

## *Appendix 1*

# *Communisme no.1*

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### **DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES OF THE BELGIAN FRACTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST LEFT**

1) The Party is a fraction of the proletariat. In the epoch of proletarian revolutions, the party in effect expresses the proletariat's consciousness and political capacity during a period of revolutionary flux in which the problem of power is directly posed.

The Fraction is an element of the party which may be organic or extra-organic according to the relationship between the classes. Its nature proceeds from the nature of the party itself. The fraction no more emanates from out of the wishes of individual revolutionaries than does the Party, but is above all a product of the class struggle, emerging when the proletarian movement as a whole is tracing a downward path. It must, of necessity, appear in order to ensure the survival of the Party's historic function at the point when the latter becomes prey to opportunism.

When the Party passes overtly into the capitalist camp, the fraction constitutes the basis for the formation, and the nucleus of the future Party which will again take up the historic succession of the old bankrupt party.

Because of its social composition, the fraction far from isolating itself from the class struggle, remains directly tied to all those proletarian reactions which determine it and the class is consequently rooted in all further developments of its struggle. As for the proletariat, in spite of its defeat it finds in the fraction a political focus where it can concentrate itself politically and strengthen its class consciousness, a necessary condition for its ability to act in the future when the situation becomes more favourable.

The betrayal of the Parties of the Third International gave rise to the historic conditions for the appearance of new communist parties but their creation does not depend on the arbitrary will of communists, it results from a maturation of social contrasts, opening up a phase of the transformation of fractions into parties on the basis of new historic conditions which the fractions had anticipated.

During the present period, the left fractions find themselves in a situation analogous to that experienced by the left currents and fractions of the Second International during the unleashing of the imperialist war, the period from the betrayal of 1914 to October 1917, in which the beginnings of a new International were being formed.

Now that the left fractions have had to make a total break with the parties of the Third International, and the situation prevents them from performing the function of parties, they find themselves confined

exclusively or very nearly within the bounds of theoretical work, in the midst of a course which is thrusting capitalist society towards the outbreak of imperialist war. In addition to forming the cadres of the future party, the fundamental task of the fractions is to forge the theoretical weapons which will give to the proletarian struggle the means to victory in the revolution.

The nucleus which arose out of the break occurring within the Ligue des Communistes Internationalistes declares itself constituted into a fraction, drawing inspiration from the above considerations. It adheres to a communist position on the basis of the fundamental principles laid down by the first two congresses of the Communist International; it therefore situates itself within the proletarian struggle as the historic continuation of Marxist theory founded on economic determinism, dialectical materialism and the class struggle. It affirms itself as a progressive organism, setting itself the central objective of pushing the communist movement to a higher stage of theoretical development by its own contribution to the international solution of new problems posed by the experiences of the Russian revolution and the period of capitalist decadence, a solution which the Third International was not able to elaborate because of the historic conditions in which it appeared.

Over and above this, the fraction has the task of responding to the specific problems of the proletarian struggle in Belgium, in the framework of the general principles governing the world struggle of the proletariat.

The fraction, in working for the reconstruction of the proletarian party and of the proletarian International, poses as a fundamental condition of this task a categorical refusal to link itself - whether organically or not - to the political currents that have been historically condemned as reactionary and enemy forces: social democracy, the parties of the Third International, or those Communist groupings

which have altered their political and ideological base by associating themselves directly or indirectly to forces belonging to those currents. By this means the fraction is safe-guarding its own development and, simultaneously, the victory of the proletarian revolution.

The fraction declares that it will only accept individual memberships on the basis of an unreserved commitment to the present declaration of principles.

The fraction, from its foundation, shows its internationalism position by affirming its desire to join forces in the elucidation of theoretical work with all political organisms that derive from another section of the world proletariat, provided that this organism acts in accordance with the principles of the fraction as set out in this declaration.

On this basis, in order to oppose the extreme confusion which is dominating the communist movement, and resolved to contribute to the strengthening of the proletariat, the fraction affirms its international links with the Italian Fraction which already supports the positions of principles affirmed above. It has thus decided to call itself the Belgian Fraction of the International Communist Left.

The following points set out the essential political ideas which are destined to be integrated into the ideological and programmatic backbone of the proletarian revolution.

2) The communist fractions can only forge the theoretical weapons that are vital to the success of the revolution if they understand the internal workings of capitalist society in its stage of historic decline and if they link their analysis of events directly to the significance of this epoch.

Imperialism — the last stage of capitalism — has led social evolution into a dead end: the productive forces as a whole can no longer develop within the framework of the capitalist system because they have attained the maximum that is compatible with the nature of this system. In other words the socialist form of production, and the bourgeois mode of production and distribution of products have entered into an irreconcilable conflict which fuels the general crisis of a bourgeois society evolving within the limits of a market saturated with goods. The regression of the productive forces poses the objective necessity for the proletarian revolution and the advent of communism at the same time as it opens a decisive phase in the class struggle, “the period of capitalist decadence is the period of the direct struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat” (Second Congress of the Communist international).

The fundamental antagonism between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat becomes the axis of historic development around which revolve all secondary tensions, including inter-imperialist conflicts. This means that from now on the life of capitalist society oscillates between the two alternatives offered by the evolution of social relations: imperialist war or proletarian revolution.

Imperialist war is the bloody ransom for the survival of capitalism beyond its time, when the proletariat is powerless to impose its own solution — communism, through its class dictatorship.

Capitalism in decline can survive only by devouring itself, provoking enormous losses of accumulated labour (under-utilisation of machinery, destruction of products, currency devaluation) and of human labour power (unemployment, or employment in war production etc.).

When war erupts it does so because the internal contradictions of bourgeois production find no other

outlet than that constituted on the one hand by the massive destruction of productive wealth which, because it must flow back into the war economy, has engendered its own negation by transforming itself into the means of destruction: on the other hand war accomplishes the massacre of the proletariat, the living antithesis of capitalist society.

It is the very nature of this society, built upon the irreconcilable antagonisms between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, which determines the fundamental movement towards imperialist war and its social content; it does not however determine the struggle between individual capitalist states or between bourgeois factions within the state: inter-imperialist rivalry simply expresses the contradiction between the tendency towards the universality of the capitalist system and its division into nations, which result from the private appropriation of wealth.

In the period of capitalist decadence, the proletariat must break away from all wars directed by capitalism or its democratic agents, whether their flag be that of the bourgeois revolution, of oppressed nations, the national emancipation of the colonies, antifascism or 'socialism in one country.

The proletariat recognises and accepts only the civil war unleashed by its own forces and under the control of its own class party, against, and for the abolition of the capitalist state.

The proletarian revolution finds its objective condition in history's death sentence upon capitalism, but the only driving force capable of propelling it forward must be sought not in the economic, but in the political arena. A society that is rotting can fall only at the push of a revolutionary class.

The proletariat, by forging its class party, becomes this revolutionary class capable of overthrowing the

bourgeoisie and of preventing war and the decomposition of society.

3) Bourgeois democracy is the political expression of economic 'liberalism' which favoured the accumulation of capital during the ascendancy of the bourgeois system of production.

At the same time, behind a facade of political 'equality', it attempted to hide from a proletariat that was growing in number and political strength, the reality of a class-divided society. Although the proletariat could not yet pose concretely the problem of power, it did however oppose the capitalist state by founding its own class organisations, and by this means it also came up against the democratic principle which constitutes the backbone of the bourgeoisie's legal and political edifice. The organisms of proletarian struggle arose against the wishes of the democratic state and not by grace of this state's existence; at the same time, however, they allowed themselves to be penetrated by the corruption of the democratic idea which was all the more powerful in that it bathed in a general ambience of prosperity. At this time, capitalism could partly satisfy working class demands when these demands were not yet a threat to the functioning of the capitalist system, but on the contrary, were able to aid its development.

In contrast the decadence of capitalism not only militates against a rise (absolute as well as relative) in proletarian living standards but demands a more intensive exploitation of the class once its struggle is stifled.

To defend its interests, the proletariat cannot attach itself to democratic institutions, as the latter are not of its own making but are bourgeois, existing only to prevent the proletariat from posing its own class demands and developing the political consciousness which enables it to discover the necessity to destroy the bourgeois democratic state.

Democracy and fascism are two forms of domination by the same class: the world bourgeoisie.

Their choice is determined not by the particular and contradictory interests of this class but by its historic, its fundamental interests: the crushing of the proletariat. The proletariat can prevent the emergence of fascist domination only to the extent that, by relying on its own class organisations, it opposes the realisation of the capitalist programme aimed at its destruction as a class, to the extent that it manages to advance towards its own objective: the communist revolution.

The experience of democracy since 1914 has shown that the defence of democracy was the negation of the class struggle. It snuffed out the consciousness of the proletariat and led its vanguard towards the betrayal — now complete — of the communist parties. It failed to prevent the emergence of fascism in those countries where this system imposed itself, and in fact contributed to that process. The tragedy of the Spanish proletariat, hurled into the abyss of the ‘anti-fascist’ war, has definitively exposed the defenders, conscious or otherwise, of bourgeois democracy.

The position of Communists in relation to the unions is linked to a central criterion affirming that the programme of struggle for immediate demands must be the pole of regroupment of the proletariat during a phase when the latter does not act like a class aware of its historic ends and where this programme appears as the only one which challenges the programme of capital. Proletarian consciousness can re-emerge to the extent that partial economic struggles develop to the point where they attain the greater political stage of development which poses the problem of power. “During the period in which capitalism is falling into ruin, the economic struggle of the proletariat transforms itself into a political struggle much more rapidly than in the period of the capitalist system’s peaceful

development. Any important economic conflict can confront workers with the question of revolution” (Second Congress of the Communist International).

Communists have a duty to fight within reformist unions which are today the sole unitary organisations of the masses. But it is on the condition that they must not renounce their activity, which is the safeguard of the proletarian struggle, that communists legitimise their presence in these unions.

Fascist unions are not working class organisations but capitalist creations which impede all revolutionary work.

When the proletariat’s weapon of economic struggle has been destroyed by fascism, communists have a duty to work for the creation of new working class unions. These latter, however, can arise only through the shaking up of social relations. Likewise a new type of unitary organisation cannot be an artificial product, but is a social phenomenon arising from revolutionary situations where the proletariat advances towards the establishment of its own power and is led to create rank-and-file organs such as the soviets. The fundamental characteristics of the proletarian revolution of October 1917 determine the content of future proletarian revolutions.

Within the developments of the class struggle, it represents the progressive continuation of the Paris Commune and the Russian Revolution of 1905 and offers living historic proof of the following theoretical premises:

a) The proletarian revolution can be carried out only by the destruction of the capitalist state and the foundation of the proletarian state - the latter being inevitable in the transition period between

capitalism and communism.

b) In order to attain its historic objective - the extinction of classes - the proletariat must establish its own dictatorship under the direction of its class party. As the party is nothing other than the most conscious fraction of the proletariat, its interests cannot be differentiated from those of that class. It expresses the interests of the whole of the class, their final social goal. By definition, and from the point of view of historic reality there is an absolute identification between the dictatorship of the class and the dictatorship of the party.

On the other hand there exists an irreconcilable opposition between the proletarian dictatorship and the dictatorship of the state.

The proletariat can safeguard its class dictatorship and consequently its historic programme by subjecting the state to the realisation of this programme.

The degeneration of the proletarian revolution finds its specific source not in the dictatorship of the party but in the incorporation of the party into the apparatus of the state. Alternatively the positive content of proletarian revolution, its ceaseless growth, resides in the withering away of the state and not in the development of its organs of coercion and repression.

One of the essential tasks of the communist fractions is to clarify a principled solution to the crucial problem of the administration of the proletarian state, a solution which the Bolsheviki could not give because of the proletariat's lack of experience at that time.

The lessons drawn from the Russian Revolution provide today the following elements of the problem:

- a) The proletarian revolution cannot follow an autonomous course, based upon the originality of a particular geographic or social milieu. It is not the result of the material conditions that have developed in the country in which it arises, but is the product of a political maturation of class tensions on an international scale. The criterion of economic or cultural maturity is to be rejected as much in reference to the more developed countries as to the backward countries. The maturity of the proletarian revolution relates to the historic period, as we have described it in point 2.
- b) The proletarian revolution takes root on a national soil but can develop only by linking up with the struggle of the world proletariat, by placing the proletarian state at the service of this struggle. The central tenet of Marxism that the political revolution must precede the economic revolution only acquires its full significance on the international arena, on the basis of a political annihilation of capitalism, at least in its vital centres.
- c) World socialism, the preface to communism, cannot be the juxtaposition of 'socialist' national economies but is the expression of the international division of labour such as it has appeared under capitalist development, a unitary organisation composed of independent sectors working in solidarity.
- d) Even after the institution of a proletarian state and up until the victory of the world revolution, the laws of capitalist production continue to apply — to a greater or lesser extent — at the very heart of this state, under the pressure of enemy classes who have been expropriated but not destroyed, and also of global capitalism. The latter cannot be overcome on the basis of economic competition, but only on the political terrain, through an intensification of the world-wide class struggle. The tasks of a

victorious proletariat with regard to its own economy must be subordinated to this international task. The limits of the economic programme are laid down by the specific place that the proletarian economy will occupy in the organisation of world socialism.

e) Furthermore the social content of the proletarian revolution does not essentially gauge its strength by the development of the productive forces, but by the extent to which it satisfies the needs of the masses.

The USSR, by breaking away from the world proletariat on the basis of national socialism has stamped a capitalist direction upon its economy, preparing itself for the outbreak of the imperialist war; soviet industrialisation has taken the form of the building up of a war economy.

The duty of communist fractions is to reject any defence - even conditional - of the USSR, instrument of world imperialism.