

Theses on the Nature of the State and the Proletarian Revolution

Gauche Communiste de France
1946

The ICC published this with a lengthy introduction and detailed footnotes. They write that this text was “first published in *Internationalisme*, no 9 (April 1946). Reprinted in *Bulletin d'Etudes et de discussion of Révolution Internationale*, no. 1 and first published in English in the ICC pamphlet *The period of transition from capitalism to socialism.*” From <https://en.internationalism.org/internationalreview/201403/9523/aftermath-world-war-two-debates-how-workers-will-hold-power-after-re>.

1. The state appears in history as the expression of antagonistic interests which divide human society; it is the product and result of antagonistic economic relations. Although the state has played an active role in history, it is above all directly determined by the process of economic development.

It appears to stand above classes but in reality it is the juridical expression of the dominant economic system; it is the super-structure, the political dressing of the economic rule of a given class in society.

The economic relationships between men, the formation of classes, and the place they occupy in society are determined by the development of the productive forces at a given moment. The state's only reason for being is to codify and sanction an already existing economic state of affairs, to give it a legal force which all members of society are obliged to accept. Thus, the state seeks to maintain an equilibrium, a stabilisation of the relations between classes, relations which flow from the economic process itself. At the same time the state seeks to prevent any attempt of the suppressed classes to put society into question by engaging in agitation and disturbances. Thus the state fulfils an important function in society, ensuring the security and order indispensable for the maintenance of production. But it can only do this through its essentially conservative character. In the course of history, the state has appeared as a CONSERVATIVE and REACTIONARY factor of the highest order, a fetter which the evolution and development of the productive forces has constantly had to confront.

2. In order to fulfil its dual role as an agent of security and an agent of reaction, the state bases itself on material force, on violence. Its authority resides in its coercive capacities. It possesses an exclusive monopoly of all the existing forces of violence: police, army and prisons.

In the struggle between classes, the state, while being the representative of the ruling class, tends to develop a certain independence. As the bourgeoisie develops its national formations, its huge concentrated democratic and political units; as the antagonism between the classes reaches higher and higher levels; as the rivalry between the great capitalist states intensifies, the state is forced to develop its coercive forces to the very

limit in order to maintain order. Internally it forces the proletariat and other labouring classes to put up with capitalist exploitation while formally and juridically recognising the freedom of the individual; externally it guarantees the frontiers of the area of economic exploitation against the greed of other capitalist groupings and enlarges them at the expense of other states.

Thus, in the decadent epoch of capitalism when the horizontal and vertical division of society and the struggles engendered by this division have reached a culminating point in human history, the state has also reached a zenith in its development as an organism of coercion and violence.

Having its origin in the historic necessity for violence (the use of coercion being the precondition of its growth), the state tends to resort independently to violence as a means of preserving its own existence. From being a means, violence becomes an end in itself, undertaken and cultivated by the state, which thus negates by its very nature any form of society which goes beyond violence as a way of regulating relations between men.

3. In the complexity of the contradictions which blossom and grow with the development of the capitalist economy, the state is constantly obliged to involve itself in every area of life: economic, social cultural, political; in the private life of each individual and in his relations with society on a local, national or world-wide scale.

In order to cope with its immense social obligations, the state has to call upon the services of an ever-growing mass of people, removing them from productive activity and creating a social spectrum apart, with its own interests, whose speciality and responsibility is the maintenance of the governmental state machine.

An important section of society (10% and perhaps more) thus constitutes an independent social stratum (politicians, the judiciary, the police and the army) with its own economic interests, living parasitically off society, their exclusive sphere of interest being the state apparatus.

This social stratum, beginning as servants of society in the hands of the ruling class, tends, because of its size and above all because of its place in society at the head of the state machinery, to free itself more and more and to put itself forward as the master of society, assimilating the ruling class into this tendency. It has an exclusive monopoly of the public finances, the right to dictate and interpret laws, and the material force of violence with which to apply these laws in its own interests.

Thus we can see the emergence of a new privileged social stratum which derives its material existence from the existence of the state, a parasitic and essentially reactionary stratum concerned with the perpetuation of the state, relatively independent, but always associated with the class whose economic system is based on the exploitation of man by man and whose main principle is the perpetuation of human exploitation and the protection of its economic and social privileges.

4. The development of technology and of the productive forces can no longer be imprisoned in the bourgeois principle of the private ownership of the means of production. Even capitalist production is obliged to violate the sacrosanct principle of private ownership and have recourse to the capitalist nationalisation of certain branches of the economy, such as the railways, the post, and to some extent aviation, the merchant marine, metallurgy and the mines. State intervention increasingly makes itself felt throughout the economy and this is obviously done to safeguard the capitalist system as a whole. Moreover, in the class struggle between conflicting forces in society, between classes and economic groupings, the state can only play its role as a representative, mediating force by supporting itself on a material, economic, independent, solid base.

In this historic evolution of capitalist society, the state takes on a new character, a new role – that of the state as boss. While maintaining and even accentuating its political functions, the capitalist state has evolved on the economic terrain towards state capitalism. Either the state levies part of the surplus-value generated in the sectors where private ownership of the means of production still exists, just like any other capital (bank or finance); or it directly exploits state-owned sectors as a single collective employer in order to create surplus value. This surplus value is shared out among the functionaries of the state (except for the part which is capitalised by being reinvested in production) according to the ranks and privileges they have obtained.

The economic tendency towards state capitalism, while being unable to reach complete socialisation and collectivisation within capitalist society, is nevertheless a very real tendency which, to some extent, frees the state from playing a strictly instrumental role and gives it a new economic character as a collective, anonymous employer which collectively extracts surplus-value.

Although the private ownership of the means of production was the fundamental basis of the economic system of capitalism and remains so today, it can, in the final phase of capitalism, undergo profound modifications without threatening the basic principles of capitalist economy. Far from signifying the end of the system, the more or less large-scale statification of the means of production is in perfect accord with the system and can even be the condition for the system's survival, providing that the fundamental principle of capitalism still exists: that is to say the extraction of surplus value from the working class for the benefit of a powerful and privileged minority. The fundamental opposition between the capitalist economy and the socialist economy does not therefore reside in the private possession of the means of production. While socialism is incompatible with the private ownership of the means of production, the absence of private ownership (although an indispensable precondition for the creation of a socialist economy) is by no means in itself identical to socialism, since reality has demonstrated how capitalism can accommodate itself to the statification of the means of production by moving towards state capitalism.

The fundamental opposition between the capitalist economy and socialism is to be found:

1. in the motive force and aim of production. Under capitalism this is the quest for a greater and greater amount of surplus value; the aim of socialism, on the other hand, is the satisfaction of the needs of society and its members;
2. in the fact that under capitalism, in the immediate redistribution of the products and values created, a smaller and smaller fraction of the values created are given over to consumption, the largest part being reinvested in order to expand production. Under socialism an increasing proportion of the values created is immediately consumed by the producers. That part of the values produced which is directly consumable must tend to increase in relation to the part which is invested in production in order to contribute to the process of reproduction.

Thus, far from representing any weakening of capitalist society, the state's growing tendency towards economic and political independence merely serves to transform the economic power of capitalism to the state by elevating the latter until it becomes the real seat of power in capitalism. In reaction to the proletariat and its historic mission of creating a socialist society, the capitalist state takes on the appearance of a Goliath. By its very nature the state represents the whole past history of humanity, of all the exploiting classes and reactionary forces in history. Its very character, as we have shown, being one of CONSERVATISM, VIOLENCE, BUREAUCRACY, THE DEFENCE OF PRIVILEGES AND OF ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION, it is the incarnation of the principle of oppression and is irreconcilably opposed to the principle of liberation, incarnated by the proletariat and

socialism.

5. Up until now all new classes have simply substituted their domination and privileges for that of other classes; the economic development of the new class unfolded slowly and over a long period prior to the establishment of its political hegemony. Because their economic interests (which coincided with the development of the productive forces) were the interests of a minority, of a single class, their power developed within the old society, first of all on the economic level. It is only after reaching a certain degree of economic development, after economically supplanting or partially absorbing the old ruling class, that the political power, i.e. the state and the juridical system, came to sanctify the new state of affairs. The bourgeoisie developed its economic domination over a long period, strengthening the power of merchant capital. It was only when the bourgeoisie had achieved its economic domination over the old feudal society that it carried out its political revolution. The bourgeois revolution had to break the resistance of feudalism and its ideological superstructure because feudal law had become a fetter on the development of the productive forces; but it did not destroy the state. Because the underlying principle of the state is the defence of exploitation of man by man, the bourgeoisie merely had to seize hold of the state machine and continue to use it in its own class interests. The revolutionary process in previous class societies was, thus, as follows:

- a. the economic rise and strengthening of the new class within the old society;
- b. its economic domination, a peaceful economic revolution;
- c. a violent political revolution sanctifying the economic state of affairs;
- d. the maintaining of the state apparatus in order to use it in the interests of the new class;
- e. the gradual absorption of the old ruling classes who live on within the new ruling class.

6. However, unlike the other classes in history, the proletariat does not possess any wealth, any instrument of labour, any material property. It cannot build any economic system inside capitalist society. Its position as a revolutionary class resides in the objective evolution of society, which makes the existence of private property incompatible with the development of the productive forces, makes the continued production of surplus value an impossibility. Capitalist society is faced with an insufficient market for the realisation of the surplus value it creates. The objective necessity for a socialist society, insofar as socialism is the dialectical solution to the internal contradictions of the capitalist system, finds in the proletariat the only class whose interests coincide with the needs of historical evolution. This last class in history, possessing nothing, having no privileges to defend, complies with the historic necessity for the suppression of all privileges. The proletariat is the only class which can carry out this revolutionary task of suppressing every privilege, all private property, of liberating the productive forces from their capitalist fetters and developing them in the interests of humanity. The proletariat does not and cannot have any economic policy inside the capitalist system.

The proletariat has no class economy to set up before or after the revolution. In contrast to other classes, and for the first time in history, the revolution of the proletariat begins as a political revolution which precedes and creates the conditions for a social-economic transformation. The economic liberation of the proletariat is an economic liberation from the fetters of all class interests; it is the disappearance of all classes. The proletariat liberates itself by liberating the whole of humanity, by dissolving itself into the latter.

The state, the incarnation of class rule and economic oppression, cannot be conquered by the proletariat in the classic sense. On the contrary, the first step towards the proletariat's emancipation is the revolutionary destruction of the state. Not having any

economic power, nor any economic property, the proletariat draws its strength from the consciousness which it acquires from the objective historical laws of the economic process. Its strength lies exclusively in its CONSCIOUSNESS and its capacity for ORGANISATION. The class party, which crystallises the consciousness of the class, represents the indispensable precondition for the realisation of the proletariat's historic mission, just as its unitary organs of struggle represent its practical material capacity for action.

Because other classes in history had economic power in society, they could more or less do without a party; they were themselves hardly conscious of where their actions were leading and they identified themselves with the state, the incarnation of privilege and oppression. But at every moment of its activity as a class, the proletariat comes up against the state – the proletariat is the historical antithesis of the state.

The conquest of the state by an EXPLOITING class in a given country marked the end of an historical process and was the last revolutionary act of that class. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE STATE by the proletariat is simply THE FIRST REVOLUTIONARY ACT OF THE CLASS, which opens the way for the proletariat and its party towards a whole revolutionary process, leading at first to the WORLD REVOLUTION and then on the economic terrain to the creation of a SOCIALIST SOCIETY.

7. There is a great historical gulf between, on the one hand, the level attained by the productive forces, which have entered into conflict with the capitalist system, and which have to go beyond the framework of that system and, on the other hand, the level of development necessary for the advent of socialist society, for the full satisfaction of the needs of everyone in society. This gulf cannot be wiped out by a simple programmatic declaration, as the anarchists believe, but must be bridged on the economic terrain by an economic policy, the economic policy of the proletariat. This is why theory posits the inevitability of a historic period of transition between capitalism and socialism – a transition period in which political power, and not economic power, is in the hands of the revolutionary class. This is the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The development of the economic foundations of socialism is the political task of the proletariat and its party and cannot be undertaken on a national terrain, but only on a world-wide scale. Capitalism is a world system. The world domination of capital ensures that the economic development of the different sectors of the world economy and of different branches of industry can only take place within the limits imposed by the interests of capital.

In other words, the development of different sectors and branches of the world economy is being severely handicapped. Socialism, on the other hand, is based on a very high economic development of all sectors of the world economy. The liberation of the productive forces from their capitalist fetters by the proletarian revolution is, therefore, the first precondition for the economic evolution of society towards socialism.

The economic policy of the proletariat develops on the basis of the generalisation of the revolution onto the world scale; its content resides not in a one-sided affirmation of the development of production, but essentially in the establishment of a harmonious rhythm between the development of production and a proportional rise in the living standards of the producers.

The period of transition expresses an economic continuity with the pre-socialist epoch in the sense that it cannot yet satisfy all the needs of society and contains within it the necessity of continuing accumulation. But any policy which bases itself on the maximum accumulation in order to expand production has no proletarian content and is simply the continuation of the capitalist economy. The economic policy of the proletariat,

therefore, is based on a necessary accumulation which is compatible with, and conditioned by, the improvement of the workers' living standards, with a relative and progressive increase in variable capital.

After its victory over the bourgeoisie, the proletariat on the one hand becomes the politically dominant class, which with its class party assures its class dictatorship throughout the period of transition in order to lead society towards socialism; on the other hand, the proletariat remains a class in production which has particular immediate economic interests to defend and it must, therefore, continue to make these interests prevail through its own economic organisations – the unions – and its own methods of struggle – the strike – throughout the period of transition.

8. The revolutionary destruction of the capitalist state, the instrument of class domination, does not mean that the economic power of the enemy class has been destroyed or that it has disappeared. The expropriation and socialisation of the key sectors of production are the first, indispensable measures of the proletariat's economic policy. The existence of backward sectors of the economy, particularly in agriculture, does not permit an immediate transition to a socialist economy or a total abolition of private property. Socialism cannot be built by mere decrees; it is the fruit of a long economic process in which the methods of socialism have to combat and defeat the methods of capitalism on an economic terrain.

The existence of these backward economic sectors, the inevitable survival of private property, represents a real danger: the soil of economic conservatism, of the consolidation and regeneration of those social forces which stand in the way of the movement towards socialism.

The period of transition is a period of bitter struggle between capitalism and socialism; in this struggle the proletariat will have the advantage of having won political power but this is not an automatic guarantee of its final victory.

The outcome of the struggle, the guarantee of the proletariat's final victory resides exclusively in the strength of consciousness in the class and its ability to translate this consciousness into practical politics.

Any political mistake, any tactical error, will strengthen the position of the class enemy. The elimination of the political formations of the class enemy, of its organisations and press, is an indispensable measure for breaking its resistance. But this is not enough. The proletariat must above all safeguard the independence of its own class organisations, preventing them from being deformed by taking up tasks and functions which do not correspond to their real nature. The party, which represents the consciousness of the historic mission of the class and of its final goal, exercises the dictatorship in the name of the proletariat; the trade union, the unitary organ of the class which expresses its economic position and which has to defend the immediate interests of the class, must not identify with the state or become integrated into it.

9. The state, insofar as it is reconstituted after the revolution, expresses the immaturity of the conditions for a socialist society. It is the political superstructure of an economic base which is not yet socialist. By its nature it is opposed to and hostile towards socialism. Just as the period of transition is an historically inevitable stage which the proletariat has to go through, so the state is for the proletariat an unavoidable instrument of violence which it must use against the dispossessed classes, but with which it cannot identify itself. "AND THE LEAST ONE CAN SAY IS THAT THE STATE IS A NECESSARY EVIL WHICH IS INHERITED BY THE PROLETARIAT IN ITS STRUGGLE FOR CLASS DOMINATION" (Engels, Preface to *The Civil War in France*).

As a social institution, the state set up after the victory of the proletarian insurrection remains alien and hostile to socialism.

Expropriation and nationalisation, the problems of managing the economy, the historic unpreparedness of the labouring classes and the proletariat to direct the economy, the need to have recourse to technical specialists, to men who come out of the ranks of the exploiting classes and their servants, the disastrous state of the economy following the civil war, all these are historical factors which will tend to strengthen the state machine and its fundamental characteristics of conservatism and coercion. The historic necessity for the proletariat to make use of the state must not lead to the fatal theoretical and political error of identifying this instrument with socialism. The state, like a prison, is not a symbol of socialism, nor of the class whose mission is to create it: the proletariat.

The dictatorship of the proletariat, expressing the will of the revolutionary class to crush the resistance of the enemy and to ensure the movement towards a socialist society, also expresses its fundamental opposition to the idea of the proletarian nature of the state, the error of identifying the dictatorship of the proletariat with the utilisation by the proletariat of this instrument of coercion, the state.

10. When the proletariat becomes master of society through the victory of the revolution against the bourgeoisie, it will be faced with a social situation which is not yet ripe for socialism but which can only attain this ripeness under the proletariat's leadership. In every sphere – economic, political, cultural, social – the proletariat will inherit remnants of nations and all kinds of backward superstructures, institutions and ideologies which the proletariat cannot abolish by a simple act of will. It will have to take them into account, to fight against them, to attenuate their most pernicious effects. Violence is not the essential means for doing this; it can only be used strictly in proportion to the violence used by the class enemy in order to crush him. Violence must absolutely and categorically be rejected in the relations between the proletariat and other labouring classes, and within itself. In a general way, the methods used to move towards socialism are closely related to the goal that is being sought after, in other words, to socialism itself.

In the beginning of the transition period, the proletariat will be forced to make use of instruments bequeathed to it by the whole past history of violence and class rule. The state is such an instrument; it is the very symbol of violence, plunder and oppression. The proletariat inherits this instrument and can only use it on the condition that:

1. it recognises and proclaims the anti-socialist nature of the state and at no time identifies itself with it; it must constantly stand against the state with its own class organs, the party and the unions, ensuring that the state is under the perpetual vigilance and control of the whole class;
2. it attenuates the pernicious effects of the state as far as possible, as in the Paris Commune (Engels, Preface to *The Civil War in France*).

The Russian experience has amply vindicated Marx and Engels' warnings concerning the dangers of the state and the need to take measures against these dangers.

These measures include: the working masses electing representatives who are revocable at any time; destruction of any armed force separate from the people and its replacement by the general armament of the proletariat and the toiling classes; the widest possible democracy for the working class and its organisations; vigilant and permanent control by the whole class over the functioning of the state; state functionaries to be paid no more than a workman's wage. Such measures must cease to be mere formulae; they must be carried out to the letter and strengthened as far as possible by complementary social and political measures.

History and the Russian experience, in particular, have demonstrated that there is no such thing as a proletarian state as such, but only a state in the hands of the proletariat, a state whose nature remains anti-socialist. If the political vigilance of the proletariat weakens, the state will become the stronghold, the rallying point and the expression of the dispossessed classes of a re-born capitalism.

The trade unions after the revolution

11. The trade unions, unitary organs for the defence of the proletariat's economic interests, have their origins in the mechanisms of production. They arise out of the necessity for the proletariat to struggle against economic exploitation, against the extraction of an ever-growing mass of surplus value, i.e. an increase in unpaid labour-time.

By increasing productivity the development of technology diminishes the labour-time necessary for the reproduction of labour power. Under capitalism greater productivity does not tend to reduce labour-time nor create a proportional amelioration of the workers' living standards. On the contrary, the capitalists' search for greater productivity is carried out purely and simply to increase the production of surplus value.

The conflict between capital and labour, constant capital and variable capital, capitalism and the proletariat, is centred round an economic problem; the role of the two forces in production is based on a fundamental antagonism which gives rise to a continuous class struggle. In this struggle against capitalism, the proletariat organises for the defence of its immediate interests through an association of all those who are exploited: the trade union.

However much the trade unions have come under the influence of the agents of the bourgeoisie, i.e. the reformist bureaucracy, whose policies sabotage and deflect the role of the unions, they remain organs of the class as long as they maintain their independence from the capitalist state.

12. The proletarian revolution will not immediately do away with classes and with relations of production between different classes. The victorious revolution is simply "the organisation of the proletariat as the ruling class" which through its party opens up an historic path, an economic tendency which begins from the existence of classes and of exploitation and ends up in a classless society.

This period of transition between capitalism and socialism under the political dictatorship of the proletariat expresses itself on the economic terrain in an energetic policy which aims to diminish class exploitation, to constantly increase the proletariat's share of the national income, to alter the relationship between variable and constant capital in favour of the former. This policy cannot simply be based on programmatic declarations of the party; still less is it the prerogative of the state, the organ of coercion and of management. This policy can only find a guarantee and a real expression in the working class itself, through the pressure which the class exerts over society, through its opposition to, and struggle against, all other classes.

Trade union organisation under capitalism represents a tendency towards the regroupment of the class against exploitation, which is constantly being held back and blocked by the influence and repression of the ruling bourgeoisie. It is only after the revolution that the trade union organisations will really become the unitary organs of the class, regrouping all the workers without exception. Only then will the unions really be able to undertake the defence of the proletariat's immediate economic interests.

13. The role of trade union organisations after the revolution does not derive simply from the fact that they are the only organisations that can undertake the defence of the proletariat's immediate interests, even though this in itself is enough justification for

complete freedom and independence for the trade unions and for the rejection of any subordination or integration of the unions into the state. But more than this, the trade union organisations are an extremely sensitive living barometer which can quickly show whether the main trend in society is towards socialism (through the proportional increase of variable capital) or towards capitalism (through a much larger proportional growth of constant capital). When there is any oscillation in economic administration towards capitalist policies (as a result of economic pressures which come from immature conditions and from surviving non-proletarian classes), the proletariat, by means of its independent union and its specific struggles, will have to react and intervene thereby providing a social counterweight which will push economic policy back onto a socialist path.

To give trade unions the role of managing the economy will not eliminate the essential problems that arise out of this economic situation. This would not solve the difficulties which are engendered by a real lack of maturity in the economy, but such a role would deprive the proletariat and its organisations of their freedom. It would destroy the proletariat's capacity to exert the pressure necessary both for the defence of its immediate interests and for guaranteeing a socialist policy for the economy.

14. Under capitalism, the trade unions provide a very imperfect reflection of the level of class consciousness. This consciousness can only be fully acquired by the proletariat after the revolution when it is free from all the shackles imposed on it by the bourgeoisie and its agents, the reformist leaders.

After the revolution, the trade unions will reflect much more clearly the level of consciousness that the whole class has reached and will provide a milieu for the political education of the masses. Communists draw their inspiration from the conception that the defence of the revolution and the building of socialism cannot be achieved by the will of a small elite, but finds its strength only in the political maturity of the proletarian masses. Violence exerted against the proletarian masses, even if it aims at guaranteeing progress towards socialism, can in no way provide such a guarantee.

Socialism cannot be a rape of the proletariat, created against its will. Socialism can only be based on the consciousness and will of the working class. Communists reject all methods of violence within the proletariat because such methods stand in the way of any movement towards socialism, because they obstruct the class from attaining an understanding of its historic mission. Within the unions communists will fight for full freedom of expression and political criticism. It is among the proletariat organised in the unions that communists will fight for their political positions, against all the tendencies which reflect the persistence of bourgeois and petty bourgeois influences within the proletariat and within certain backward strata of the class. Freedom for fractions and tendencies within the unions, freedom of speech and of the press for all the currents inside the unions: these are the conditions which will enable the class party to recognise and evaluate the level of consciousness in the masses, to guarantee the movement towards socialism through the political education of the masses, to verify its own policies and correct them when necessary.

The relationship between party and class is simply the relationship between the party and the unions.

15. Any tendency to reduce the role of the trade unions after the revolution; any pretence that the existence of a 'workers' state' means the end of freedom to engage in union activity or strikes; any advocacy of fusing the unions with the state through the theory of handing economic administration over to the unions, which seems revolutionary but which in fact leads to an incorporation of the unions into the state machine; any position which, however revolutionary in its intentions, calls for violence within the proletariat and its organisations; any attempt to stand in the way of the broadest workers' democracy and

the free-play of political struggle and of fractions within the unions: any such policies are anti-working class. They falsify the relationship between party and class and weaken the proletariat's position during the transition period. The duty of communists will be to energetically denounce and fight against all these tendencies and to work for the full development and independence of the trade union movement, which is an indispensable condition for the victory of socialism.

Management of the economy

16. The management of the economy after the civil war is the most difficult and complex problem which the proletariat and its party will have to face. It would be puerile to try to provide a priori solutions to all the practical aspects of this problem. It would transform marxism into a system of rigid precepts, valid and applicable at any time regardless of the various concrete and circumstantial situations which could arise in different countries and sectors of the economy.

It is only through practical study that we will be able to find the necessary solutions to any situation that may arise. Following Marx and Engels, we can today only give a broad outline, provide the general principles of economic management during the transitional period, basing ourselves mainly on the experience of the Russian revolution.

17. The achievement of socialism demands a very advanced development of technology and of the productive forces. Following the victory of the revolution, the proletariat will not have a fully developed technology at its disposal. This is not because the revolution is premature; on the contrary, the development of the productive forces has reached its limit under capitalism. This fact justifies the assertion that the objective conditions for revolution are present. Capitalism has become a fetter on the development of the productive forces and must be destroyed. It is up to the proletariat to conduct a policy which will allow a full development of the productive forces so that socialism can become an economic reality.

The development of technology and of the productive forces is the basis of the economic policy of the proletariat. This requires an accumulation of part of the values produced in order to improve, intensify and ensure an expanded reproduction. But socialism is not simply a result of the speed with which the productive forces develop; the rhythm of the movement towards socialism will be subordinated to, and limited to, the concrete possibilities given by the real economic and political situation.

18. The management of the economy can at no time be separated from the development of the political struggle of the class, and this means on an international scale. A revolution that is victorious in one country cannot simply seek to develop its own economy, independently from the struggle of the proletariat in other countries. The Russian revolution has given us historic proof of the fact that the attempt to develop the economy in Russia outside of an ascendant movement of the revolution in other countries led Russia into a policy of compromises with world capitalism, a policy of external pacts and economic agreements and internal concessions. These compromises turned out to be just so many ways of economically propping up a capitalist system in open crisis, saving it from collapsing. But at the same time, these compromises had a deeply disturbing effect on a proletariat which was in the throes of a revolutionary struggle (the secret Rapallo Treaty of 1922 between the Soviet state and German militarism, for example).

The economic agreements which were aimed simply at achieving a partial strengthening of the country of the revolution in fact led to a political and economic reinforcement of capitalism, an overturn in the balance of class forces in favour of capitalism. Thus the country of the victorious revolution accentuated its isolation and lost its only ally, the only guarantee of its ultimate development: the international revolution. It ended up as a

political and economic force diverted by the growing pressure of its historic enemy and was reabsorbed into the capitalist system.

The economic policy of the proletariat in one country cannot aim at the resolution of that country's economic difficulties or the overcoming of underdevelopment within the narrow framework of one country. The future of that economy is indissolubly linked and directly subordinated to the development of the international revolution. Any internal economic policy must be of a provisional character and essentially aimed at helping the international revolution.

19. The Russian experience has also shown that the attempt to accelerate the rhythm of production beyond a proportionate development of consumption will lead to the production of goods destined for destruction. This is in line with the general tendency of world capitalism in its decadent phase which can only ensure the continuation of production by setting up a war economy.

Against this policy of speeding up industrial development as much as possible, of sacrificing the immediate interests of the proletariat in order to build a war economy, a genuine proletarian economic policy will be based on a rate of growth which is proportionate to the consumption requirements of the producers, and will therefore aim at the production of consumer goods immediately necessary for the satisfaction of workers' needs.

Accumulation will not be based on the criterion of developing industry as quickly as possible, but will be fixed at a rate which is compatible with the progressive satisfaction of immediate needs. The fundamental principles of economic management will be the production of basic necessities, and the gradual harmonisation of the various branches of production, particularly between town and country, industry and agriculture.

20. As long as the productive forces have not reached a level of development which can do away with small-scale production in every branch of the economy, there can be no question of the complete and immediate disappearance of intermediary classes, of the artisans and small peasants.

After the revolution the proletariat will only be able to collectivise the developed and concentrated sectors of industry, the key industries: transport, banking, big landed property. It will expropriate the big bourgeoisie. But small private property will continue to exist and will only be abolished through a long economic process. Alongside the socialist sector of the economy there will still be a private sector of small producers. The economic relations between these sectors will probably take many forms, from socialist relations to co-operative ones and to the free exchange of commodities between the state and the small-holders and even between the individual, isolated producers themselves. Problems of production, of exchange prices, markets and money will also take many different forms. The economic policy of the proletariat will have to take this situation into account, rejecting bureaucratic violence as a way of regulating economic life and basing itself solely on the real possibilities of absorbing private production through the development of technology. It will aim at the elimination of private property and the isolated producer through the incorporation of these strata into the great family of the proletariat.

21. The management of economic and social life requires a centralised organism. The theory which would give each group of producers the task of managing their own enterprises is a reactionary petty bourgeois utopia. The development of technology requires the participation of the great mass of the workers, their cooperation in the productive process.

Production in each branch of the economy is linked to the whole of national and international production. It calls for the setting in motion of immense forces and for systematic planning, and only a centralised administration can ensure this. Otherwise one would

have to transform each member and group of society into so many small proprietors, each with their own antagonistic interests, which would mean a return to the epoch of simple commodity production long since wiped out from history by the development of industry. Socialist society will engender its own organs of social and economic administration. In the period of transition, the function of economic management can only be undertaken by the political power which emerges from the revolution and which, under the control of the entire working population, will manage and direct the economy.

The broadest, most effective and most direct participation of all the workers at every level of the new power will be the only way of ensuring that the economy is under the management of the workers themselves. The Paris Commune gave us the first example of this new kind of state, while the Russian revolution reaffirmed this first attempt and gave it its definitive form in the organs of representation of all the workers at their workplace and in their localities: the councils or soviets.

22. Everyone who works will participate in the elections to organs of direction and management. Only those who do not work or who live off the labour of others will be excluded. The interests of all the working masses will be expressed in the councils, including those of the non-proletarian strata. The proletariat, because of its consciousness, its political strength, the place it occupies at the industrial heart of the economy, because of its concentration in the towns and factories, having acquired a sense of organisation and discipline, will play a preponderant role in the whole life and activity of the councils and will give leadership and direction to the other strata of the labouring population.

In the councils, the proletarians will for the first time learn the art of administering society for themselves. The party will not impose its economic policies on the councils through decrees or by claiming some divine right. It will have to make its conceptions and policies prevail by proposing them, defending them, and submitting them to the approval of the masses organised in the councils or soviets, relying on the councils of workers and on the workers' delegates to the central councils to bring its class policies to a successful conclusion.

23. Just as the relationship between party and class is expressed through the trade unions, so the relationship the proletariat and its party have with other labouring classes is expressed through the councils or soviets. Just as violence within the class can only falsify its relationship with the party, so there must be a rejection of violence in the relations between the proletariat and the other labouring classes and strata. These relations must be based on full freedom of expression and criticism within the councils of workers' and peasants' delegates.

In a general sense, violence as a method of activity in the hands of the proletariat will be indispensable for destroying the rule of capitalism and its state, and for guaranteeing the victory of the proletariat against the resistance and violence of the counter-revolutionary classes during the civil war. But apart from this, violence can play no part in the constructive task of building socialism. On the contrary, it contains the risk of deviating the proletariat's activity, of falsifying its relationship with other labouring strata, and of distorting its capacity to find class solutions to the problems which confront it, solutions which can only be based on the development of the political maturity of the masses.