

Documents of the historical Communist Left

'Internationalisme' (GCF) on the National and Colonial Question

Resolution on nationalist movements (1945)

The Conference, with the unanimity of the comrades, affirms as an unalterable position of principle for communists in the face of the national and colonial movements that are emerging and can emerge in the era of the decadence of capitalism:

- 1) Any national movement led by or against the existing government is in its class character anti-proletarian and counter-revolutionary.
- 2) The participation of a more or less large part of the proletariat in this movement does not change its class nature.
- 3) The national movements have their foundation in the interest of the bourgeoisie or a fraction of the bourgeoisie of a country facing the economic and political domination of another imperialist bourgeoisie and, in the current historical period, allow the bourgeoisie to hide from the proletariat the general and insurmountable crisis in which society finds itself.
- 4) The imperialist occupation and domination, generating in the proletariat of the occupied countries a deep discontent on the basis of increased exploitation and oppression pushed to the extreme, offer the national bourgeoisie the

means to exploit this popular discontent by influencing it with a nationalist and chauvinist ideology with the help of which the bourgeoisie diverts the proletariat from its class territory and even leads it into imperialist war.

- 5) The class position of the proletariat can only be the abandonment and separation from the whole national movement and the fiercest fight against chauvinism.

From the fact that the nationalist movements, because of their class nature as capitalist, have no organic and ideological continuity with the class movements of the proletariat, therefore the proletariat, in order to rejoin its class positions, must break and abandon all links with the nationalist movements.

**'Internationalisme' (Gauche Communiste de France)
N° 1, January 1945**

Source: **Résolution sur les mouvements nationalistes**
http://igcl.org/internationalisme/fra/i01/i01_7.html

Translation: H.C., April 4, 2019. Final version: April 19, 2019

An appeal to translators and proofreaders

Next to historiographic and political contributions, *A Free Retriever's Digest* regularly (re)publishes texts by the historical German-Dutch communist Left, in collaboration with *Left-dis* and *AAAP*. You can find a list of *annotated translations* on page 17.

Full text (re-)editions in English language include:

- [Marxism and State Communism. The Withering Away of the State](#)
(G.I.C., 1932. Annotated English edition of December 2017, Left-dis)

Historiographic and critical contributions:

- Fredo Corvo, May 2018: [The G.I.C. and the Economy of the Transition Period - Introductory Article](#)
(Supplement to AFRD Vol.2#03, June – July 2018)
- Ph. Bourrinet, September 2017: *The Workers' Councils in Germany 1918-23* ([Part 1/2](#)) (AFRD Vol.2#6, December 2018 – January 2019); ([Part 2/2](#)) (AFRD Vol.3#1, February – March 2019)

We are looking for collaborators at transcribing and translating historical texts (mostly from German and Dutch sources into English) and at proofreading in English or German language. Should you be interested in contributing, please contact us by sending your e-mail to: afreeretriever@gmail.com or: info@left-dis.nl.

The national and colonial problem (1946)

The "national question": A theoretical point of view

The bourgeois revolution and the idea of nation

The national problem is linked to the bourgeois revolution. The idea of nation developed and grew throughout the period of the bourgeois revolution which, beginning with the Reformation, went as far as the development of the Big Monopolizing Capitalism. During the first period of the bourgeois revolution, the English Revolution of the 17th Century and the French Revolution of the 18th Century, the most radical movements of the most exploited social strata, or [of those] whose political rights were not yet recognized, ⁽¹⁾ in reality had to push the bourgeois revolution to a stage the bourgeoisie would not have been capable to rise at by itself.

Thus the "Diggers" were the revolutionary movement of the soldiers of Cromwell's army, a radical movement that, by disappearing, made the Lilburn "Levelers" movement disappear with it.

The movement had enabled the Cromwell dictatorship to consolidate itself by curbing the most radical revolutionary tendencies and consolidating, in the eyes of other classes of society, the power of the State and the need for the continuation of that power for a given time.

The same was true for the **Terror**. Pushed against their will by the Enragés and subsequently by the Hébertists, the Jacobins inaugurated it by suppressing its most audacious supporters. Cromwell's dictatorship over the Croupion Parliament, that of Robespierre and the Public Salvation Committee would disappear and give way to "reaction" once their mission was accomplished. In effect, their passage would simultaneously mark an internal centralizing mission and the struggle for the recognition of the achievements of the Revolution by other nations externally.

The whole movement remains national and patriotic; however radical it may be, it is devoted to this

merciless scheme of bourgeois revolution, namely the crushing of the most radical layers once the revolution has been accomplished.

In the ascending period of capitalism, even when revolutionary tremors constitute a social earthquake with international repercussions, the revolutionary proletariat is doomed to be crushed. Such were the June days of 1848 in France, such was the constitutional campaign [of 1848 – 49] in Germany. This was also the case with the Paris Commune of 1871. Effectively, it is on its corpses that the Third Republic of sad memory was built. Until then, they [the revolutionary tremors]] only appear as a radicalization of movements in the different layers of the bourgeoisie and ultimately only benefit the latter. However, as has so often been said and written, they are "the locomotive of history", constantly pushing history to its superior stage.

The capitalist contradictions

Effectively, if the bourgeois revolution economically destroyed the remnants of feudalism, which was an obstacle to the development of capitalism, and if its role at that time consisted mainly in centralizing at the national level and breaking provincialism, in founding banks and [standardizing] money to promote the development of trade, in unifying weights and measures, etc., today we are faced with *a completely different aspect of the problem* and, for the bourgeoisie itself, nationalism and patriotism are no more than a facade.

Under the ideological veil of patriotism, [the bourgeois revolution] serves to mobilize the exploited masses behind the interests of the capitalist state for the latter's defense.

It is through the "Sacred Union", through the "Union of all for the defense of the interests of all", under the tricolor rags that this popular brainwashing is carried out.

This is only the simplest and the most simplistic aspect of the national problem in the current period. Apart from this traditional national question, which always serves the bourgeoisie like all counter-revolutionary ideologies: nationalist, anti-Semite, religious and secular, Stakhanovite and others, there is another aspect of the problem that is much more complex and that takes us to the very heart of the present situation.

1) Such were the "Levelers" movements led by Lilburn in the Cromwell Revolution, misnamed as such but forming a conglomerate of all kinds of petty-bourgeois, peasant, Jewish and including the soldiers' movement, "diggers", as well as the Enragés and Hébertists movement in the French Revolution.

In the present period, the national question must therefore be considered in the light of the objectively existing conditions. The different Nations subsist as the apparatus of the bourgeois state because the Nation is the social milieu necessary to mobilize all classes around the interests of the bourgeoisie. At the same time, the state apparatus of repression of the national bourgeoisie erects itself as a barrier of iron and fire as soon as an organized movement of emancipation appeared in the oppressed classes.

However, in the decadent period of capitalism, we no longer find ourselves with only contradictions of interests of national bourgeoisies among themselves but, in addition, we find the constitution of imperialist blocs and the sometimes complete hegemony of imperialist countries over many smaller ones.

The constitution of the big imperialist blocs presupposes the complete subjugation of the satellite nations. The internal contradictions of the capitalist regime do not in any way give up their rights: the contradictions between the different nations composing the geographical puzzle of the world subsist and even aggravate; the constitution of the imperialist blocs only come about by super-interest, only in overbidding the contradictions by creating another one; they do not suppress the former in any way, but adjoin them in their entirety, in order to turn them into the game of their powerful interests.

Similarly, it should also be stressed here, as part of the internal contradictions of this regime:

- there is no such thing as ONE bourgeoisie whose interests are ALWAYS indissoluble;
- the interests of the bourgeoisie take second place when the danger of the revolutionary proletariat⁽²⁾ is at the doorstep; but once the proletariat is defeated, the divergences of interests within the capitalist bourgeois class itself appear with all their acuity;
- the interests are not always contradictory;
- the characteristic of the capitalist regime is to pursue immediate interests without worrying too much about future consequences.

This is how the problems posed by the recovery of Germany in the aftermath of the other war⁽³⁾ and of this one⁽⁴⁾ become clear.

2) It would be more accurate to say: "fade away" because they persist, which increases the superiority of the revolutionary class.

After the 1914-18 war, a social-democratic government perfectly serves the interests of the German bourgeoisie: against proletarian revolution within, for the influx of American capital and the payment of war debts. But the fatal consequence of the recovery of the German economy was to be its tendency to free itself from Anglo-American financial capitalism by shaking off its "democratic-plutocratic" yoke and to bring in fascism immediately (State capitalism in this given period).

Fascism simultaneously was the classical form of counterrevolution in some countries with advanced proletariats and of popular national revolution calling on the petty-bourgeois (bureaucrats, traders and intermediaries, small farmers) to support the large industrial capitalists and large landowners of a country to relieve themselves of the patronizing of any great imperialism. In this case, either the country is able to establish itself as a great imperialist, forming itself a separate bloc such as Hitler's Germany, or, too weak by itself, it must turn at all costs towards an imperialist bloc and, at that moment, the game of struggles in its midst is a reflection of its inter-imperialist struggles (Spain 1936).

Capitalism, in its present period, therefore tends sporadically, and without ever succeeding perfectly, to a higher concentration and centralization on an international scale. However, since it is not a question of capitalism managing in a reasoned way in order to satisfy the interests of society as a whole, just as capitalism acts under the pressure of its immediate interests – or rather under the pressure of those of capitalist groups – in order to defend them, as within these groups themselves there are profound divergences of interests, these groups, these monopolies, these imperialist blocs, in a word this tendency towards high centralization, marks to the highest point the contradictions in which the regime is struggling, its growing instability, its attempts to survive despite everything, while the socialist revolution is objectively put on the agenda.

These block formations, this centralization, are actually created under the pressure of more violent antagonisms and they burst and dissolve as soon as these antagonisms are resolved in one way or another to be posed again on a larger scale. In a word, this *apparent centralization* hides an anarchy never equaled before; it marks the decadence and decomposition of the capitalist regime.

3) The First World War (1914 – 1918)

4) The Second World War (1939 – 1945)

In this case, disorders – appearing to unsuspecting eyes, at the national level, in small countries or in certain colonies – are by no means revolutionary phenomena of the proletariat, even if it is physically involved, but are on the contrary struggles of inter-imperialist rivalry involving the interests of different antagonistic blocs and relying on certain social layers of these countries.

In this case, different groups are formed in the countries, within the bourgeoisie, and, according to their interests (or according to what they regard as such) are pushed towards one or another imperialist bloc. Some groups, by contrast, may think that it is necessary to be nationalist first and foremost and to prevent the intrusion of any imperialism into the country's affairs.

In any case, mainly in the colonial countries, when a colonial bourgeoisie tends to emancipate itself from the metropolis, even through revolutionary means and even if it really believes it can achieve its autonomy, [it] can only fall back, in the present period, before the fact of the dependence of this or that imperialist block. Even if the initial objective is an emancipatory and autonomous struggle, it can in no way remain so and must fall under the control of a great imperialism.

Position on this problem for the future Revolution

On the contrary, the proletarian revolution emerges as a phenomenon tending to destroy the bourgeois state and with it the very idea of Nationalism. The proletarian revolution is, every time it occurs in history, a profound international earthquake that puts the bourgeois world in danger only to the extent that it becomes aware of its strength as an international revolutionary power; and that finds itself defeated and regressed as the state and nation, either by force or ideologically, regain control of their proletariat. Looking at the problem from this perspective, every struggle with a national character is not progressive, even and especially in a period of revolutionary upsurge.

The Communist International (CI), in considering the problem, argued that any movement with a separatist tendency would inevitably tend to weaken the metropolis and create social unrest. But this is to look at the problem from the backside, and that is what the CI did when it saw revolutions or insurrections in colonial or semi-colonial countries.

Effectively, the German revolution defeated and centrism reigning over the English and French CP's, the proletariats of these great capitalist countries had their hands tied by opportunism; and if the revolting movements in the colonial countries had repercussions in the metropolis, this did not in any way endanger the bourgeoisie of these countries.

It is therefore in the sense that the proletariat of the most advanced countries will take their first steps in arms that they will be able to have support from the colonial exploited or from less advanced countries; but here again the nationalist peril remains intact; and it is only to the extent that the exploited of the colonial countries or vassal states will move away from this nationalism that they will be able to seriously strengthen the revolutionary movements of the most advanced countries.

The problem in the present period

In whatever way this problem is posed, it must be posed in order to apply it to a given period in function of the situation and its prospects.

For us – we have already often tried to demonstrate this in practice – the situation is one of retreat, a reactionary period and the perspective is one of imperialist war between the two blocks whose antagonisms accentuate themselves ever more gravely: the Russian block and the American block.

In this sense, the crises that have shaken Iran over Azerbaijan's "national awakening" supported by the Russians in their press and by the "Peace" conferences and at the UN; the Kurdish "national awakening", the "unrest" in the Arab countries, Palestine and Egypt – where it is a question of the stationing of English troops and of the prevalence of Anglo-American imperialism – also have the favor and support of Russian imperialism. In this sense too, the civil war that has reigned in China since the end of the Far East war is significant enough; Chiang Kai-shek and the nationalists would like to form Chinese National Unity for the benefit of their Anglo-American allies, while the Chinese "communists", materially supported by the Russians, want to keep their dominance in northern China. In Korea, as well as in Germany, the national problem is under the immediate influence of the antagonisms of the two great imperialist blocks.

In Indochina, the initial result of the Vietnamese "national revolution" was to bring about a compromise between Vietnam and France because, for the time being, the Vietnamese bourgeoisie has its inter-

ests linked to those of France and it has no interest in turning to another imperialism, or because the question cannot yet be raised on the basis of geographical location or political opportunity, or simply because the Vietnamese bourgeoisie basically needs French troops to maintain order in its affairs, and because France needs the intermediary of the Vietnamese bourgeoisie to better materially and ideologically oppress the Vietnamese “people”.

The situation in India, by its topicality, attracts the most attention. The question of the Hindu constitution is not an issue today. It was in the aftermath of the 1914-18 war, after the development of the exploitation of India by English capitalism, that a “national awakening” was marked at the same time in different layers of Hindu society. But here again it is very clear today that each group has a very specific position and is in no way revolutionary or progressive.

England had previously relied, in general, on the Muslims against the Hindus, India’s rich and powerful caste. But for the English it is only a question of the “divide and conquer” policy. Today, Muslims are putting the project of forming an independent state, Pakistan, on the agenda, whose creation is very much welcomed in Moscow, the future Pakistan being very close to Russian Western Asia. This is why today, reversing their policies, the English (in this case Wavell) rely on the Hindus and other castes

(the *pandit* Nehru, etc.) against the Muslims supported by the Russians.

Several thousand deaths in Bombay and Calcutta! General strike? Maybe! But who benefits from these troubles? Who leads them? And who pays for the broken pots?

It is a few thousand more dead that the proletariat pays in tribute to the interests of capitalism, but it is not a “step forward” towards revolution, at most a step forward towards the 3rd imperialist war. For the proletarians of these countries, in the present period, there is only one policy: not to get involved in a conflict where their immediate or remote interests are not at stake. And, on the day they will be given the strength by the contribution of a revolutionary uprising on a global scale, one policy only: the overthrow of all national barriers and all these small states.

(Remember the controversy between Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin on the national question where Rosa defends a thesis still valid today.)

‘Internationalisme’ (Gauche Communiste de France), N° 13, September 1946

Source: **Le problème national et colonial**
http://igcl.org/internationalisme/fra/i13/i13_2.html

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Documents of the German-Dutch Communist Left (A Free Retriever’s Digest)

Vol.	Issue	Date	Title	Author(‘s)	Words
1	#3	Jun 15, 2017	Marx and Engels versus Lenin’s ‘State and Revolution’ (Max Hempel, 1927)	An editor's introduction; Marxism and State Communism (complete edition in pdf)	1,608
	#4	Aug 22, 2017	‘Notes on communist economy’ (Part 1 of 3)	Piet de Bruin (Jan Appel) (‘Klassenstrijd’, 1928, Extracts)	1,332
	#6	Nov 22, 2017	Program of the K.A.P.D., 1924 (Reprint)	Annotated Extracts	1,457
2	#1	Feb 1, 2018	The Crisis in Socialist Theory	A. Pannekoek on the Group of International Communists (Holland, 1947)	1,327
	#2	Mar 31, 2018	Lenin as a Utopian	Willy Huhn (1948)	2,078
	#3	May 31, 2018	Action against War	Anton Pannekoek (‘New Review’, 1915, Fragment)	948
	#6	Dec 12, 2018	The outcome of the struggle	A. Pannekoek (‘Arbeiterpolitik’, February 1st, 1919)	2,013
			International Communism		1,579
3	#1	Feb 14, 2019	A Letter from Comrade Pannekoek	A. Pannekoek (‘Der Kommunist’, KAPD, July 1920)	1,449

The Russian communist Left (the revue 'Kommunist', Moscow 1918)

Recent translations by the CWO

The CWO has continued its long-term project of translating the texts from the four issues of [the revue 'Kommunist' \(Moscow, 1918\)](#), the organ of the first left fraction that emerged within the Bolshevik party since the seizure of power by the soviets in October 1917. (1)

The following table lists the recent, annotated translations, which all have been provided with an introduction by the CWO. For a complete overview of the articles published in English in the course of this project since February 2017, we refer to the '[Russian communist left](#)' page on the ICT website.

1	Title:	Anarchy and Scientific Communism	
	Published on:	February 7, 2019	Week 5
	Author(s):	Nikolai Bukharin, 'Kommunist' #2 (March/April 1918).	
	Web link:	http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2019-02-07/introduction-to-bukharin-s-anarchy-and-scientific-communism	
	Genre:	Translation, with an introduction by the CWO	
	Length (words):	6,561	
2	Title:	The Formation of the Red Army 1918	
	Published on:	February 11, 2019	Week 6
	Author(s):	Karl Radek, 'Kommunist' #2 (March/April 1918).	
	Web link:	http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2019-02-11/the-formation-of-the-red-army-1918	
	Genre:	Translation, with an introduction by the CWO	
	Length (words):	4,038	
3	Title:	Bukharin's Review of Lenin's The State and Revolution	
	Published on:	February 21, 2019	Week 7
	Author(s):	Nikolai Bukharin, 'Kommunist' #1 (April 20, 1918)	
	Web link:	http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2019-02-21/bukharin-s-review-of-lenin-s-the-state-and-revolution	
	Genre:	Translation, with an introduction by the CWO	
	Length (words):	4,524	
4	Title:	Ossinsky's Demand for Clear Answers (April 1918)	
	Published on:	March 13, 2019	Week 10
	Author(s):	N. Ossinsky, 'Kommunist' #2 (March/April 1918).	
	Web link:	http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2019-03-13/ossinsky-s-demand-for-clear-answers-april-1918	
	Genre:	Translation, with an introduction by the CWO	
	Length (words):	3,541	
5	Title:	Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic	
	Published on:	April 18, 2019	
	Author(s):	Béla Kun, 'Kommunist' #2 (March/April 1918)	
	Web link:	http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2019-04-18/bela-kun-and-the-hungarian-soviet-republic	
	Genre:	Translation, with an introduction by the CWO	
	Length (words):	3,972	

1) First reference to this project by *A Free Retriever's Digest* can be found in: *From the Bookshelf*, Vol.1#2 (Try-out, May 15, 2017). Two CWO introductions to articles from 'Kommunist' (1918) have been adopted in the section *Documents of the historical communist Left*: · Ossinski on State Capitalism in Russia, AFRD Vol.1#5 (October 1, 2017); · Lomov's Economic notes and Bukharin's book review concerning the transitional period, AFRD Vol.2#5 (October 18, 2018). See '[Editions](#)' on AFRD's web blog.