Party, Left Party, Left Front, New Anti-Capitalist Party, etc.) adopt a position more or less clearly *opposed* to military intervention but steer well clear of stating the orientation or outcome they are *for*. I.e., these political formations adopt the profoundly negative attitude of rejection. At most, these comrades add a generalisation devoid of meaning, i.e. that what is needed is to solve the (economic, social, national) problems these countries face. This great general truth is hardly brilliant in its originality, so much so that even the government has given up repeating it.

We need a clear orientation!

To tell the truth, most of these organisations and groups do point to what they think is a way forward. They say – indeed, often demand – that military intervention must be left to African states – Mali and her neighbours, under UN patronage. It is quite obvious that they think this would be a suitable solution since (and this is how shallow their thinking is) it would be a better fit with the African ethnic image and the sacrosanct authority of the UN. They are completely unperturbed by the fact that Hollande and his government have spent long months trying to achieve precisely that arrangement.

Such a "solution" amounts more or less to re-establishing the status-quo, i.e. the situation preceding the debacle of the Malian state and army. But trying to apply it without the French army is simply a bad joke, since the preceding state of affairs was precisely what brought about that debacle and ended up with the present disastrous situation. The French army intervened precisely in order to save the apparatus of the Malian state from complete collapse. Despite appearances, it was not directed against those Islamic terrorists. That pretext was blown up by propaganda to keep everybody happy. In truth they did it to shore up a native administrative apparatus in mortal danger – as it happened, from the islamist attack. The delight the population of Mali showed and which was obligingly filmed by French TV was less at the arrival of a foreign French army than at getting rid of a cruel medieval dictatorship. To present it as enthusiasm for the arrival of a foreign army is to indulge in the same degree of mystification as the attempt to interpret the vote *against* Sarkozy as support *for* the plans of the Socialist Party.

So the French army stands there nakedly exposed as the only cement that can hold this feeble state together, or any of the others that share the same congenital weaknesses. In that sense it is not only the chief factor in that African Union, but also the only one that can put up any opposition and organise any resistance to its ineluctable decomposition. It is high time for the parties and groups and their leaders who speak in the name of the working class to break with the backward and grotesque way of thinking which takes African states as if they were an emanation of their peoples and formed a group by its nature independent of imperialism. Whereas in reality they form a quite specific – subaltern but essential – part of the mechanism of imperialism's world system, officially run by the omni-substitute, the UN.

The clear regression in these states in relation to fundamental problems of African society is the logical

consequence and obvious indication of the manifest setback to the attempt by the bourgeoisie – even what were at first its most radical elements – to solve elementary tasks of the bourgeois revolution. The way these regimes are currently decomposing is a striking proof from the negative side of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution; specifically, that in our imperialist epoch the bourgeoisie of any country at all – even a backward one – is organically incapable of solving the tasks posed by such a revolution. Every orientation towards a so-called popular front, every policy of alliance with a wing of the bourgeoisie, has led to setbacks. That is the cruel lesson of events.

Thus, in the absence of a clear orientation towards the theory of permanent revolution and its application in order to mobilise the workers of the whole region, a catastrophic situation has got even worse even quicker. Indeed the choice put forward in the past by Rosa Luxemburg and taken up later by Trotsky: Either the working class succeeds in overthrowing capitalism and opening the road to socialism, or humanity will fall back into barbarism – is today an immediate practical question.

In this respect, this part of Africa at least (like the Middle East) is a little ahead of Europe. That continent, too, is from now on confronted with the same direct choice. It is only the many and various reserves at her disposal which still retard the explosive maturing of the same historical dilemma, as well as the general lack of preparedness on the part of the workers' movement.

The working class in the region of Africa under discussion already has several political organisations, even if they are still weak and enjoy only minority support. But that can change quickly, not to mention the unions which, like the UGTT in Tunisia and in the big cities in the region, are sometimes powerful.

Without going into detail, there are a fair number and variety of organisations which described themselves as Marxist and/or working-class, and they have the capacity to work together for a united struggle in the region. The first pre-condition for such a struggle and for their own development is undoubtedly their ability to take fully into account the orientation offered by the permanent revolution and on that basis work out and apply democratic slogans for revolutionary change.

Revolutionary and working class organisations in Europe can and should do everything they can to help clarify this essential issue. That way they will be able to find their way back to their proper role, making the link with their history and tradition of supporting brothers and sisters in Africa. A precious contribution to this would be to adapt and develop the Fourth International's Transitional Programme, the only one to express concretely the orientation of permanent revolution. Although it needs changing in places, as a whole it remains valid. It is the one and only path to solving weighty problems which can at the same time correct wrong orientations and go beyond passive contemplation of events when African activists need clear and active support.

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Sarkozy back in political activity and Beefing up the bonapartism! Warning of a real danger! by Balazs Nagy

Not long ago, Nicolas Sarkozy was unceremoniously bundled out of office. Now he's back on TV in all his pomp and glory. France's second channel (chaine 2) is supposed to be a public enterprise run by the state, or successive governments, but in any case at taxpayers' expense. Now it gives Sarkozy the red carpet treatment. The way they transformed him from a duplicitous agent of the bourgeoisie into a messianic liberator was amazing and shockingly servile. One faithful retainer, Yves Jégo, was moved to comment in astonishment, and with some justice: "It can't be right to give 45 minutes on a current affairs TV show to a Presidential contender" (*Le Monde*, 23 September 2014).

Now, it was Sarkozy who appointed the boss of this channel, and the current President, Hollande, was daft enough to keep him in the job. This man virtually prostrated himself in front of Sarkozy, and the simpering nonentity who conducted the interview like a willing stooge more or less got down on all fours. It may not make much sense, but that's the way things go in this general political climate.

Trials and tribulations of post-war Bonapartism in France

The government of the so-called Socialist Party and its associates – what a lot of people still call “the Left”, is visibly on its last legs. It is too closely tied to moribund capitalism, too definitively compromised in the twilight decadence which drags all down in its gloomy wake.

But, debilitated as it is by this decline, the bourgeoisie still has to do something about the fact that its social-democratic servant is bankrupt and too weak now to face the growing perils. This is what explains the growing strength of fascist organisations and the disproportionate extension of their influence right across the old capitalist countries. But Trotsky warned that between social democracy and fascism there is a whole spectrum of intermediate regimes which the bourgeoisie can use to replace their failed social-democratic business managers without going straight over to fascism, with all the burdens and risks that brings. Fascism is an option they keep on a back burner, ready for use as a last resort, but at the moment they are hoping to get by without it, especially since the memory of the traumas it inflicted is still very much alive. But, above all, the ruling class lives in hope that the virtual vivisection that has been performed on the world working class means they can take refuge in less rigid intermediate regimes which might avoid the brutal shock of fascism. (Indeed, the changes the working class has undergone, the way it has been scattered and physically weakened, and its theoretical and political arms changed and perverted, plus a series of retreats and serious defeats, have disarmed the working class and considerably weakened it in action.)

Under these conditions the capitalists think that, for the moment, a bonapartist regime is the most appropriate political form in which they can secure their position. But even in modern France such a political system is nothing new. The French bourgeoisie originally created this type of regime.

They have often had to face bold challenges to their power, and are all the more inclined to rely on this particular crutch because it can easily be used as a massive club. But the bourgeoisie had no easy job trying to dust it off after World War II. De Gaulle had everything it takes to do the job and solidly established the Fifth Republic as the prototype of modern-day bonapartism, but in the end even he got the boot in the aftermath of the powerful 1968 general strike. While he himself paid the price for trying capital's strong-arm tactics on the working class, the Fifth Republic itself survived the onslaught of the oppressed thanks to the connivance of Stalinists and reformists.

You don't need to look very hard at France's political history since De Gaulle's humiliating fall from grace to see that French bonapartism, in the shape of the Fifth Republic, has followed a particularly chequered and contradictory path. None of the heirs to the Fifth Republic's bonapartist institutions has had anything like what De Gaulle had in terms of means, inclination and courage to destroy working-class gains in an open frontal assault. Every single one of them, without exception, has been steeped in the tepid pseudo-democracy of the Fourth Republic, imbued with the long tradition of flabby pacifism, compromise and unprincipled shilly-shallying as a way of evading or bypassing conflicts and difficulties. The majority of them are impregnated to the very marrow of their bones in the spirit of this bourgeois democracy, whose pillar and vital principle is precisely the *class collaboration* guaranteed by opportunist workers' leaders.

But above all they were terrified by very lively recollections of the 1968 general strike, especially since, as irremediably civilian bourgeois, their links with the armed forces have been ad hoc and ambiguous. Mitterrand and later others went on the attack, directly and across the board, on the gains working people have made, but it was under the influence of the general international turn to so-called neo-liberal

policies, and it was done tangentially and with many reservations and in the shape of a sustained war of attrition. While what they did was already unbearable for the working class, it has still not been enough to satisfy the bourgeoisie.

So the reason why today's bourgeois politicians and ideologues bitterly reproach their predecessors for not thoroughly dismantling all the working class's previous achievements and taming that class is explained by the figures who embodied the Fifth Republic after De Gaulle. All his Presidential successors have liked to dress in the bonapartist lion's clothes, but have turned out to be pretty toothless in practice, even though they were quite prepared to get their claws into working people.

Hollande's political incoherence makes him look like a marionette with its strings cut

None of the civilian bonapartist Presidents of France have had what it takes to carry out the mission conferred on them by virtue of their office, but the last in line, Hollande has without doubt been the least competent for the job. Of course, his limited abilities, narrow mind-set and penchant for double-talk all mean he finds it hard to take the job on properly, but he is no more stupid or short-sighted than any of the others. Events have gone completely over his head because, as head of the Fifth Republic he has had to strain every nerve to reconcile the policy of class collaboration (normal in bourgeois democracy) with that of open confrontation between the classes (function of the Fifth Republic). And all the while, the stagnation of capitalism in its twilight prevents him from granting any concessions and insistently demands confrontation with the working class.

And so the wider conflict between these two choices faced by the bourgeoisie nowadays is concentrated in the person and policies of François Hollande. The outcome is the way real

concessions are turned into broken promises in a series of pseudo-reforms on the one hand, and on the other the harsh daily reality of blows struck against working people, but which the bourgeoisie do not think are harsh enough. Hence the image presented of a government hanging in mid-air and pushed about by whatever wind is blowing at any particular time, as well as an irresistible sense of things finally falling apart.

When you look at the awful state social democracy's doctrine is in, what is most astonishing is that Hollande cannot somehow shake it off. Where he should give up on trying to square the circle between two bourgeois lines, one of which, class-collaboration, has already lost the battle to contain and calm class conflict, he has merely tried to alter the form within which he attempted to reconcile them. He did this by delegating a big part of his bonapartist task to that Socialist Party mini-Napoleon, Manuel Valls, a man whose own natural inclinations have already converted him from a shamefaced social democrat into a pocket Bonaparte. But despite what a lot of activists on the so-called far left expected, the obviously lame form of bonapartism affected by the Socialist Party only served to intensify the obvious signs that the party itself is falling apart, testimony to the insurmountable difficulties involved in turning this party into a pliable instrument for a reinforced bonapartism without major internal shocks and crises. Every attempt along those lines will just drag it closer to ultimate decay.

This historic collapse of social democracy, which expresses both the increasing severity of capitalism's crisis and the bankruptcy of one of the counter-measures the bourgeoisie relied on, also gives Sarkozy a second chance. This simple fact exposes Hollande and co.'s social democracy as the midwife of fascism or, more likely, a more homogenous and resolute form of bonapartism.

Sarkozy's bid to be iron-fisted Bonaparte.

Sarkozy did not beat around the bush. He announced straight off that he was back on the scene as a serious candidate for the role of unbending Bonaparte saviour. He presented his political re-appearance as dispassionate obedience to the requirements of the situation, renouncing any personal ambition and explaining that he was responding to a higher, nay divine, call to help our suffering world. This marked reference to some quasi-mystical obligation as justification for his re-entry into politics and the clear-cut aspiration to be a supreme saviour are sure signs of a would-be Bonaparte. The odd journalist has noticed Sarkozy's occasional bonapartist tendencies, but none have pointed out that this re-appearance basically means he intends to set up a consistent and decisive bonapartist dictatorship.

Sarkozy's declared political project also exhibits all other elements of that sort of bonapartism. All the main ingredients of a pure and harsh bonapartism are present, alongside the insistent and repeated evocation of a supreme call to duty on the part of some divine providence.

First of all comes the claim to be acting for the benefit of society as a whole, above classes. Obviously he could not use the word "class" because he has banished it from his vocabulary, but he explicitly stated he wanted to abolish party differences as outdated leftovers and unite everybody behind his flag.

A whole raft of proposals accompanied and filled out this decision to jump over whatever democratic constraints the bourgeoisie itself has been forced to impose on society in order to channel class contradictions. And, in line with his wish to banish differences between parties, Sarkozy again spoke out against organisations which come between the various classes and the authorities, above all independent trades unions. Moreover, as a consistent bonapartist, he was for regular referendums where class votes are short-circuited by plebiscitary consultations with the "whole of society".

Needless to say, two essential ingredients of properly-established bonapartism were not omitted from his political plans. One is the intensification of overt nationalism, which Sarkozy expressed in his plan to end the Schengen Agreement guaranteeing free movement around the European Union. The other is his decision to establish a political apparatus in the exclusive service of his bonapartism by radically transforming the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) into a homogenous and docile body under his personal control.

And this last point raises the important question: Will this clearly-formulated plan for an integrated, coherent, vigorous and determined bonapartism actually get the upper hand? To answer that, we need to look above all at the working people who are immediately threatened and targeted by this plan.

Workers disarmed in the face of this bourgeois dictatorship

Problems like this usually go straight over the heads of revolutionary and socialist organisations – because of their formalist and sectarian leaderships. To tell the truth, both their revolution and their socialism are no more than vague references to a rosy future; consequently they are quite separate from their day-to-day preoccupations and practical activities. That's why they see very little importance, or none at all, in the political and tactical changes the bourgeoisie introduce in the political form in which they try to rescue their system as the crisis worsens. Even if some of them do draw attention to the danger of bonapartism, as the Lambertist organisation did over De Gaulle's accession, their politics have never gone beyond defending traditional bourgeois democracy. So their day-by-day struggle has been limited by that framework and their commitment to socialism remained at the level of propaganda – necessary, obviously, but restricted to the realm of ideas. Later they supported Mitterrand against De Gaulle's bonapartism in the name of this democracy. But as we know and Hollande has proved most recently, this democracy is no more than the antechamber to

fascism or, specifically, bonapartism.

Whether or not these organisations actually mention bonapartism today, their slogans in general do not go beyond defending democracy as a whole against the attacks upon it. But the fact that the bourgeoisie is going over to bonapartism, even in a form masked and softened by remnants of democracy like the Fifth Republic, means that this system is already at a complete dead-end. So the concrete threat to toughen up the current "soft" bonapartism makes it even more vitally urgent to apply a bold and appropriate programme which can open up a *practical and concrete* path to socialism. Sarkozy taking the field to stiffen and toughen up the regime is a signal, a warning of the need to formulate such a programme for a socialist alternative publicly and put it into action. It is a challenge, a veritable tocsin calling all Marxists to reply in one voice, despite and independently of whether they belong to separate organisations, overcoming their divisions and clarifying what this alternative means theoretically and practically.

The Left Front has virtually ceased to exist

Sadly, the Front de Gauche (Left Front) stands out for its complete absence from this particularly agitated political situation. What forces it had have already been dissipated by a succession of defeats in recent (municipal and European) elections, just when violent political crises have shaken the supposedly-socialist Parti Socialiste (but also the bourgeois UMP), exposing their internal contradictions and driving forward their decomposition (or explosion). The Left Front's main components, the Parti de Gauche (Left Party) and Parti Communiste (Communist Party) are following different political trajectories corresponding to each one's specific character.

Representing a petty-bourgeois layer of a workers' aristocracy ensconced in local government and the trade union leaderships, the Communist Party is throwing itself into variously-

configured alliances, above all involving Hollande's disappointed elected representatives and officials. The aim of these parliamentary-style manoeuvres is to re-establish good old bourgeois democracy with "fair" class collaboration using the well-known political method of the popular front. And this at the very moment when the great majority of the bourgeoisie, in its insurmountable torments, has gone far beyond this stage, which is both outmoded and tailor-made to shore up its power. Now this reactionary orientation on the CP's part is dangerous because, outdated though it is, it can still mislead workers (as it did in the past) and channel their anger into an obvious setback. The CP may have willy-nilly had to abjure Stalin, but it would be a serious mistake to ignore that they have not got over their Stalinist conceptions.

The Left Party, meanwhile has been disappointed by its (predictably) poor election results and seems to have backed out of political life completely, just when politics have got agitated and offer a fertile field for determined intervention by an organisation of workers. The party needs some inspiration to lift it from the demoralisation its defeats have caused, but they seem to be intimidated by how harshly reality has treated their rather broadly-drawn and inconsistent policies, and they have retreated into fantasy. Instead of a political programme, they have put forward a propagandist project for a Sixth Republic. But this demand has turned up all on its own, lacking both a head and a tail and completely detached from the concrete reality of struggles, about as appropriate in time and place as an ashtray on a motorcycle.

This demand is quite unexpected because it is on its own and, as it were, asexual. Nevertheless, at first sight it seems to be opposed both to Hollande's bastardised Fifth Republic and Sarkozy's project of consolidating this regime by reinforcing and accentuating its bonapartism. But if you look past the sentiments which animate it to what it concretely means as a

demand, it turns out that this opposition is an illusory appearance, a mirage, and it does not really conflict with them at all. This Sixth Republic is not solidly located in a concrete programme for changing the whole of society; indeed, Melancon scrupulously avoids any attempt to describe such a republic, so the vacuous nature of the project inevitably exposes it as an attempt to re-establish the old Fourth Republic. No amount of goodwill can change what this slogan ineluctably means. If it remains as it stands, this policy is condemned to rapid failure in this time of ever-intensifying class struggle.

(One cannot here pass over in silence Jean-Luc Melancon's recent book: *L'Ere du Peuple* [The Age of the People] which marks a new stage in his theoretical and political regression. This is exposed by his explicit shift from being a declared representative of working people to the retrograde and dangerous mythology that exalts the people in general. At the same time he achieves a parallel conversion to a sort of visceral environmentalism, that petit-bourgeois substitute for social struggles and lifebelt for capital. A fuller examination would exceed the scope of this article, but in view of its significance it will be undertaken shortly).

For all that, it would be a premature to reject the Left Party out of hand as a definitively lost cause where working people are concerned. Indeed, it is hard to believe that all its members and activists will blindly follow that sort of renunciation of the class struggle. It will take an internal struggle to decide the organisation's fate. But in the meantime this party, for now, like all the other far-left organisations, has shut itself out of the current political struggle in which the immediate stakes are capital's desire to reinforce its power using consistent bonapartism. The Left Party's general and summary denunciations of capitalism and/or its Fifth Republic are certainly not enough to make good the glaring shortcomings in their activity.

So an initial response to the question posed above, about whether Sarkozy's bonapartist project can succeed, is this: given the congenital and worsening maladies besetting the political organisations currently available to workers, as summarised above, they are hardly well-placed to prevent this big political shift, unless, of course, there is some unexpected outburst. So the answer depends on the outcome of the internal struggle currently underway between different political segments of the bourgeoisie distributed around the various bourgeois political parties (UMP, centrists, Front National, as well as the Socialist Party). They are in any case (with the temporary exception of the FN) ravaged by struggles between various factions precisely around problems relating to the profound need to transform the bourgeoisie's regime of political governance.

Bourgeois parties' deepening internal crises and conflicts

A relatively strong element in the UMP (to whom the various centrist circles can be added) is lining up behind so-called moderate leaders such as Alain Juppé or François Fillon, who express and represent a wing of the bourgeoisie. This element is still attached to the very relative tranquillity of bourgeois democracy based on class collaboration and is alarmed by the uncertainties of a open, brutal social confrontation and the unforeseeable consequences of a fascist or even just a clearly more authoritarian regime. But their weakness from the point of view of the bourgeoisie arises from the situation itself, which is more and more conflictual and intolerant of any such compromise, and which they are no more fit to deal with than the Socialist Party is.

This segment of the political bourgeoisie is on the one hand taken aback by capital's need to beef up its power (which means they are impotent in the face of fascism) and on the other disarmed when it comes to breaking the resistance of working people (in particular by smashing the unions). It is true their leaders try to outdo one another in demanding even

greater social destruction on their patrons' behalf than that announced and promised by Sarkozy, but this changes nothing fundamental in their position.

This is why, in order to remain in that body and/or advance their careers, more and more UMP leaders are rallying around Sarkozy, sometimes unexpectedly (Raffarin, De Villepin, Wauquiez, etc.). They are following or expressing the clear majority of the right both inside and outside the UMP who are massively opting for the tough solution to the crisis.

Analysis of the forces at work thus points to Sarkozy as the probable victor in a political competition already underway to provide weakening capitalism with a tougher and more stable government more able to bring it the support it needs.

But life is much richer and more varied than even the best analysis, based as it must be on the available data. Imponderables arising from the multiplicity of human activities could shift and change the picture. However, such activities themselves do not fall from the skies, since they are already rooted in objective facts. We can point to some of them, even if it is impossible to predict precisely what the future will bring.

For a start, even if the bourgeoisie would like for the moment to avoid and spare itself the extra expenses (economic, social and political) incidental to fascism, and would be content just to toughen up its bonapartist regime, it is possible that their calculations could be upset by various factors within even their own ranks which might help the Front National to come to power.

It is also possible that the break-up and decomposition underway in the Socialist Party will provide another candidate for the role of Bonaparte in the person of Manuel Valls, politically converted and personally completely up for this job.

And who can tell with any certainty what the outcome of the various judicial inquiries underway, all threatening Sarkozy, will be. There is not adequate space here to describe in detail how widespread all the corruption among politicians is and explain what it means, nor how lenient bourgeois courts can be where politicians are concerned. However, it is not entirely out of the question that Sarkozy will be found guilty. That would smooth the path for another UMP candidate, or maybe someone from the Front National. In any case, the victor would be the one who offers the strongest guarantees to the bourgeoisie that he or she will tie working people down hand and foot and destroy the gains they have made in order to rescue exhausted capitalism in its death agony.

For the working-class solution!

Finally, and for that very reason, it is also possible that the masses of working people, including some of their political organisations, will rise in salutary fashion and come on the stage to overturn these machinations and change the situation from top to bottom. That will be much more likely if the activists in these organisations get involved in a decisive and unified struggle for the resolute defence of working people against the bourgeoisie's many-sided attacks; that would really lay the basis for a rising of that sort, which would be concentrated, and increasingly confirmed, in the struggle between the intensified attacks and resistance on the part of trade unions. Hence the vital importance of working flat out to link these organisations to the *workers' unions* and the struggles they are involved in. In any case, such a link is a major requirement of Marxism, as well as a precise measure of all these organisations' real relationship to this revolutionary theory.

This theory clearly states that they have a duty, and one moreover, which the social context itself urgently requires, to offer a way out, a political programme for this resistance by the trade unions, and to organise to get it successfully on

the road. The main axis of this policy necessarily must be to bring the unions to a break with the deceptive conception and rotten practice which demeans them to the level of “social partners” with the bourgeoisie. And at the same time bring them back onto the path of struggle for the emancipation of the working class. In the absence of such an opening, embodied in everyday practice, those organisations which claim to stand for working people and the revolution will fail in their elementary duty and, like a blunt and rusty knife, end up at the rubbish dump. That is the decisive choice today.

Balazs Nagy, November 2014

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Euro-election shock by Balazs

Nagy

The surprise results of the recent European elections mean all political organisations have to re-evaluate the overall situation and their own policies.

Complete bankruptcy of bourgeois Europe

Two highly revealing and significant facts stand out about these elections, as a whole and in each individual country. First, and certainly foremost, is the particularly high level of abstentions (approaching 60% in France!), concentrated, moreover, in conurbations where workers and working people live. Abstentions were clearly higher, it needs to be said, in the countries of Eastern Europe (more than 70% in the great majority of them, over 80% in Slovakia and the Czech Republic). This clearly reflects their secondary position within European “unity”.

The second is the unprecedented and ubiquitous growth of fascist or semi-fascist oppositions, a far right which actually came first in certain countries (France, UK, Denmark).

Apart from anything else, the first and most obvious conclusion is that the vast majority of Europeans are turning their backs on and definitively rejecting that monstrous construct called “European union”. This central conclusion cannot be queried or challenged just by reference to the obviously broad range of views among those who abstained, or even voted for the far-right. Of course each of their various – and sadly all too often reactionary, retrograde or simply backward – motives is crucially significant in its own way. We should note, however, that many of those who voted for the far-right probably did so in protest against that Europe, rather than out of support for fascist ideology. Be

that as it may, these results express an irrevocable verdict on the part of Europeans as a whole: They are absolutely opposed to the bourgeoisie's pseudo-Europe, which they massively reject and will not tolerate.

Bourgeois leaders' vicious and criminal intransigence

Late on 25 May, French TV channels ran the election results and what the various political party representatives had to say about them. The evening's viewing provided a good opportunity to assess the immediate reactions of a whole range of the country's political parties, from the conservative or social-democratic official spokespeople for the Euro-homunculus right through to the opposition, by way of the leaders of Front de Gauche (Left Front) and Front National (National Front) and everything in between. What they said made it blindingly obvious that literally not a single one of the representatives of this bankers' Europe has understood what voters are trying to tell them, clear as that message has been. Not a single one of the social democratic leaders or their traditional bourgeois partner/opponents, nor the various subordinate currents which gravitate around them, had grasped what this means. That, of course, only surprised those incorrigibly naïve people who still take them seriously.

The main leader of the reactionary brain-dead in the Union pour un mouvement populaire (UMP) is [Jean-François Copé](#). All they could offer was the consolation that they had gained ground at the expense of Hollande's Parti socialiste (PS). Their noisy self-satisfaction, however, was tempered by regret at being overtaken by the National Front. They sadly resigned themselves to the fact that the rusty European hulk had just gone under, but had little to offer when it came to explaining why. Not that they even tried. Copé simply blamed Hollande's policies for this setback, obviously without realising that they are both in the same rather fragile European boat. Under these conditions, how could they have seen that the reason their European cockleshell foundered was design and

construction defects rather than something the captain had done wrong (Even if the latter's incompetence did accentuate the more basic flaws). As a result, they were all equally baffled by the huge advances the far right made right across the continent, and just saw it as a minor passing accident.

Alain Juppé speaks for another wing of the same party, allegedly more thoughtful and moderate, but even he could not rise above the same cheap parliamentarism. Being a more serious politician than his less sophisticated colleague Copé, he at least made the effort to sketch a political line to beat the National Front. Quickly adding the 10% of votes won by the bourgeois centre parties to the 20-21 % the UMP got, he triumphantly declared that the resulting 30% of votes cast easily beat the National Front's 25%. All you needed to do was combine the UMP and centre parties' votes, and a thorny political problem tuned into a simple parliamentary manoeuvre.

These recently-merged centre parties came in fourth place just in front of the ecologists, followed in 6th place by the Left Front. So they showed loud and overflowing satisfaction and were at pains to emphasise, in their enthusiastic congratulations, that their totally but critically pro-European policy is the way out of the current deadlock.

In fact all these good people were forced to acknowledge that current policy on Europe has suffered a resounding setback. What else could they do? They even bandied words like "failings", "convulsions" and "chaos". Oddly, but completely in character with their bourgeois political commitments, none of them could see that what causes it is this bourgeois Europe's destructive nature. They simply could not see that what people were rejecting was precisely this Europe.

In general, they were all self-critical, although almost all of them more or less blamed the government and Hollande personally, except for the Socialist Party – and Green – representatives. But let's not exaggerate. Any normal

person – if he or she were childishly naïve – would expect these politicians and journalists to apologise for carrying out the European policies that the voters massively rejected. Far from it! Every single one re-stated their commitment to those very same policies, then beat their breasts for not having done more to explain (?!) the setback their bourgeois Europe had suffered. But in fact this Europe has been so well explained, not only by pervasive and aggressive propaganda but also by an eloquently destructive practice, that voters rejected it precisely because they know exactly what it means.

Socialist Party leaders just as perverse

This sort of collective blindness on the part of politicians and journalists discussing the stinging rebuff their Europe had suffered is truly amazing. It presents a striking and repulsive image of the system's so-called "elite" which absolutely captures its decadent nature. What it foreshadows – should its miserable existence be prolonged – is an uncertain future full of looming threats, convulsions, pain and repeated shocks.

But the (socialist) government promptly also went in for denial of reality. TV viewers saw a clearly shocked Prime Minister Valls nevertheless insisting that the measures he has been taking in recent times are exactly what the voters wanted. To tell the truth, he had to blind himself to reality so absurdly just to justify staying in government. But so contemptuous a distortion of the truth was contradicted not only by the facts but also the prime minister's haggard and extremely upset appearance and his dazed and lugubrious tone, which clashed oddly with the artificial joviality he sometimes affects in his new role. He really looked like he was falling apart under the seismic impact.

We should point out immediately that the very next day Hollande stubbornly and unblushingly confirmed that they would

carry on with their criminal policies which, together with their "responsibility plan", he presented as if it was what the voters said they wanted! This shameless arrogance went much, much further than even Valls' insolent effrontery. The wily old politician's practised and cool cynicism in political lying made up for the panic his rattled minister showed. Just like all their pseudo-opponents, they both attributed the voters' general rejection of the bourgeoisie to the weakness and inadequacy of the propaganda explaining what they thought and what they were doing in relation to Europe. This brutal travesty of the truth foreshadows a swift deterioration in already difficult living conditions and even greater shocks in future.

Others make headway in the absence of working-class politics

The most telling feature of these elections has been the striking absence of genuine workers' parties. More exactly: none of the various political organisations which actually fight against the bourgeoisie's policy on Europe – and to their credit they undeniably do that – have managed to free themselves from major shortcomings which show their dependence on the bourgeoisie.

For one thing, they do not go beyond a very restricted level of simply criticising the bourgeoisie's policy on Europe. None of them has yet been able to open a concrete perspective of a working-class Europe radically opposed to the kind of Europe the bourgeoisie are concocting. For another, and bound up with this negative position, each of them has developed their criticisms over Europe firmly within the limitations of their own strictly national framework, except for a few sentimental rather than effective solidarity links and the occasional sprinkling of gatherings and resolutions left over from the past.

Altogether and in general, all these organisations are therefore captives of the given capitalist system and submit

to its pressure. Here, too, they are still largely influenced, by the enduring ideology of social democracy and Stalinism, whose national, not to say nationalist, political horizon has always been a bulwark against internationalist Marxism. The few scattered allusions to the Socialist United States of Europe we get from certain organisations of Trotskyist origin do not change anything in this general picture, since these chance references are completely detached from daily reality, hanging in mid-air and placed as far in the future as religion's Kingdom of Heaven.

Under these conditions, the rout inflicted upon the bourgeoisie's policy over Europe has led to not only a spectacular resurgence of fascist and semi-fascist organisations but also the emergence and proliferation of petit-bourgeois formations in general. (We leave aside, for the moment, analysing the considerable advances by UKIP in the UK and the People's Party in Denmark, both of which came first. They campaign openly for putting the bourgeoisie back in the driving seat and, in order to do so, they make abundant use of fascist ammunition against impoverished peoples and the migrants from their ranks and for the restoration of the national state).

As for the advances made by the fascists, it is significant that bourgeois commentators try to console themselves over the setback they have suffered with the thought that the fascists are unable to form a homogenous group in the European Parliament. Splitting hairs like this is pathetic in itself, since instead of explaining why the fascists are growing so strongly, they try to make it disappear by exploiting a problem that arises precisely from their growth. Nevertheless, it is true that there are differences, not to say considerable divergences between them. Maybe you cannot identify Nigel Farage's British UKIP with Golden Dawn in Greece modelled on Hitler's Nazi party, or even with the Front National in France. Nevertheless this UKIP, like the Danish People's

Party, draws its politics from the same fascist arsenal. Their frenzied nationalism and clear orientation towards re-establishing a strong national state together with aggression against migrant workers and peoples of the former colonies and dependent states puts them in the same camp of semi-fascists and impels them in that direction.

From a different point of view, the idea that in the past all fascist parties stuck together in unity was always a myth invented by the bourgeoisie – and Stalinists. There were well-known differences and divergences, even between Hitler and Mussolini, for example and even when they were fighting on the same side, which tended to iron them out. To say nothing of the distinctions between Franco's party and Salazar's and others, or the military dictatorships drawn into Hitler's gravitational field.

This crying absence of genuine workers' politics is also what has allowed a set of straightforwardly petit-bourgeois political parties to flourish like mushrooms after rain. They, too, are distinguished from each other in various ways, but in a quite different fashion from the fascist or semi-fascist organisations whose open and resolute support for capitalism unifies them on the extreme right. At the same time there is a significant difference between the majority of the petit-bourgeois organisations developing a critique of bourgeois politics from the left of the political chess-board and others who try to maintain a pseudo-independence. What they all have in common, for all their often quite broad political diversity, is the attempt to camouflage society's division into classes. They replace this with secondary and sometimes quite odd problems on the basis of a shared and savage hostility to the conception of class struggle and Marxism in general.

Whether these organisations are right or left, older and larger, like the ecologists, or recent and local like "Podemos" in Spain, we can for the moment postpone their

examination, necessary as it may be. On the other hand, there are, in France at least, organisations which claim to speak on behalf of working people about which it has become essential to reflect seriously.

Where do Left Front and its European partners stand?

The Left Front coalition, which took off big time in a left-radical way during the presidential elections and since, has quite rightly raised many hopes. It created confidence that a big, genuine workers' party could replace the old, compromised social-democratic and Stalinist parties mired in class-collaboration. Consequently it also embodied the concrete possibility of the re-birth and development of the new, big revolutionary party the situation requires. And that is why, despite the inevitable and tenacious residues of its origins which blemish its activities and retard its development, it was necessary to encourage and support this initiative. It marked and expressed the possibility of a renewal of the revolutionary movement in the face of the opportunist decadence of the traditional workers' parties and also the sterile blind alley in which various organisations with a more and more blurred reference to Trotskyism find themselves. The fact that more or less identical movements came about and developed in Greece (Syriza) and Germany (Die Linke) indicated that the conditions for their existence were not only present in Europe but had also matured.

However, while supporting the Left Front, we have had to intensify our criticisms around the negative character of its political line, i.e. its reduction to a simple critique of current policy and striking lack of a workers' programme for fighting the bourgeoisie. After the municipal elections, our journal *Lutte des Classes* (no 22) wrote that in the absence of such a programme "the Left Front is condemned to mark time while the National Front has made considerable progress, including among discontented workers." (English translation printed in *Workers' International Journal* no 5, June 2014). A

month later, just before the European elections, we anticipated in the same journal (no 24) that "Perhaps a pathetic result at the ballot box will shake these organisations' centrist outlook and unleash a movement for their renewal. It is a hope to cling to". (English translation printed in *Workers' International Journal* no 5, June 2014).

Indeed, the Left Front's disastrous election results fully confirmed these fears and our criticisms. In view not just of the much better results they had got in the presidential elections but also the much worse current situation, their miserable 6.3% of the vote represents an obvious decline. This real collapse exposes a disparity, not to say a contradiction, between the Left Front's programme on the one hand and the steadily worsening situation working people face on the other. But sadly, the initial reactions to this resounding defeat are worse than disappointing, expressing a level of astonishment at the meagre results matched only by an inability to comprehend them.

The morning after the elections, J.-L. Mélançon presented his party cadres and the media with the plaintive and tearful commentary of a beaten chief. He more or less repeated what he had said on TV the previous night (mentioned above). He was so grief-stricken that he could hardly hold back the tears and he drew his comments to a rapid close to avoid breaking out in sobs.

This physically awkward appearance itself revealed a man moaning on at his wits' end rather than a fighter reflecting on the lessons of a temporary defeat. Indeed, the lamentable way he presented his interpretation of the results completely matched the whining and recriminatory content of his remarks. Faced with the cresting progress of the National Front, he lost any sense of proportion and got bitterly distressed about this "end of civilisation" (?), just as over the top as a few days earlier when he had shown boundless confidence that the Left Front would amaze everyone with how well it would do.

(Sadly, the phenomenon this exaggerated and one-sided judgement failed to address was the very high level of abstentions.)

He said absolutely nothing about the possibility that his own organisation's political line might be mistaken – any such idea seemed to be outlandish, not to say sacrilegious – so all that remained was for him to try to lay the blame on the situation and/or working people. Comrade Melançon avoided saying it outright, but at the end of his breast-beating he couldn't stop himself from appealing to working people to take heart again and see where their real interests lay, which was a barely-disguised way of making them responsible for the setback.

Syriza in Greece, with visibly the same politics, did manage to come out clearly on top in the elections with 26.6% of the votes, but that was solely because the situation there is different and more favourable. The bankruptcy of Pasok, the social-democratic party, already happened earlier. Together with the servile way the bourgeois New Democracy party fell into line behind Brussels and its Troika, this opened the door wide for Syriza, and this was extended even further by the openly and repellently Hitlero-fascist politics of Golden Dawn. However, these more advantageous conditions should not make us forget that the conservatives came hard on Syriza's heels with 23.1% of the votes, while here, too, abstentions amounted to more than 40% of the electorate. In Germany die Linke also saw their share of the vote drop to 6.5%, more or less the same as Left Front, given that quite a number of voters could see no difference between this formation and the SPD (Social-Democratic Party of Germany) in "opposition".

As for Tsipras (Syriza) standing against Barroso in the election of the new President of the European Commission, this was just opportunist grandstanding. By doing this, these parties justified and legitimated this instrument of bourgeois dictatorship for grinding the working people of Europe under

the iron heel of its policies. Tsipras' political line, with a tinge of anti-German feeling (such is his nationalist resentment at the supremacy of German capital within the bourgeoisie's arrangements) clearly express the content of this opportunism. What it actually indicates is that he thought – and still thinks – that he can use the same rotten and anti-democratic organs ... for policies in favour of working people. This involves bourgeois policies without austerity, a big investment programme, a New Deal, he says credulously. So it's no surprise that now, instead of Barroso, he is backing Juncker from Luxembourg, the close and fervent friend of the big bankers, the initiator and boss of the hated Troika! There's only one way to describe this kind of clowning: going backwards.

Responsibility of the traditional far left

The general decline in these promising formations (with the exception of Syriza in Greece where it is prospering due to various objective factors) is completely mirrored by the spectacular advances the far right is making. Now such symmetry is not somehow caused by the balance of nature; the pitiful retreat by the former has directly conditioned the considerable progress the latter have made. But where is the so-called Marxist far left?

If one looks in France, for example – and also at a European level – , for reasons why it has not been possible to re-discover and develop a genuine workers' programme, there is no doubt that a significant share of the responsibility rests with the three biggest organisations which have come out of Trotskyism and profess that tradition. Without of course pretending to be able to describe them completely here, some general comments are required in relation to this responsibility.

First and foremost, for all the differences of outlook between the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA of Alain Krivine and

Olivier Besancenot), Lutte Ouvriere (LO, Workers Fight, formerly of Arlette Laguiller) and the Lambertist Parti des Travailleurs (Workers Party), differences due mainly to their respective histories, all these organisations have taken a negative attitude towards the Left Front. They have regarded this newcomer with a lot of distrust and not a little jealousy: after all, they come from the suspect milieu of social democracy and Stalinism and, what's much worse, trespassed on private hunting preserves.

From the outset they carefully avoid getting "compromised" with the Communist Party and Melançon's new party in the Left Front, which they treated with hostile suspicion. Moreover, they unanimously rejected the slightest sustained cooperation in struggle, a united front, indeed, and even any electoral alliance with these plague-carriers who had come to disturb their established daily routine. In fact, after the last big battle of clarification in Trotskyist ranks in 1952-1953, they settled down comfortably into their special role of licensed public revolutionary, a role they practice according to an arcane ritual they call Marxism. In fact it was and remains a profanation of the Marxist method, opposed to it in every way and which, to put it briefly, consists in trying to separate and fix, restrict and freeze the conditions of struggle, in particular the activity and circumference of the revolutionary organisation.

How can you expect these organisations to apply the policy of the united front or join in this Left Front coalition or at least form an electoral alliance with it, when they have been virtually incapable of establishing such an alliance between themselves for the last 60 (!) years.

Since the 1952-1953 split, the ditch separating them has just got bigger and bigger and each on its own side has settled into the split in the Fourth International as an eternal destiny in which each one has its own special corner. They have demonstrated their complete incapacity to sort out

rebuilding the Fourth International, considering the two other organisations to be enemies definitively and totally lost to that process of rebuilding. In the absence of any ability to resolve or even confront the problem at the base of the break (i.e. the problem of re-building), the split intensified further and dramatically the original cause of the separation, that is, Pabloite revisionism, systematising it into generalised opportunism via Mandel's "neo-capitalism" and finally culminating in the furtive abandonment of Marxism. But this fatalistic mutual acceptance of the break, on the other hand, also reinforced the sectarian isolation of the anti-Pabloite critics, fixed their sterile enclosure in the ivory towers of their verities singularly lacking in any perspective that offered a solution.

Where did this monumental historical deficiency arise from, a deficiency whose effects have gone on for decades and transformed what started off as a split into a veritable dislocation of the International, then into today's yawning abyss where, alongside false propositions, reaction too takes root?

Throughout their history, the French Trotskyist organisations (like the others) have been more or less intensely affected by the influence of Stalinist conceptions, often preponderant and always corrosive. Even while Trotsky was still alive, this defect was made considerably worse by the petit-bourgeois composition of the organisation, driven to the margins of the workers' movement by the Stalinists. After Trotsky's assassination, followed by the total collapse at the end of the war and then the split, whatever organisations emerged divided again, not between the real Marxists and the others, but along the lines of the various – but all equally mistaken – strategic versions which the Stalinists applied in the course of their history. The different Trotskyist organisations followed either Stalinism's right-wing orientation, or the ultra-leftism of the "Third Period". Very

often they mixed the opportunism of the one with the sectarianism of the other.

But as concerns the method of political struggle in general and building the party in particular, the former Pabloites currently in the NPA, the Lambertists in the parti des travailleurs and Lutte Ouvriere invariably shared the same outrageous sectarianism, firstly towards the other "Trotskyist" tendencies and then in relation to the workers' movement as a whole. They looked at the Left Front in the same way.

Trotsky once commented that the Stalinists regarded Rosa Luxemburg with a great deal of suspicion, unable to tell whether she was a friend or an enemy. Now the NPA, with its Pabloite origins, looks askance at the Left Front in exactly the same way (not, of course, that that makes the Left Front into any sort of Rosa Luxemburg). These hesitations have, nevertheless, already caused a number of splits in the NPA. First, a group led by Christian Picquet, then another one, split away and joined the Left Front. These breaks, however, have not led to the necessary re-awakening of the organisation as a whole. So the groups that split away have maintained their centrist character and remained unable to change anything at all in the Left Front., while the NPA has continued its unprincipled hesitation waltz.

As for Lutte Ouvrière, it has continued imperturbably on its solitary way, marked from its very origins by hostility to the proclamation of the Fourth International and by its nationalist seclusion. It persists in its isolation with an inveterate sectarianism in which both their behaviour and the arguments they use look strangely similar to the ultra-left politics of "Third Period" Stalinism. True to form, this organisation gleefully reported the Left Front's latest electoral setback as if this justified its hostility to the Front.

One can describe Lutte Ouvrière's sectarianism as intrinsic. That of the Lambertist organisation, on the other hand, is, one might say, "tempered" by its special and occasional opportunism (in contrast to the more generalised opportunism of the NPA). The Lambertist organisation is sectarian in relation to the Front de Gauche and the CFDT trade union and even the CGT, but flatly opportunist in relation to the Force Ouvrière trade union, which has been its privileged partner since that union came into being. Apart from its opportunism towards social democracy, which it likes to identify with the working class, the Lambertist organisation's Achilles' heel is its inclination to substitute the struggle for national sovereignty for the international class struggle. And so in 2013 the congress of their "International" suddenly decide to concentrate the international mobilisation of its militants in the "defence" of Algeria against some imaginary threat of US military intervention! Obviously this "threat" never materialised, but the whole thing worked marvellously to distract the attention of activists from, for example, the problems of Europe.

So, with either an occasional or an intrinsic sectarian conception (which they claim to be Marxist) in relation to every other organisation such as the Left Front, they too took their own lonely, isolated stand in the recent European elections. Obviously (what is more) they lacked a clear working-class policy on Europe dealing with concrete and current problems. And of course they each in their own corner garnered about 1% of the vote – actually worse than usual, while the Left Front just got weaker.

Such sectarian outlooks, and the concomitant opportunism, are the natural products of an aristocratic conception of the party (their party!), separated from the workers' movement as a whole in a water-tight compartment, whose building is reduced to the rigorous and individual selection of the few elect into a separate elite. This sect conception, detached

and distant from the masses, is only applicable at most to clandestine conditions, but it is disastrous in open political struggle. Right through modern history, it has been opposed to Marxism and its application. Since the Communist Manifesto, Marxism has clearly established, against any sectarian or elitist point of view, that it is the workers' movement as a whole, all the changes it undergoes and the methods it uses, that constitute not just the terrain but the very skeleton of the revolutionary party itself.

The Manifesto unequivocally emphasised: "The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole". Nor do they "set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement". And in conclusion: "the communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing political and social order of things". Political – and theoretical – struggle unfolds within this framework as a necessary means of clarification, not as some sort of selection criterion.

Now isolated and besieged as it was, and giving way to the pressure of capital, Stalinism in the USSR perverted Marxism, including Lenin's heritage. They adapted it to the requirements of staying in power: conciliatory towards capital and violently opposed to the workers' movement as a whole. Once Trotsky was lost, his heirs in turn succumbed to this de-natured and corrupt "Marxism".

Concretely each and every one of these "Trotskyist" formations think that in and through itself the revolutionary party already exists, and building it is simply a matter of linear and progressive growth through recruiting individuals one after another. With strictly individual recruitment of this sort – which is normal in a secret society but absolutely alien to Marxism – they can denounce all other organisations, lumping their members together with their

leaderships.

These organisations are condemned to decline, although this is masked and retarded by their prolonged vegetation, punctuated by successive electoral setbacks. It is a fact which should stir their members to study past and recent experiences very carefully and draw the necessary conclusions, especially since the long decades of defeats and setbacks the international workers' movement has suffered, made particularly worse by the liquidation of the USSR and the changes in the composition of the working class, have profoundly altered the habitually-known conditions for resuming the struggle.

The essential feature in these negative changes has been the general repudiation of Marxism and socialism at the same time as the Soviet Union collapsed and was disowned. Since this workers' state was associated with the Stalinist bureaucratic regime, Marxism in turn was identified with the falsification of it at the hands of the same bureaucracy. The whole thing was greatly facilitated by the evolution and changing composition of the working class which was happening at the same time and the growth of petit-bourgeois intermediary layers. The results were not long in coming: On the one hand a shrinkage and ossification of living Marxism reduced to the level of dogma in ancient texts; on the other, a more and more flagrant contradiction between the growing size of the mass movements and their theoretical poverty, not to say the complete absence of any theory. Under these conditions, the masses' apprenticeship in struggle needs more explanations and time, and activists' development requires much more patience.

Ramblings based on impressions replacing theory

Flagrant impotence, therefore, is sadly what characterises all the organisations on the far left who oppose bourgeois politics and its Europe. Their impotence in a situation which should actually favour their development means we must undertake a serious critique of the theoretical arsenal

underlying the political dead-end they are in.

We have already glanced at the way the organisations which arose out of the dislocation and often repudiation of the Fourth International share responsibility for the Left Front's stagnation. They have been through a long death-agony and floundered, inflicting their own death-blow by repudiating or diluting the Marxism that alone could provide a theoretical, either by simply and clearly dropping it (NPA), or by letting it ossify into a collection of classical assertions ("Lutte Ouvrière" and the Lambertists).

Consequently there has been no pressure on the Left Front on sharpen up its theoretical armaments by accepting and developing creative Marxism, so that it remains captive to profoundly mistaken theoretical considerations which it peddles, like birth-marks inherited from its social-democratic and Stalinist parentage and which tie it to the existing social and political order. A recent work by the Left Party's leading economist, Jacques Généreux, provides a useful opportunity to evaluate concretely the dominant theoretical conceptions in the Left Front. *Jacques Généreux explique l'économie à tout le monde (Jacques Généreux Explains Economics for All)* is a 331-page book published quite recently (May 2014) by Seuil. It sums up rather well the theoretical nonsense the Left Front has strayed into, but which affects all organisations on the far left to one degree or another.

This economic inspirer of the Left Front thinks that the post-war period known as the "thirty glorious years" of the economy "... which persisted until the 70s, had very little to do with capitalism in the strict sense." (p.41), because "... the big industrial countries developed in a new system in which the holders of capital no longer had complete freedom or the powers which that confers". (p.42) It is important to note that as far as he is concerned, this "new system" is the goal for which we must strive.

To bolster this bold and surprising conclusion he lists some of the rules he claims limited the omnipotence of capital, although he carefully avoids putting a name to this "new system" which supposedly replaced capitalism. This prudent approach enables him later to note that during the 1980s capitalism returned in strength, simply thanks to various counter measures.

We should not waste too much time on this – to put it mildly – extremely cavalier way of dealing with the change of a whole mode of production, which in principle (and in historical practice) can only be the outcome of significant social factors accompanied by political overturns. We merely need to underline that this crude and simplistic view exposes total ignorance, not just of the real reason for the "thirty glorious years", but also of the resounding social struggles that took place during those years. In fact it is fairly easy to understand the historical movement of powerful social and political forces whose interaction engendered these so-called "thirty glorious years".

Capitalism entered the war in order to suppress its insurmountable and prolonged economic political crisis which broke out in 1929. It came out of the war in 1944-1945 even weaker and more exhausted than at the beginning. In the course of the war the relationship of forces between it and the world working class had shifted strongly in favour of the latter. From the beginning of 1943, the proletarian revolution was spreading in several countries in Europe and Asia, stimulated by the Soviet Union's Red Army's powerful offensive.

The bourgeois political regimes which had been vassals of fascism or had fallen victim to it collapsed one after the other. The revolution was on the march – but enemies were at work within its own ranks. Above all, it was the active collaboration of the leaderships of the workers' movement, the Stalinist parties especially and in particular, which saved the capitalist system from total collapse, a powerful rescue

operation prepared and orchestrated by the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union as a resolute ally of the "democratic" bourgeoisie.

Now if this new-style Holy Alliance actually did strangle the revolution, which failed everywhere (except in Yugoslavia and China, where it was brought to an abrupt halt) it nevertheless left a deep impression on the bourgeois regimes which re-emerged after the war. In other words, the bourgeoisie's faithful servants who had sold the revolution for a mess of pottage had to be rewarded. Within a relationship of forces clearly in favour of the proletariat, this mess of pottage had to be paid for.

Such was the particular class configuration which formed the basis for the "thirty glorious years", whose backcloth was the open and direct going-over of the Stalinist bureaucracy and its agents as a whole to the active counter-revolution. To be sure, they did not perform this immense service for free and without a recompense that let them justify and retain their influence. The extent of the concessions the bourgeoisie granted in turn reflected the degree of danger that menaced capitalism. It also demonstrated the bourgeoisie's great fear, since it went very far into these compromises in its concern to preserve the system, even so far as to grant concessions which altered its very appearance, and to adjust the form of its rule. It changed its face without altering its character. The capitalist wolf mutated into a loving grandmother who carefully retained her "big teeth".

A lot of people were fooled by this ability of the bourgeoisie to manoeuvre in order to stay in power. The whole of what they call the "Left" fell for it. The chief ideologue of the Left Party, the economist Jacques G n reux, expresses this fundamental and general error like this: "Between 1945 and 1975, many industrial countries were no longer within a real capitalist economy. What rescued the industrialised countries from the damage caused by capitalism ... is precisely they fact

that they got out of the capitalist system as Marx described it. In place of this capitalism ... they substituted a mixed and highly-regulated economy in which salaried managers and civil servants had more power than the capitalists." (p.43).

Here, Jacques Généreux says openly what people on the "Left" and even many on the far left thought more quietly without daring to put it so crudely. This way of looking at things rests entirely on the firm conviction that this whole lucky mutation came from the bourgeoisie itself which, acting freely and of its own accord, decided to make capitalism more bearable out of its infinite wisdom and magnanimity.

The class struggle, indeed any sort of struggle at all, is totally conjured away in this imaginary society ruled by understanding and discernment. The theoretical crutch upon which this conception rests presents itself as an obviously wrong interpretation of Marxism, which Généreux reduces to a few formulae, missing out the essential part. This is indicated already by the simple fact that throughout the whole 331 page book the word "class" (to say nothing of "class struggle") does not even appear!

The basis for this misunderstanding and, more concretely, the idyllic transformation of capitalism into a regulated and more humane (but undefined) system is, therefore, an obvious ignorance of capitalism itself. To be more exact, it is a total misunderstanding (or deliberate omission) of its nature and its historic evolution, as well as of their inner driving forces and content. Even more concretely, it is capitalism moving on from its classic, ascendant phase to its decline, death-agony and the manifold determinations involved which are missing in this fixed, immobile, capitalism. It is a well-known procedure frequently used by pseudo-Marxists who refer to Marx but deliberately leave out how Lenin and Trotsky developed his theory. This is how they strip Marxism precisely of its spirit as an analysis of living reality and petrify it into ancient immutable texts.

This is the method Jacques Généreux uses too when, claiming to present Marx's conception, he carefully excises Lenin's contribution. This surgical operation allows him to present the way capitalism was rescued from complete collapse by making concessions (1945-75) into proof that it had metamorphosed into a higher social order. Alchemists of old had a similar blind confidence in the miraculous ability of base lead to mutate into noble glittering gold. But in the end science taught us that that kind of transubstantiation exists in religious beliefs, but not among the natural elements, nor in social reality.

This kind of superstitious speculation abounds in Jacques Généreux's book when it comes to the desirability and possibility of a repeating the "thirty glorious years" in today's base society. They replace any serious reflection of the programme which flows from the situation itself, since they are so pervasive that they simply push aside the harsh realities of everyday life. But essentially this unbridled speculation masks and hides above all the reality of the concrete and particular historical conditions of the "thirty glorious years".

The first condition for the really significant concessions made in those post-war years was the actual strength of the working class in the industrial countries, where revolutionary movements (and a series of revolutions) placed the capitalist order in mortal danger. But also the imperilled bourgeoisie, weakened as it was, had to be able to offer concessions, even on a temporary and cavalier basis, by digging even deeper into its own shrinking reserves. Finally, it also required that at the head of the revolutionary working class there should be degenerated and corrupt leaderships prepared to sell the revolution out cheaply in exchange for these concessions, while still able to produce arguments to justify imposing this abuse of authority.

Not a single one of these conditions is fulfilled today, or to

be more precise, that are radically changed. The powerful and vigorous working class of then has suffered crucial successive defeats, and the endless retreats have merged into one general rout. Moreover, it has seen its forces drastically diminished, its make-up radically changed and its movement now only a shadow of what it was at the end of the war. Moreover, not only has it become impossible for the bourgeoisie to offer anything whatsoever to working people, its decline has grown even worse and impels it to violently and dictatorially destroy all past reforms and concessions, something it finds easier because of the weakening of the workers' movement. We should add that, following their open and brutal collaboration, the bureaucratic leaderships of the workers' movement have lost their former decisive position in the workers' movement. The historic defeat of Stalinism and social democracy's open avowed and cynical role as a direct pillar of the bourgeoisie have practically put an end to their organisational grip on the working class. (Even if the influence of their conceptions is still rife and serves to muddle the political consciousness of the majority of left and far-left activists.)

And this is how it goes with the Left Front and Left Party, one of whose most significant leaders, Génèreux, in his book not only heaps praises on the class collaboration of the "thirty glorious years" but advocates a return to these policies as the right and proper programme with which to oppose the devastation caused by austerity. But we have just seen that the very specific social and political conditions, historically determined by particular circumstances, which combined to give birth to this special form of class collaboration, have disappeared. More concretely, the quite exceptional relationship of class forces at the time, with a working class on the offensive against a bourgeoisie forced onto the defensive and retreat, has today turned into its opposite.

It is the bourgeoisie which has taken the initiative and developed a general offensive against a working class weakened and disarmed, destroying their previous gains. Trying to force the bourgeoisie to make significant concessions when it is developing an offensive against a working class in disorganised retreat, quite apart from betraying a petit-bourgeois expectation of alms from the master, is in any case a terrible nonsense which confuses two entirely different situations.

In concrete daily politics, this muddle inevitably appears as a serious mistake, as Généreux's book as a whole illustrates. The endless rambling about the possible and desirable changes in capitalism prevent him from even mentioning the current and real bourgeois offensive against all the gains that working people have made. And so fundamental problems of the day, such as the growth in unemployment, the unbearably high levels of debt, the rapid fall in wages in the face of overwhelming price rises, and the continuous dismantling of rights and benefits, to mention only a few, are completely missing from this book. So it's no surprise that one looks in vain for any sort of programme that could respond to these problems which workers face every day. All you can hope for is that something (the Holy Ghost, perhaps?) will touch the bourgeoisie and inspire it to transform its offensive against the working class into a new version of the "thirty glorious years".

It seems little short of incredible that activists endowed with the capacity to reflect, the will to fight and solid experience should fall for such twaddle. But in the Left Front and certain other far-left organisations, it is nonsense of this kind that guides and orientates their struggles. There is, therefore, an absolute contradiction between their sincere commitment to changing the world and the skimpy, retrograde conceptions which tie them to this world. That is why the main task is to overcome this contradiction by adopting a conception and policies in total harmony with this real

determination to change the world.

For a radical theoretical and political turn by the far left

Theoretical and political independence in relation to capitalism, its system and its bourgeois class, is the indispensable condition for establishing harmony between, on the one hand, sincere and ambitious aspirations and, on the other, limited objectives of the struggle. Only that sort of independence allows a concrete perspective to be defined which actually goes beyond the system. All past and recent history proves that, without independence of that kind, even the firmest determination to change capitalism is reduced to patching it up, and that in principle this can only work in the short term.

But this theoretical and political independence cannot be the fruit of disembodied speculation or mental play. It is rooted in the working class, whose existence and fate are tied to those of capital, but opposed to them in a profoundly contradictory way. Hence the indissoluble organic link between theoretical and political independence vis-à-vis capital and the struggle of the working class. Now, only Marxism expresses this cohesion and thus puts into words the necessary class independence in thought and action. *All* other theories are tied to this system or inevitably fall back into its well-worn tracks. That is why this theory alone clearly says that, instead of trying to patch up capital's dilapidated and unhinged system, the central and immediate task is to overthrow it and move on to socialism. In conclusion, the historic task of the moment is reduced to and concentrated in a vigorous return to Marxism and its reaffirmation as the theory and guiding thread of the political activity of all organisations fighting against the grip of capital.

However, as the election results have repeatedly and relentlessly confirmed, the prospects of the Left Front and die Linke in Germany have been broadly compromised. These two

coalitions, in thrall to their reformist theories, are seriously threatened with disappearing or shrivelling into political insignificance. (Syriza in Greece still has the benefit of a respite due to the specific situation in that country.)

Sadly, the Left Front obviously lacks the internal resources which could enable it on its own to make the veritable leap that is necessary if it is to turn to Marxism. From now on it is useless and in fact damaging to hang around waiting for any such "cultural revolution" on its part. Instead of that kind of turn, it is attempting to avoid the more and more obvious fate that awaits it with a confused and many-hued mixture of inconsistent scraps and reformist recipes. Its recent political evolution proves this.

Within the structure of the Left Front, the weight of those formations which, formally at least, linked it to Marxism and the workers' movement has noticeably diminished and that of those which came from other horizons grown (obviously one is not speaking here of the Communist Party, which long ago silently dropped even the caricature of Marxism to which it used to lay claim). For example there were groups which broke away from the NPA (Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste – New Anti-capitalist Party) like that led by Christian Picquet and others, which have lost their role and significance in this coalition, whereas the frankly petit-bourgeois group "Ensemble" ("Together") of Clémentine Autain, a loose, obscure and indeterminate assemblage, is coming to the fore. This surely represents a political slide to the right on the part of the Front, despite the fact that the groups coming from the NPA have shown not the slightest aptitude to inspire anyone with Marxism. Faithful to their Pabloite heritage, they have continued their old politics of adaptation, this time not to triumphant Stalinism but the reformism pervasive in the Left Front. Nevertheless, their loss of influence has loosened even further the Left Front's already tenuous links with Marxist

traditions.

Finally, like a drowning man clutching at a straw, the Left Front has clung even closer to the “enrichment” offered by the environmentalists and their doctrine. But environmentalism (and the politics of the “Greens” as a whole) is another way – different from the well-known, traditional, reformism – of asserting that it is possible to cure capitalist society, i.e. to maintain it, through ecological rather than socialist policies and measures. In this it is (if possible) more reactionary than traditional reformism: politically further to the right and intellectually inferior, since it squarely abandons the concrete social terrain to situate its struggle elsewhere, in man’s (general!) relationship with nature – much to the delight of the capitalists! In line with this evasion, it turns its back on the workers’ movement, in particular the trade unions, to place itself in the heart of the urban petit-bourgeoisie. And then, since unlike traditional reformism, it has been and remains utterly incapable of producing a perspective, a general theoretical vision, it does not even have a coherent political programme and makes do with negative criticisms and repeating a few nostrums.

Now the Left Front (or concretely its political motor force, the Left Party) has turned even more closely towards these reactionary ersatz politics, decorating its wobbly political line with a few environmentalist trimmings. This highly-embroidered adventure it has baptised “eco-socialism”, which strictly speaking is entirely devoid of meaning. What it does actually mean, very clearly, is that the Left Party (the Left Front), instead of drawing closer to Marxism, is moving even further away. Two very important political conclusions flow from this.

The first is that, despite everything, the Left Front’s retreat and its slide to the right should not serve as an alibi for abandoning it or turning one’s back on it. Despite

all its growing imperfections, its petit-bourgeois and centrist character, it remains the only political formation which has not renounced its opposition to the policy of the bourgeoisie. It thus still has within it the real possibility of developing and improving that fight and the struggle for Marxism. It is the natural crucible par excellence for these battles.

The second conclusion is precisely the lesson that the initiative for a renewal of Marxism can only come from outside the Left Front, in particular those organisations linked to Marxism and the working class movement.

However, we have seen that the three political formations which claim to be Marxist are incapable, as organisations, of providing an impulse of that sort. Their Marxism, if they still profess it, is nothing but a collection of bookish and formal references to old texts, detached from current reality. The politics they carry out alongside these references flagrantly contradicts them. From that point of view their policy on Europe and their attitude to other anti-bourgeois organisations are equally eloquent.

Under these conditions, the impulse can only come from an organisation (or organisations?) which, like Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International, openly and publicly fight for the renewal of Marxism and for socialism cleansed of Stalinist dross. It goes without saying that such a struggle ought to rally and unite all those who, though they may be in separate organisations, wish to fight openly for genuine Marxism and revived socialism.

By *Balazs Nagy*, July 2014

Quelques problèmes de la IVE Internationale, – Et les tâches de sa reconstruction

Balazs Nagy 13.08.2014

Pour aborder ce sujet qui a de multiples facettes et couvre des domaines extrêmement variés, ainsi que pour en relever les points essentiels, il faut revenir bien arrière et examiner certains problèmes décisifs de l'histoire du mouvement communiste. Sans dresser un bilan rigoureux et objectif de l'activité historique de la IVE Internationale, même s'il ne prétend pas à la totalité, il est impossible d'établir correctement ses problèmes et de définir les tâches de sa reconstruction.

Sans pouvoir entrer ici dans les détails du processus de la formation des partis communistes pendant et au lendemain de la 1ère guerre mondiale, on pourrait – et on devrait – constater qu'à part le parti bolchevik, aucun

de ces nouveaux partis ne correspondait à l'image d'un véritable parti communiste marxiste exigé par la situation révolutionnaire générale. Même le parti bolchevik, malgré sa rupture avec les mencheviks a dû passer par une crise profonde à son réarmement théorique et politique par l'appropriation des Thèses d'avril de Lénine afin de pouvoir accéder à la direction de la révolution.

En effet, l'histoire nous enseigne que tous les partis révolutionnaires doivent traverser une période plus ou moins longue semée de crises pour arriver à la maturité marxiste nécessaire à l'accomplissement de ses tâches historiques. Toute la IIIe Internationale léniniste était un immense école-chantier pour la compréhension et l'assimilation de ces tâches par la transmission des expériences bolcheviques. Mais c'est

déjà tout au début de ce processus que la direction Zinoviev a dévié ce chemin, puis le stalinisme a complètement falsifié le développement en lui imprimant un contenu, une direction et des méthodes faux, puis réactionnaires. On pourrait dire que c'était, en quelque sorte, une revanche de la ligne opportuniste menchevique vaincue par les Thèses d'avril.

Il est à remarquer que, comme conséquence, déjà la lutte de l'Opposition contre Staline n'avait provoqué que relativement peu d'écho favorable à l'échelle internationale, et même une bonne partie de celui-ci s'est perdue dans l'impasse de l'opportunisme ou de l'ultra-gauchisme.

Toujours est-il que la lettre-rapport de Eleazar Solntsev à Trotsky, à l'automne 1928, a dépeint une situation chaotique d'une opposition faible et très bigarrée en Europe et aux USA. Cette lettre rapportait qu'il existe « indubitablement... un début de formation (le tout début, malheureusement) d'une aile gauche dans l'I.C. » dont le « processus (de développement) sera long, difficile et très douloureux ». Puis, il complétait cet avis par l'affirmation suivante : « Il est... prématuré d'espérer d'avoir dans un avenir proche une gauche unie » (une gauche dans l'I.C.). Ensuite, il désignait la cause de cette diversité : « Les multiples groupes auxquels nous avons donné notre étiquette sont entrés dans l'opposition par des voies si variées et pour des raisons si diverses que l'on peut s'attendre aux combinaisons et aux regroupements les plus inattendus. » Pour cette raison, il préconisait : « Il nous faut, avant toute unification, nous délimiter en traçant nos frontières. » (« Cahiers Léon Trotsky », no. 7/8)

Nous savons qu'effectivement, au début de son exil, Trotsky a commencé son activité par une délimitation rigoureuse. Au cours de ces premières années de délimitation et de regroupements, les forces de l'Opposition marxiste ont perdu beaucoup d'anciens cadres expérimentés (passés à droite ou à gauche du mouvement ouvrier) et son renforcement venait surtout de jeunes inexpérimentés. Toute cette grande sélection

s'est traduite, jointe à la fameuse « bolchévisation » de l'I.C. menée par Zinoviev, par la poussée de l'Opposition internationale à la périphérie de la classe ouvrière et de son mouvement et, incidemment, a détérioré sa composition sociale en faveur de la petite-bourgeoisie intellectuelle. Le triomphe du stalinisme accentuait encore plus cette évolution.

Trotsky était pleinement conscient de grandes faiblesses de l'Opposition internationale : de ses graves insuffisances de formation marxiste et de ses manques d'expériences, ainsi que de ses défaillances d'organisation. Le mouvement dans son ensemble était pratiquement dépourvu d'une continuité réellement communiste.

Encore au début de 1936, Trotsky écrivait que « ... même aujourd'hui, la IVe Internationale a déjà en URSS sa section la plus forte, la plus nombreuse et la mieux trempée. » (Œuvres, vol.8, p.89), alors que sévèrement décimée, ses membres étaient presque tous dans les prisons et les camps.

L'ensemble de la lutte de Trotsky s'est concentré ainsi sur une activité incessante de transmettre le bolchévisme et ses enseignements sous toutes ses formes aux jeunes, et parfois moins jeunes cadres et militants de la IVe Internationale naissante. Car il connaissait toutes les carences et le caractère politique immature de la majorité de ces jeunes. Le 25 mars 1935 en France, il notait dans son Journal : « je crois que le travail que je fais en ce moment... est le travail le plus important de ma vie, plus important que 1917, plus important que l'époque de la guerre civile, etc. » – Et plus loin, il ajoutait : « ce que je fais maintenant est dans le plein sens du mot « irremplaçable »...L'effondrement des deux Internationales a posé un problème qu'aucun des chefs de ces Internationales n'est le moins du monde apte à traiter... c'est une tâche qui n'a pas, hormis moi, d'homme capable de la remplir... » Puis, il évaluait le temps nécessaire pour accomplir cette tâche historique : « Il me faut encore au moins quelque cinq ans de travail ininterrompu pour assurer la

transmission de l'héritage. » (Trotsky . « Journal d'exil », Paris, Gallimard, 1960, p.74-75)

Nous savons qu'il avait justement ces cinq ans jusqu'à son assassinat, mais les événements ultérieurs ont démontré que s'il a pu transmettre l'héritage bolchevik, ses élèves-dirigeants ne l'ont compris que d'une manière très imparfaite et ne l'ont pas assimilé.

En rétrospectif, il est indéniable que le grand schisme de la IVe Internationale en 1952/53 a désigné un événement beaucoup plus significatif qu'une rupture franche et ouverte d'avec les révisionnistes, contenu dans l'orientation et la pratique de Pablo et consorts. En réalité, il a marqué un tournant historique, un point de démarcation à partir duquel la IVe Internationale est définitivement entrée dans la phase de sa rapide fragmentation et décomposition, sa désintégration en sectes dont un bon nombre ne s'en réclame même plus.

A la racine de cette dispersion et du déclin il y a l'incapacité des dirigeants anti-pablistes d'aller jusqu'au bout de leur critique, le caractère incomplet de cet acte. Elle s'est limitée – et c'était déjà un fait positif important ! – à la critique du révisionnisme pabliste tel qu'il a apparu, sans un examen profond des conditions qui, au cours de l'histoire de la IVe Internationale, ont rendu possible et favorisé ce révisionnisme. A tel point, que l'apparition brusque du pablisme a surpris tout le monde, y compris ses adversaires, alors que les conditions et les particularités de cette histoire ont, depuis longtemps, accompagné, fermenté et préparé toutes les déviations, pablisme compris.

Pourtant, c'est ce caractère partiel et inachevé de la critique qui a rendu possible le retour de l'américain SWP – suivi par plusieurs autres organisations – au giron de

l'Internationale pabliste, en bloquant ainsi la voie au processus de toute clarification. Nous savons que cette volte-face du SWP et des autres avec lui, signifiant leur refus d'engager la critique (sans parler d'une critique encore plus conséquente) était, en dernière analyse, la base et la raison profondes de la dégénérescence complète et de la quasi-disparition de ce SWP et des autres.

En revanche, le grand mérite historique des deux principales organisations adversaires du pablisme, devenues plus tard l'Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI) en France et le Socialist Labour League (SLL) en Grande-Bretagne, associées dans le Comité International de la IVe Internationale, réside non seulement dans le fait qu'elles ont donné une analyse marxiste du pablisme, rompant avec lui, mais aussi qu'elles ont entrepris en partie l'examen et la correction des conditions favorables à son développement.

C'est ainsi qu'elles sont arrivées à déterminer l'une des racines de l'apparition du pablisme dans le manque et l'insuffisance d'enracinement des organisations trotskystes dans la classe ouvrière. Ce défaut reflétait et exprimait une composition sociale défavorable, notamment petite-bourgeoise des organisations trotskystes, surtout en France. Il est certain que la prise en compte de cette carence, que Trotsky a dénoncée plusieurs fois, et les mesures prises pour y remédier, constituaient un immense pas en avant que nous devons non seulement reconnaître mais développer encore plus.

Mais les mesures pour assurer la composition ouvrière des organisations, et pour l'implantation dans la classe ainsi que dans le mouvement ouvrier, bien qu'elles soient essentielles pour l'Internationale et ses organisations, et nous sommes encore loin de les assurer, ne garantissent rien en elles-mêmes, car elles relèvent de l'organisation et de son fonctionnement, sans en définir le contenu. De telle façon que, même la solution de ces problèmes pourtant indispensables pour une organisation marxiste, pourrait – et peut en effet –

servir de buts variés y compris contraires aux intérêts de la classe ouvrière. Les organisations staliniennes de composition ouvrière en offrent des exemples multiples.

Il est donc nécessaire d'aller plus loin et de confronter le défaut politique fondamental qui était, d'après moi, à la source de toutes les insuffisances de l'activité de la IVE Internationale et formait la base de toutes les déviations qui ont surgi dans son histoire, telle que le pablisme mais aussi toutes les autres.

C'était l'incompréhension de ce qu'est la IVE Internationale, sa mission et de sa tâche et, partant, de sa nature. Pendant toute l'histoire de l'Opposition internationale, puis de la IVE Internationale, cette incompréhension était omniprésente et apparaissait clairement dans la différence, voire l'opposition entre la vue de Trotsky à ce sujet et quasiment de toutes les directions et cadres de l'Internationale.

Cette différence fondamentale et importante accompagnait toute l'histoire de l'Opposition et de la IVE Internationale et revenait à la surface très fréquemment. Pour présenter l'opinion de Trotsky, je ne le réfère qu'à deux de ses textes les plus significatifs. Le premier (38 pages) est « La guerre et la IVE Internationale » d'octobre 1934. (Remarquons, en passant, cette caractéristique de l'approche de Trotsky qui consistait à parler de la IVE Internationale – et non pas de l'Opposition -, bien avant la proclamation formelle de la IVE Internationale.)

Après avoir constaté que « Sans une révolution prolétarienne, une nouvelle guerre mondiale est inévitable » (Œuvres, vol.4, p.49) – un jugement unique par sa clairvoyance dans ces temps-là, – Trotsky définissait que « Ce fait même fait de l'attitude vis-à-vis de la guerre qui vient la *question clé* de la politique prolétarienne. » (Ibid. p.53. – souligné par moi – B.N.)

Il a clairement désigné par-là, sans la moindre équivoque, la tâche de l'Opposition : « *La transformation de la guerre impérialiste en guerre civile* constitue la tâche stratégique générale à laquelle devrait être subordonné l'ensemble du travail d'un parti prolétarien pendant la guerre. » (Ibid. p.75. – souligné dans l'original.)

Pour Trotsky l'objectif central était donc la révolution prolétarienne et sa préparation et cela, notons-le bien, indépendamment de la force limitée des rangs de l'Opposition (plus tard, de la IVe Internationale). C'est pour cette raison que dans le même texte, il disait : « Ce n'est pas un révolutionnaire, mais un parasite impuissant, qui capitulera

Demain devant le fascisme et la guerre, celui que peut passer sous silence la tâche de l'armement des ouvriers. » (Ibid. p.77.) – Il y développait donc largement les tâches de cet armement ! Puis, il affirmait : « Si le prolétariat se révèle impuissant à empêcher la guerre au moyen de la révolution – et elle est l'unique moyen d'empêcher la guerre -, les travailleurs, avec le peuple entier, devront *participer à l'armée et à la guerre.* » (Ibid. p.82. – souligné dans l'original.)

Et il terminait par ces mots : « Même si, au début d'une nouvelle guerre, les révolutionnaires authentiques devraient se retrouver en minorité infime, nous ne pouvons un seul instant douter que, cette fois, le passage des masses sur le chemin de la révolution se produirait plus rapidement, de façon plus décisive et plus acharnée, que pendant la première guerre impérialiste. Une nouvelle vague d'insurrections peut et doit vaincre dans tout le monde capitaliste. » (Ibid. p.85.)

Nous devons constater que l'ensemble de la guerre, et la révolution yougoslave en particulier – malgré sa direction stalinienne forcée par les circonstances – donnait une confirmation saisissante de cette stratégie, renforcée par les

révolutions éclatées en Grèce et en Italie, par exemple, canalisées et étouffées par les staliniens et d'autres.

Un autre texte de fond (de 51 pages) de mai 1940 analysait cette même tâche centrale encore plus concrètement. Rédigé pour la conférence internationale, dite « d'alarme » à New York, même son titre la formule très expressément : « Manifeste sur la guerre impérialiste et la révolution prolétarienne mondiale ». (Œuvres, vol. 24, p.27.) On y lit que « Notre politique (celle de la IVe Internationale) dans la guerre n'est que la poursuite sous forme concentrée de notre politique dans la paix. » (Ibid. p.66.) Et ce programme « ...est formulée dans une série de documents accessibles à tout un chacun. On peut en résumer la substance en deux mots : *dictature du prolétariat.* »

(Ibid. – souligné dans l'original.) Autrement dit, le but est la révolution prolétarienne. Il est donc suffisamment clair que pour Trotsky la préparation de cette révolution constituait le but immédiat de l'Internationale.

Or, pour les directions aussi bien de la IVe Internationale que de ses sections ce but apparaissait dans le meilleur des cas, comme une perspective plus ou moins lointaine, mais aucunement en tant que la tâche du moment. Et cette déviation importante s'est brutalement révélée au cours de la 2^e guerre mondiale.

(C'est justement pendant mes investigations sur le développement de la révolution mondiale pendant et à l'issue de la 2^e guerre mondiale ; ainsi que sur le processus de sa canalisation et de son étranglement que ce bilan tragique m'est apparu le plus nettement. Cette investigation constitue le vol. 2. de mon travail : « Considérations marxistes sur la crise ».)

L'épreuve de cet évènement historique a mis à nu et violemment accentué cette faiblesse principale de la IVe Internationale.

C'est cela qui, dès le début, avait freiné le développement de l'Opposition internationale. En somme, cette incompréhension générale (confusions, compréhension fausse et/ou limitée des tâches, etc.) de la IVE Internationale et de sa construction a lourdement entravé son développement et, finalement, non seulement rejeté en arrière mais servait de base d'un changement profond de son objectif et, partant, de sa nature. C'est cette transformation relativement lente, – temporisée par la contradiction entre la pression de la classe ouvrière transmise par les militants appuyés sur celle-ci – qui formait le contenu exact de son impuissance, allant jusqu'au seuil de sa perte.

Pour faire ressortir cette véritable opposition entre l'opinion de Trotsky sur la mission de la IVE Internationale et celle de ces dirigeants et cadres, il suffit de voir comment ces derniers voyaient les raisons de la proclamation et de la naissance de la IVE Internationale – même quelques décennies plus tard. Dans sa brochure « La quatrième Internationale », parue en 1969 chez Maspero, Pierre Frank réfutait les arguments des adversaires de la proclamation, selon lesquels celle-ci était « prématurée », par une affirmation non moins étrange. Selon Frank, « ...il ne s'agissait pas pour lui (c'est-à-dire pour Trotsky) d'une question de chiffres des effectifs, (etc.), mais avant tout et surtout de la perspective et de la continuité politiques. » (p.42.) Pour renforcer et étayer encore plus une telle incompréhension, proche de la mystification, il affirmait que « Après coup,... on peut se rendre compte que l'entrée dans la guerre sans que la IVE Internationale eut été proclamée aurait permis à toutes les pressions étrangères et à toutes les forces centrifuges... de s'exercer cent fois, mille fois plus intensément. » (P.42-43.) Et il nous assénait sans ambages sa certitude fautive : « Par la proclamation de la IVE Internationale Trotsky visait essentiellement à assurer cette continuité au cours d'une période pleine de dangers. » (p.43.)

Frank exprimait par-là une vue largement répandue parmi les dirigeants et cadres de la IVE Internationale qui la voyaient – et voient encore ! – dans la IVE Internationale une sorte de talisman de force surnaturelle qui les protégerait contre toutes les menaces d'un environnement dangereux.

Or face à cette vue du dirigeant pabliste Pierre Frank, en quoi voyaient alors ses adversaires anti-pablistes de 1952/53 la raison d'être de la IVE Internationale ? Pierre Lambert, porte-drapeau de la lutte anti-pabliste en France et pour une bonne part aussi à l'échelle internationale, publiait une brochure en 1970. Celle-ci a paru sous le titre prometteur de « Quelques enseignements de notre histoire ». (Remarquons que Lambert, dirigeant incontestable de l'OCI n'a pas osé pourtant d'en affirmer publiquement la paternité.) Néanmoins, sur la page 29 de cette brochure nous découvrons son opinion maintes fois revendiquée, à savoir que Trotsky estimait « ... qu'il faut proclamer la IVE Internationale dans le but, justement, de permettre à l'avant-garde... de résister à la terrible pression qui va s'exercer sur elle avec la deuxième guerre mondiale... » Puis, il continuait : « ... précisément parce que les défaites et les reculs... vont inévitablement amplifier avec la nouvelle guerre impérialiste... que la IVE Internationale doit être proclamée ». Et à Lambert de poursuivre ses élucubrations : « La proclamation était l'unique moyen de permettre à la classe ouvrière... d'assurer l'héritage d'Octobre et de résoudre positivement les contradictions... », etc.,etc., suit une longue liste confuse et peu compréhensible. (p.29-30.) Il évoquait donc exactement les mêmes « arguments » que son adversaire pabliste Pierre Frank, et confirmait ainsi leur accord profond sur ce point décisif. Notamment, que les adversaires du pablisme ne sont pas allés jusqu'au bout de leurs critiques parce qu'ils étaient, et sont restés sur le même terrain de la négation de la mission de la IVE Internationale qui, en définitive, a permis la naissance du pablisme et a favorisé sa progression.

L'examen rigoureux et détaillé de l'interdépendance intime et la parenté proche entre le pablisme et leurs adversaires sont patentés et évidentes quant à leur refus commun d'assumer l'engagement franc et direct de la IVE Internationale pour la préparation effective de la révolution prolétarienne. Le pablisme s'est affirmé comme l'une des formes achevée de ce refus, tandis que ces critiques et dénonciateurs lambertistes en représentaient, et représentent encore, l'une des variantes dissimulées et plus subtiles. Il est indispensable de continuer encore et d'enrichir cette analyse. Mais pour le moment, nous devons poursuivre notre examen qui ne fait qu'esquisser les grandes lignes d'une critique, servant l'assimilation des leçons authentiques de notre histoire, en vue des conclusions susceptibles de réorienter notre activité.

C'était pendant la 2^e guerre mondiale que cette terrible contradiction entre la vue de Trotsky sur la mission et l'objectif immédiats de la IVE Internationale et celle des dirigeants de cette même Internationale devenait une véritable antagonisme. De plus, favorisé par l'assassinat de Trotsky ce désaccord s'est gonflé démesurément et aboutissait, pendant la guerre, à la paralysie de la IVE Internationale, contrebalancée à peine, sinon pas du tout, par une activité positive sporadique par telle ou telle section et de leurs militants.

Comme nous l'avons vu, Trotsky voyait la guerre comme la matrice importante de la révolution prolétarienne, un terrain fertile de sa préparation, ce qui nourrissait chacun de ses textes. Alors que les dirigeants et cadres de l'Internationale ne voyaient dans la guerre que le conflit inter-impérialiste – ce qui l'était effectivement ! – dans laquelle ils n'avaient rien à faire, à part l'expression et la défense habituelles du prolétariat, comme pendant le temps de paix. De la vérité incontestable que la guerre est celle des deux impérialismes et elle n'est pas la leur, l'écrasante majorité des dirigeants

a tiré la conclusion formaliste et fautive selon laquelle les trotskystes n'ont rien à faire avec cette guerre. En général, ils ont refusé l'engagement militaire – sauf les britanniques et les américains – contre le fascisme en l'identifiant avec le service rendu à l'impérialisme anglo-saxon. Surtout, tous refusaient, dès le début, la lutte armée révolutionnaire pour le pouvoir qui s'est présentée alors sous la forme spécifique de la prise d'armes avec les partisans. Par cela même, ils ont radicalement mis en question le marxisme, en particulier l'enseignement de Lénine et de Trotsky sur l'époque en tant que celle de « guerres et de révolutions ».

Ainsi la IVe Internationale se transformait de l'instrument de la révolution imminente en une sorte de l'icône sacrée, messagère d'un avenir radieux. Par cette méprise tragique de son objectif, ses pontifes ont émoussé la pointe acérée de cet outil puissant de lutte pour en fabriquer une amulette. Et comme les anciens peuples dans un passé lointain ou les superstitieux de nos jours, ils croyaient fermement – beaucoup sont qui croient encore – que ce fétiche les protège contre les accidents de parcours et contre les maladies et les déformations.

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D'où venait cette vue mystique sur la destinée d'une organisation par excellence politique et combattante, renvoyant son rôle et son fonctionnement effectifs dans un avenir vague et incertain ?

L'une des sources puissante de cette perception devait être la méconnaissance de l'enseignement de Lénine sur l'impérialisme, un savoir sommaire et superficiel de l'agonie du capitalisme, de sa nature définitivement déclinante. Ils étaient bloqués ainsi par une compréhension partielle et lacunaire de la décadence impérialiste comme la base du rôle révolutionnaire

immédiat de l'Internationale.

A l'exception des bolcheviks, l'ensemble du mouvement ouvrier mondial se nourrissait, en effet, des traditions réformistes transmises et renforcées par mille canaux. Toujours dans son « Journal d'exil » Trotsky remarquait encore au début de mars 1935 : « Après la guerre mondiale, Blum (il s'agit de Léon Blum – BN) considérait (et il considère en fait encore) que les conditions n'étaient pas mûres pour le socialisme. Quels naïfs rêveurs étaient donc Marx et Engels, qui dès la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle attendaient la révolution sociale et s'y préparaient !... Pour Blum il existe... on ne sait quelle « maturité » économique absolue de la société pour le socialisme, une maturité qui se détermine d'elle-même par ses seuls symptômes objectifs... J'ai mené la lutte contre cette conception mécaniquement fataliste dès 1905 (Voir : « Bilan et Perspectives »). (p.60.)

On peut mesurer le ravage de cette incompréhension objectiviste, par le fait navrant que même après la 2^e guerre mondiale, la période de trente années de prospérité factice du capitalisme a été attribuée à la capacité supposée de ce même capitalisme de développer les forces productives par l'ensemble de la IVe Internationale pabliste. Impulsée par l'économiste pabliste Ernest Mandel, la contamination de cette perversion spéculative était tellement profonde que même dans la Workers International à ses débuts nous avons dû mener une discussion âpre contre cette conception soutenue par l'argentin Rollo Garmendia et par l'organisation italienne « Gruppo Operario Rivoluzionario ». (A ma connaissance, cette organisation a disparu dans la catacombe générale des organisations ouvrières en Italie.) Toujours est-il que la force de résistance de la croyance de la capacité de l'impérialisme de réguler ses contradictions et de se régénérer est si vivace qu'elle devenait aujourd'hui la base de la plate-forme générale de tous les courants petits-bourgeois et des renégats du marxisme qui appellent au retour des mesures

de Keynes et ses prétendues « trente glorieuses ».

La profonde influence de cette vue antimarxiste vient non pas directement seulement du réformisme ancien mais de sa reprise par le stalinisme et des « apports » complémentaires de celui-ci. Le nationalisme réactionnaire du stalinisme affirmant la possibilité du socialisme dans un seul pays, postulait le développement du capitalisme dans le reste du monde. Cette distorsion du marxisme s'appuyait aussi sur un autre aspect de la conception réformiste qui considère le système capitaliste-impérialiste mondial non pas dans son entité organique mais comme une sorte d'addition des pays aux systèmes différents. Cette vue d'ensemble dont la source était et reste la méconnaissance de la nature, du rôle et du fonctionnement du marché mondial qui, sur la base capitaliste, unifiait le monde depuis longtemps. Or déjà le Manifeste du Parti Communiste disait déjà : « Par l'exploitation du marché mondial, la bourgeoisie a donné une tournure cosmopolite à la production et à la consommation de tous les pays. » Et plus loin : « L'ancien isolement... fait place à des relations universelles, à une interdépendance universelle des nations. » On ne peut pas être plus clair. Pourtant, cela n'a pas empêché la prolifération et la fréquence de vues réformistes sur un monde fragmentaire désigné plus haut. Mais je ne m'arrête pas ici plus longtemps sur cette question. Il suffit de dire que dans son analyse de l'impérialisme, même Rosa Luxembourg est tombée dans l'erreur de supposer un marché extérieur au capitalisme qui serait nécessaire pour la réalisation de la plus-value. (Rosa Luxembourg. « L'accumulation du capital » I-II, Paris, Maspero, 1967, pp.301+238.) Nous savons que Lénine a vivement réagi par ses notes critiques à cette rechute inattendue de Luxembourg dans les platitudes narodniks qu'elle a pourtant rejetées. Il suffit de dire ici que malgré cette faute de type réformiste, Rosa Luxembourg n'a pas suivi la trajectoire révisionniste de cette conception, mais elle s'affirmait comme révolutionnaire.

Nous avons vu qu'en critiquant la vue bornée de Blum sur une prétendue immaturité du capitalisme (alors qu'il était déjà entré dans sa phase déclinante de pourrissement), Trotsky a fait référence à son ouvrage « Bilan et Perspectives » paru en 1906. Au lendemain de la révolution russe de 1905, et muni de ses expériences riches, il arrivait dans ce livre à la conclusion qu'après le grand développement du 19^e siècle, la dynamique de la lutte de classes amènera le prolétariat, même dans les pays arriérés, à la prise de pouvoir avant même la maturité complète du capitalisme. Par conséquent, le prolétariat sera poussé par sa lutte à l'accomplissement de la révolution bourgeoise tout en continuant ses luttes pour ses objectifs socialistes. Trotsky donc écrivait contre les fatalistes d'un développement dit objectif que « ... toute la question est que les processus qui constituent les prémisses historiques du socialisme ne se développent pas isolément les uns des autres, mais se limitent mutuellement ; lorsqu'ils atteignent un certain point... ils subissent un changement qualitatif ; leur combinaison complexe engendre alors ce phénomène que nous appelons révolution sociale. » (Trotsky. « 1905 » – Suivi de « Bilan et Perspectives », Paris, 1969, Ed.de Minuit, p.440.)

Il me semble inutile de détailler ici toute la théorie de la révolution permanente. Toujours est-il que par cette conception remarquable Trotsky a remis la lutte de classes, ses ressorts, ses éléments et combinaisons au centre, comme l'agent principal et le pivot du développement historique. Par cela même, il renvoyait les peseurs pointilleux de signes de degré du capitalisme parmi d'autres dogmatiques.

On peut dire sans exagération que ces deux œuvres absolument complémentaire: L'impérialisme de Lénine et La révolution permanente de Trotsky constituent un véritable renouveau et un enrichissement fondamental du marxisme. Ce n'est pas un hasard que tous les réformistes vulgaires et renégats d'aujourd'hui – même ceux qui tentent de se cacher derrière Marx – évitent

soigneusement de faire face à ces deux monuments théoriques.

Bien entendu, on ne pourrait pas comparer les partisans de Trotsky aux réformistes vulgaires pareils au Blum. Même s'ils ne comprenaient que très sommairement et superficiellement l'analyse de Lénine sur l'impérialisme (en particulier sa nature décadent dépassé, son pourrissement et parasitisme), ils voulaient abattre ce capitalisme et croyaient sincèrement à la révolution socialiste. Sauf que cette croyance, cette certitude même restait au niveau d'une conviction scientifique et d'un espoir politique, mais ne devenait pas la pratique assidue de sa préparation concrète. De plus, un vieux préjugé proche d'une superstition s'est emparé de la majorité des trotskystes et les retenait dans une étrange passivité dans ce domaine.

Ils étaient convaincus, à juste titre, que c'est la classe ouvrière qui fait la révolution, donc ils étaient hostiles, aussi avec raison, à toute idée aventuriste de « faire la révolution » eux-mêmes. Mais de cette compréhension correcte, ils tiraient la conclusion générale, fausse et antidialectique, qu'ils n'ont qu'à attendre que le prolétariat fasse la révolution. Or en 1902, Lénine a consacré tout un livre à la lutte contre une telle soumission à la spontanéité des masses prolétariennes. Il y écrivait, par exemple que « ... le mouvement ouvrier spontané, c'est le trade-unionisme...or le trade-unionisme, c'est justement l'asservissement idéologique des ouvriers par la bourgeoisie. C'est pourquoi notre tâche... est de combattre la spontanéité, de détourner le mouvement ouvrier de cette tendance spontanée qu'a le trade-unionisme à se réfugier sous l'aile de la bourgeoisie et d'attirer sous l'aile de la social-démocratie révolutionnaire. » (Lénine. « Que faire ? », Paris, Ed. Sociale, 1965, p.391-92.)

Malgré tout, l'influence de cet esprit de spontanéité était si forte sur les membres de l'Opposition, que Trotsky jugeait nécessaire de revenir publiquement sur ce problème. En 1935 il écrivait un article important « Rosa Luxembourg et la IVE

Internationale. Remarques rapides sur une question importante. » (Œuvres, vol.6 p.34.) Il est nécessaire d'en citer abondamment. D'abord, on peut y lire que pour Luxembourg « ... la sélection préparatoire d'une avant-garde ne comptait pas suffisamment par rapport aux actions de masses qu'il fallait attendre, tandis que Lénine, en revanche,... réunissait inlassablement des ouvriers avancés en noyaux fermes... » (P.36.)

Et justement là, contre la spontanéité ! – la première fois il formulait : « On peut affirmer, sans la moindre exagération : l'ensemble de la situation mondiale est déterminé par la *crise de la direction du prolétariat*. » (p.37. – souligné dans l'original !)

Ensuite, il expliquait que « ...les grandes actions exigent une direction à leur dimension. Pour les affaires courantes les ouvriers continuent à voter pour les vieilles organisations. Ils leur donnent leurs voix – mais absolument pas leur confiance illimitée. D'autre part, après le pitoyable effondrement de la IIIe Internationale, il est devenu beaucoup plus difficile de les inciter à donner leur confiance à une nouvelle organisation révolutionnaire. C'est précisément en cela que consiste la crise de la direction du prolétariat. Dans une telle situation, chanter un hymne monotone à la gloire des actions de masse d'un avenir indéterminé, en l'opposant à la sélection consciente des cadres d'une nouvelle Internationale, c'est faire une besogne profondément réactionnaire. » (p.38.)

Et il arrivait à la conclusion : »La crise de la direction du prolétariat ne peut évidemment être surmontée par une formule abstraite. Il s'agit d'un processus d'une très longue durée. Pas un processus purement « historique », c'est-à-dire des conditions objectives de l'activité consciente, mais d'une chaîne ininterrompue de mesures idéologiques, politiques, organisationnelles, en vue de fusionner les éléments les meilleurs, les plus conscients du prolétariat mondial sous un

drapeau sans tâche, ces éléments dont il faut sans cesse augmenter le nombre et la confiance en eux, dont il faut développer et approfondir les liens avec de plus larges secteurs du prolétariat... » (p.39.) A mon avis, nous devons méditer chaque phrase de ce texte pour en assimiler le message entièrement valable pour notre activité d'aujourd'hui.

Mais en dépit de ces avertissements de Trotsky et de tous ses efforts, il ne pouvait pas redresser une tendance générale à la spontanéité qui marquait fortement l'activité de la IVe Internationale. Après son assassinat, les dirigeants internationaux ont carrément passé outre ses recommandations. Plus exactement, ils les ont interprétés à leur manière, comme ils les ont compris à leur façon schématique, formaliste, antidialectique. Ainsi pendant la guerre, – puisque Trotsky a prédit l'arrivée de la révolution – ils l'ont attendu avec ferveur, comme le peuple juif jadis attendu la Messie.

Or la révolution était là. Mais ces révolutions de 1943-46 dans les pays européens, faute d'une direction appropriée et donc loin d'atteindre les sommets de la mobilisation des masses et l'intensité de leurs luttes comme dans la révolution de 1917, même leurs contours ne s'étaient qu'à peine dessinés. Elles commençaient alors à se renflouer rapidement. Alors beaucoup de révolutionnaires trotskystes, profondément déçus, ont exprimé leur chagrin : « il n'y avait pas de révolution ! » Leur désenchantement était si grand que toute une série de dirigeants a tourné le dos et déserté l'organisation en cédant la place aux plus jeunes, en exclamant que « Trotsky nous a trompé » et que « le marxisme ne peut rien expliquer » ! A personne parmi eux ne venait à l'esprit que la révolution n'est pas une fatalité et ne tombe pas du ciel. Elle ne vient même pas nécessairement et inévitablement de l'action des masses, – si les révolutionnaires conscients telle qu'une bonne accoucheuse ne lui préparent pas les voies, ne facilitent pas sa progression et n'organisent pas ses instruments, – mais lui tournent le

dos en renonçant à la lutte armée contre le fascisme et aux Etats débilés à sa solde. Il n'y a pas de révolution ascendante sans révolutionnaires conscients !

Car il y a une relation, une interdépendance dialectique entre, d'une part, l'action révolutionnaire des masses et, d'autre part, l'avant-garde consciente de la révolution. Sans cette dernière, même si le mouvement spontané d'une révolution de masses réussit à abattre le régime haï, sans l'activité correspondante d'une avant-garde révolutionnaire, son reflux inéluctable ne ramène au pouvoir qu'un autre régime haï. Une multitude des révolutions atteste cette vérité, tout dernièrement l'histoire des révolutions en Tunisie et en Egypte. Le fait indéniable que ces révolutions n'ont pas encore dit leur dernier mot, n'y change rien.

Au fait, les dirigeants trotskystes d'alors n'ont rien compris des « Thèses sur Feuerbach » de Marx, plus exactement, ils l'ont interprété de travers. Pourtant il y résume la philosophie marxiste dans une forme condensée en tant que « pratique révolutionnaire » et il a conclu par sa célèbre affirmation : « Les philosophes n'ont fait qu'*interpréter* le monde de différentes manières ; mais ce qui importe, c'est de le *transformer*. »

En tout cas, une bonne partie de ces dirigeants trotskystes de la première période 1938-1946 de la IVe Internationale, convaincue qu'il n'y avait pas de révolution, ont déserté la lutte. C'est en anticipant un tel bilan grave que la prédiction dramatique de Trotsky sonne comme un mauvais augure prophétique. Dans le Manifeste de 1940 déjà cité précédemment, il écrivait : « Si le régime bourgeois sort de cette guerre impuni, tous les partis révolutionnaires dégèneront. » (Œuvres, vol.23, p.67.) Or non seulement cette anticipation extrêmement grave devenait une réalité terrible, mais elle en marquait aussi sa cause et son contenu.

