

The Platform of the Communist International¹

The contradictions of the capitalist world system which were hidden deep within it have burst forth with tremendous force in a single huge explosion – the great imperialist world war.

Capitalism tried to overcome its own anarchic nature by organising production. Instead of numerous enterprise-owners competing with one another, powerful associations of capitalists (syndicates, cartels, trusts) were created; banking capital united with industrial capital; economic life as a whole came under the influence of the finance-capital oligarchy, its power and its organisation giving it exclusive dominance. Free competition gave way to monopoly. The individual capitalist was transformed into a member of a capitalist association. Organisation took the place of reckless anarchy.

But, while in each individual country the anarchy of the capitalist mode of production gave way to capitalist organisation, at the level of the world economy, the anarchy, the competition and the contradictions intensified. The struggle between the largest and most organised exploiting states led, with iron necessity, to the horrors of the imperialist world war. Greed for profit drove world capital to fight for new markets, new spheres of investment, new sources of raw material, and the cheap labour power of the colonial slaves. The imperialist states which divided the whole world between them, turning many millions of African, Asian, Australian and American proletarians and peasants into beasts of burden, had, sooner or later, to discover the real, anarchic nature of capital in a full-scale conflict. This was how the greatest crime of all – the murderous World War – came about.

Capitalism also tried to overcome the contradictions of its social structure, bourgeois society is a class society. Capital in the great ‘civilised’ powers wanted to veil its social contradictions. By plundering the colonial peoples, capital was able to buy off its own hired slaves. It created a community of interest between the exploiters and the exploited at the expense of the oppressed colonies – of their yellow, black and red-skinned populations. In this way, the

¹ On the hundredth anniversary of the Communist International, the ICMLPO reproduces the Platform of the Communist International, which was approved in March of 1919, because of its great significance and historic importance.

European and American working classes were tied to their imperialist ‘fatherlands’.

But when war came, this method of bribery, previously securing the patriotism of the working class and its spiritual servitude, had the opposite effect. Peace between classes was finally paid for by physical annihilation, the complete enslavement of the proletariat, terrible repression, impoverishment and physical degeneration and world famine. Civil peace was shattered. The imperialist war turned into a civil war.

A new system has been born. Ours is the epoch of the breakdown of capital, its internal disintegration, the epoch of the Communist revolution of the proletariat.

The imperialist system is collapsing. There is unrest in the colonies and among the small nations which have recently gained independence. This is a time of proletarian uprisings, and of triumphant proletarian revolutions in some countries. The imperialist armies are demoralised; the ruling classes are completely incapable of continuing to govern. Such is the present state of affairs throughout the world.

Human culture has been destroyed and humanity is threatened with complete annihilation. There is only one force able to save humanity and that is the proletariat. The old capitalist ‘order’ has ceased to function; its further existence is out of the question. The final outcome of the capitalist mode of production is chaos. This chaos can only be overcome by the productive and most numerous class – the working class. The proletariat has to establish real order – Communist order. It must break the rule of capital, make wars impossible, abolish the frontiers between states, transform the whole world into a community where all work for the common good and realise the freedom and brotherhood of peoples.

World capital, on the other hand, is preparing for the final battle. Behind the cover of its ‘League of Nations’ and pacifist chatter, it is making a last attempt to piece together the capitalist system now in the process of spontaneous disintegration and to direct its energies against the steady advance of the proletarian revolution.

The proletariat must reply to this new and gigantic conspiracy of the capitalist classes with the seizure of political power. The workers must use this power as a weapon against their class enemies and as a lever to effect the economic reconstruction of society.

The final victory of the world proletariat signifies the beginning of the real history of human liberation.

The Conquest of Political Power

The conquest of political power by the proletariat means the destruction of the political power of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois state apparatus with its capitalist army commanded by the bourgeois – Junker officers, with its police and gendarmerie, its gaolers and judges, its priests and civil servants is the strongest weapon the bourgeoisie possesses. The capture of state power must not mean simply a change of personnel in the ministries, but the elimination of the hostile state apparatus, the concentration of real power in the hands of the proletariat, the disarming of the bourgeoisie, the counter-revolutionary officers and the White Guard, and the arming of the proletariat, the revolutionary soldiers and the Red Workers' Guard; the removal of all bourgeois judges and the organisation of a proletarian court; the abolition of the rule of the reactionary civil service and the creation of new proletarian organs of administration. The victory of the proletariat is guaranteed by the disruption of the enemy's power and the organisation of proletarian power. The bourgeois state apparatus has to be shattered and a proletarian state machine constructed. Only when the proletariat has finally broken the resistance of the bourgeoisie and is clearly the victor can former opponents be gradually brought under control and made to contribute to the construction of communist society.

Democracy and Dictatorship

The proletarian state is, like every other state, an apparatus of repression, but its repression is directed against the enemies of the working class. Its purpose is to break, once and for all, the resistance of the exploiters, who will stop at nothing in their desperate struggle to drown the revolution in rivers of blood. The dictatorship of the proletariat, which gives this class the leading position in society, is, however, a temporary form of government.

As the resistance of the bourgeoisie is overcome, its property expropriated, and its members gradually drawn into working for society, so the proletarian dictatorship disappears, the state withers away and the division of society into classes is ended.

So-called democracy, i.e. bourgeois democracy, is nothing but the veiled dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. The much-vaunted 'gen-

eral win of the people' is no more a reality than 'the people' or 'the nation'. Classes exist and they have conflicting and incompatible aspirations. But as the bourgeoisie represents an insignificant minority it makes use of this illusion, this imaginary concept, in order to consolidate its rule over the working class. Behind this mask of eloquence it can impose its class will. The proletariat, which forms the vast majority of the population is, on the contrary, completely open about using the class power of its mass organisations and Soviets to eliminate the privileges of the bourgeoisie and guarantee the transition to the classless, communist society.

Bourgeois democracy consists essentially of a purely rhetorical and formal recognition of rights and freedoms, which are in fact inaccessible to the working people – the proletariat and semi-proletarian elements – on account of their lack of material means. The bourgeoisie at the same time has every opportunity to use its material means, its press and organisation to cheat and deceive the people. However, the new type of state power, known as the Soviet system, ensures the proletariat the opportunity of guaranteeing its rights and freedom in practice. Soviet power provides the people with the best palaces, houses, printing works, stocks of paper, etc. for their press, and clubs for their meetings. Only such measures make proletarian democracy really possible. It is only on paper that bourgeois democracy and its parliamentary system give the masses the opportunity to participate in the running of the state. In actual fact, the masses and their organisations have absolutely no access to real power and are denied any genuine participation in the state administration. Under the Soviet system it is the mass organisations, and through them the masses themselves, that are running things, inasmuch as the Soviets attract an ever-increasing number of workers into government. This is the only way the entire working population can gradually be drawn into the work of state administration. The Soviet system is thus based on the mass organisations of the proletariat, on the Soviets themselves, the revolutionary trade unions, the cooperatives, etc.

The separation of legislative and executive power and the absence of the right of recall, characteristic of bourgeois democracy and parliamentarianism, widen the gulf between the masses and the state. The Soviet system, with its right of recall, the combination of legislative and executive power and the consequent position of the Soviets as working bodies, is able to link the masses with the ad-

ministrative organs. This link is further strengthened by the electoral system which is based on production units rather than artificial territorial constituencies.

Thus the Soviet system makes possible genuine proletarian democracy – a democracy for the proletariat, by the proletariat, and against the bourgeoisie. In this system the industrial proletariat is guaranteed a privileged position as the leading, best organised and politically most mature class, under whose hegemony the level of the semi-proletarian elements and the poorer peasants in the rural areas is gradually raised. The industrial proletariat must use its temporary privileges to free the poorer petty-bourgeois masses in the countryside from the influence of the rural kulaks and bourgeoisie, to organise and draw them to the cause of communist construction.

The Expropriation of the Bourgeoisie and the Socialisation of Production

Given the dissolution of the capitalist system and capitalist labour discipline, and the present state of relations between classes, the re-construction of the economy on the old basis is impossible. Workers' struggles for wage increases, even where successful, do not result in the anticipated rise in living standards, because the rising prices on all consumer goods cancel out any gains. The living conditions of workers can only be improved when production is administered by the proletariat instead of the bourgeoisie. In countries where the crisis situation is clearly insurmountable the militant fight for better wages inevitably develops into a bitter struggle which tends to escalate. The continued existence of the capitalist system is consequently impossible. Before the productive forces of the economy can be raised the resistance of the bourgeoisie has to be broken. This must be done as swiftly as possible, since bourgeois rule prolongs the death agony of the old society, creating the danger of the complete destruction of economic life. The proletarian dictatorship must expropriate the big bourgeoisie and landowners and make the means of production and exchange the common property of the proletarian state.

Communism is now rising from the ruins of the capitalist system; this new system is the only way out of the historic crisis that faces humanity. Opportunists who put forward the utopian demand for the reconstruction of the capitalist economic system in order to defer socialisation only postpone a resolution of the crisis and create

the possibility of utter ruin. Communist revolution is the best – is indeed the only possible – means by which society’s truly productive force, the proletariat, and society itself can be saved.

Proletarian dictatorship does not involve any sharing out of the means of production and exchange. On the contrary, the greatest possible centralisation of the productive forces and the subordination of all production to a single plan is the aim.

The first steps towards the socialisation of the whole economy include: the socialisation of the apparatus of those big banks at present controlling production; the seizure of all the economic institutions of the capitalist state by bringing them under the control of proletarian state power; the nationalisation of all industries organised in syndicates and trusts and of those branches of industry in which the concentration and centralisation of capital makes nationalisation technically possible; and the nationalisation of agricultural estates and their transformation into publicly managed agricultural units.

As regards the smaller holdings, the proletariat must gradually amalgamate them in ways appropriate to their size.

It must be emphasised that small properties will not be expropriated and force will not be used against small property-owners who do not exploit hired labour. This layer must be drawn into the sphere of socialist organisation gradually. Example and practice will show them the advantage of the new system, which frees the small peasant from the economic yoke of the kulaks and the landowners, and the urban petty bourgeoisie from the weight of taxes (the cancellation of state debts is an important measure in this connection) etc.

In the economic sphere, the tasks of the proletarian dictatorship can be carried out only to the extent that the proletariat is able to create centralised organs for the management of production and introduce workers’ management. In its attempt to achieve this goal the proletariat will have to make use of those mass organisations which are most closely connected with the production process.

In the sphere of distribution the proletarian dictatorship must replace trading by a fair distribution of products. Measures necessary to this end include the following: the socialisation of large commercial enterprises, the transfer of all bourgeois state and municipal organs of distribution to the proletariat, introduction of control over large co-operative associations, whose organisational ap-

paratus will still have a big economic significance in the transitional period, the gradual centralisation of all these organs and their transformation into a single system, responsible for the rational distribution of products.

In the sphere of distribution, as in that of production, qualified technicians and specialists are to be used once their political resistance has been broken and they prove themselves prepared to work with the new system of production instead of capital.

The proletariat has no intention of oppressing these people – on the contrary, it will give them, for the first time, the opportunity to develop their creative energies. Under the proletarian dictatorship the separation of physical and mental labour, characteristic of capitalism, will be superseded by their integration, and in this way labour and science will be unified. Besides the expropriation of factories, mines, estates, etc., the proletariat must also put an end to the exploitation of the population by capitalist landlords, placing the large houses in the hands of the local Soviets, moving workers into the apartments of the bourgeoisie, etc.

In the course of effecting these great changes, Soviet power must steadily build up a huge administrative apparatus and centralise its organisation, and, at the same time, draw increasing layers of the working people into direct administrative work.

The Road to Victory

The revolutionary epoch demands that the proletariat use methods of struggle capable of focusing its militancy – namely, methods of mass struggle which lead logically to direct confrontation and open battle with the bourgeois state machine. All other methods, including the revolutionary utilisation of the bourgeois parliament, must be subordinated to this aim.

An essential condition of victory in this struggle is that the proletariat make a break not only with the outright lackeys of capital and the hangmen of the Communist revolution, such as the right-wing social democrats, but also with the ‘centre’ (the Kautskyites), which abandons the proletariat at the critical moment to compromise with its avowed enemies.

It is vital at the same time to form a bloc with members of the revolutionary workers’ movement – certain syndicalist elements, for example – who, in spite of the fact that they did not earlier belong to

the socialist party, have more or less accepted the platform of the proletarian dictatorship through Soviets.

There are several factors which make the creation of a truly revolutionary and proletarian Communist International essential: the growth of the revolutionary movement in all countries, the danger that the revolution will be suppressed by an alliance of the capitalist states, the attempts by the parties of the social-traitors to unify their ranks (the establishment of the scab 'International' in Berne is an example) and so better serve Wilson's League of Nations and finally, the absolute necessity of co-ordinating proletarian action.

Only an International, capable of subordinating so-called national interests to the interests of international revolution, will organise aid on an international scale, for without economic and other kinds of mutual support the proletariat is not in a position to build a new society. Unlike the scab socialist International, the International of the Communist proletariat will support the exploited peoples of the colonies in their struggle with the imperialists, in the knowledge that this action will promote the final collapse of the world imperialist system.

At the outbreak of the world war the capitalist criminals maintained that they were concerned only with the defence of their fatherland. It was not long, however, before German imperialism showed its brutal nature in a series of bloody actions in Russia, the Ukraine and Finland. Now it is the Entente powers that are being exposed, even in the eyes of the most backward layers of the population, as international robbers and murderers of the proletariat. Together with the German bourgeoisie and the social-patriots, and with hypocritical phrases about peace on their lips, they use their tanks and brutalised, barbaric colonial troops in an attempt to crush the revolution of the European proletariat. The White Terror unleashed by the bourgeois cannibals is indescribable. Its victims in the working class are innumerable. The bravest fighters, including Liebknecht and Luxemburg, have been lost.

The proletariat must defend itself at all costs. The Communist International calls the whole world proletariat to the last fight. We must meet arms with arms, force with force.

*Down with the Imperialist Conspiracy of Capital!
Long Live the International Republic of Proletarian Soviets!*