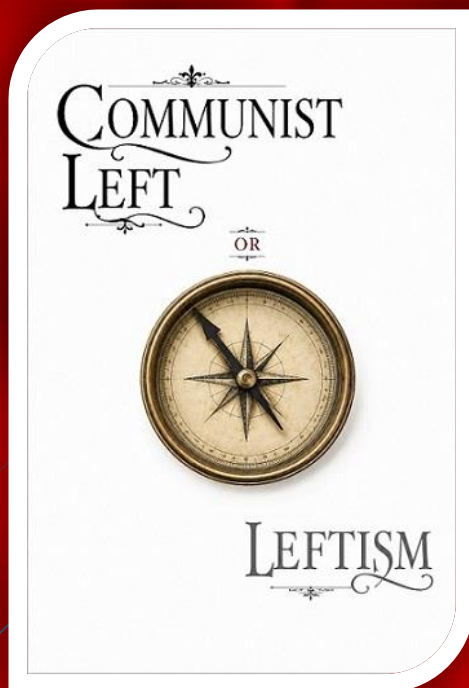


A Polemic with the International Communist Party (il Partito): Communist Left or Leftism?



Internationalist Voice

Addresses of the Internationalist Voice

Homepage:

www.internationalistvoice.org

Email:

contact@internationalistvoice.org

X (formerly Twitter):

https://twitter.com/int_voice

Telegram:

<https://t.me/intvoice>



*Communist Revolution
or the Destruction of Humanity!*

A Note on This Polemic

Marxism is a living and dynamic tradition that is continually enriched in the light of the experience of the class struggle. Enriching this tradition on the basis of the achievements and lessons of the class struggle makes discussion, criticism and polemic among internationalists indispensable. From this perspective, political polemic is an important form of solidarity with and support for communist tendencies. This is also one of the important lessons we have inherited from the tradition of **Bilan** and, more broadly, from the tradition of the Communist Left.

The proletarian movement cannot take effective steps forward in the class struggle without political clarity. Internationalists must participate actively and dynamically in debates and, through polemic, contribute to clarifying the positions and orientations within the proletarian political milieu. Such clarity can only be achieved through the open and frank confrontation of differing viewpoints, mutual criticism and political polemic.

In this polemic, we emphasise the proletarian and communist character of the tendencies with which we are engaging in debate. For this reason, we never forget that those with whom we are polemicising are comrades, sisters and brothers who consider themselves part of the tradition of the Communist Left. Therefore, despite the seriousness and frankness of our criticisms, the language of this polemic remains comradely and within the framework of communist solidarity. Our sole aim is to clarify political and theoretical differences and to contribute to deepening our common understanding of communist tasks in the class struggle.

For this reason, the text of this polemic was made available to the comrades concerned prior to publication. This is important to us because a political polemic can only lead to a fruitful outcome when it is based on an accurate understanding of the positions of both sides, rather than on misunderstanding, misinterpretation or the attribution of positions that the other side has not adopted.

The aim of every communist polemic should be to achieve greater clarity within the proletarian political milieu. A polemic that, instead of clarifying positions, adds to confusion cannot be said to have fulfilled its purpose. We therefore hope that this polemic, too, will be a step towards greater clarity within the proletarian political milieu and towards strengthening the internationalist and communist struggle.

Support Internationalist Voice!

A fundamental pillar of revolutionary work is to systematically intervene and provide a perspective for the development of the struggle of the working class. The existence of a revolutionary tendency, though very weak, is a manifestation of the antagonism between the social classes and is a barometer of the class struggle.

A revolutionary tendency is only supported against the enormous resources of the bourgeoisie propaganda machine by those who are against the capitalist society, exploitation, wage slavery etc. Internationalist Voice is truly internationalist without any illusions about nationalism, democracy, and the left of capital, and defends the Communist Left tradition. Internationalist Voice is fighting for the Communist Revolution and needs your support in its struggle, in its defence of proletarian values and principles. Support Internationalist Voice.

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Introduction

The International Communist Party (il Partito)¹ is one of the organisations within the tradition of the Communist Left, whose political and theoretical origins lie in the Italian Left Fraction. Both during the activity of the Italian Left Fraction and in the period that followed—particularly throughout the dark years of the counter-revolution—it was among the very few organisations that consistently defended proletarian internationalism and the principles of revolutionary Marxism. The International Communist Party (il Partito) has sections in a number of countries and publishes periodicals in several languages. By virtue of its internationalist positions, its adherence to the tradition of the Communist Left, and its decades-long defence of proletarian principles, the Party bears a particular responsibility for defending communist positions and the historical tradition of the Communist Left.

Proletarian internationalism is not an abstract or merely moral principle; it is the guide to communist practice under the concrete conditions of the class struggle, especially during periods of imperialist war. For this reason, the defence of internationalism cannot be confined to the proclamation of general principles; it also requires efforts to organise the political response of the working class to the barbarism of capitalism. The experience of the Zimmerwald Conference and the struggle waged by the revolutionaries against the First World War demonstrated that, despite theoretical and organisational differences, internationalist communists can adopt a common position against imperialist wars on the basis of shared principles. From this standpoint, efforts to issue joint statements and appeals do not imply disregarding political differences; rather, they seek to emphasise the fundamental common interests of the proletariat in opposition to the world bourgeoisie and all imperialist camps.

¹ The contact details for the International Communist Party are as follows:

- Website: www.international-communist-party.org
- Email: icparty@interncommparty.org

With the outbreak of the imperialist war between Russia and NATO-backed Ukraine, several groups within the Communist Left proposed issuing a joint statement in order to condemn the war with a single voice and reaffirm the necessity of the class struggle against all imperialist poles. The International Communist Party (il Partito) not only declined to support this initiative but also published no political explanation for its refusal to participate. Consequently, it remained unclear whether the Party objected to the very principle of joint action, disagreed with the content of the proposed statement, or had other reasons for its non-participation.

The same situation arose following the outbreak of the war between Israel and Palestine. Once again, a number of groups within the Communist Left issued a call for a joint statement and, referring to the experience of the Zimmerwald Conference, emphasised the necessity of defending the internationalist tradition of the Communist Left. Nevertheless, the International Communist Party (il Partito) once again remained silent and offered no explanation of its position.

In June 2025, coinciding with the war between the United States and Israel on the one hand and Iran on the other, *Internationalist Voice* sent a letter to organisations of the Communist Left calling for the adoption of a common position in response to this imperialist war. This appeal also went unanswered by the International Communist Party (il Partito), which offered no explanation for its refusal to participate.

Shortly afterwards, with the outbreak of the latest war in the Middle East—which drew more countries into the conflict and had far-reaching consequences for the international working class, the world economy, and the capitalist order—*Internationalist Voice* once again called upon organisations of the Communist Left to adopt a common position in defence of proletarian internationalism. Yet the International Communist Party (il Partito) once again failed to respond to this initiative, thereby continuing its pattern of silence in the face of appeals for joint internationalist action.

Of course, this issue is not limited solely to the International Communist Party (ICP). All groups and organisations that received the letters and appeals from *Internationalist Voice* but declined to respond or state their position without providing any political explanation are confronted with a common question. Every political organisation has the right to oppose a joint appeal or statement; however, from the perspective of the Marxist and Communist Left tradition, political opposition should be expressed openly, with reasoned arguments and in a manner that allows for criticism and debate. Silence neither facilitates reciprocal criticism nor helps to clarify political disagreements. Consequently, such an approach not only fails to contribute to the development of theoretical debate within Communist Left and to political clarity in the proletarian milieu, but is also incompatible with the political responsibility expected of an internationalist current.

Therefore, the central issue is not simply the refusal to sign one or more joint statements. The fundamental question is what responsibility an internationalist current—particularly one that considers itself a continuation of the historical tradition of the Italian Communist Left—has when confronted with repeated proposals for joint action against imperialist wars. If it does not agree with these initiatives, should it not publicly state its political reasons, thereby making discussion and reciprocal criticism possible? Is repeated silence compatible with a tradition that has always emphasised theoretical struggle, political clarity, and internationalist responsibility?

The purpose of this discussion is to examine these very questions. The argument advanced here is that the repeated silence of the ICP (il Partito) cannot simply be reduced to a disagreement over the issuing of one or more joint statements. In our view, this silence reflects ambiguities in the understanding and fulfilment of communist and internationalist responsibilities—ambiguities that must be examined and criticised in the light of the historical tradition of the Communist Left, the experience of the revolutionary movement, and the requirements of the class struggle under present conditions. Only through such an examination can it be

assessed to what extent the approach of this party corresponds with the theoretical and political legacy of the Communist Left, and to what extent it is consistent with the responsibilities that an internationalist organisation bears towards the world working class.

Imperialist War and the Communist Left

The opposition of communists to imperialist wars does not stem from pacifism, abstract humanitarianism, or moral considerations, but from the standpoint of the independent interests of the working class and the perspective of communist revolution. Consequently, communists are not, and cannot be, opposed to all wars in general; rather, they oppose wars that serve the interests of exploiting classes and the competition between capitalist states.

With the entry of capitalism into the era of decline and imperialism—of which the First World War represented a historic turning point—wars ceased to express the progressive role of any class. Instead, they became wars for the redistribution of markets, resources, spheres of influence, and the reconfiguration of the balance of power between capitalist states. From this perspective, in the era of imperialism, all wars between capitalist states, regardless of their slogans or ideological justifications, are imperialist in character, and none are worthy of the support of the proletariat.

The only exception is the revolutionary war of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. Following the victory of the communist revolution, the bourgeoisie will inevitably resort to civil war in an attempt to regain power, just as, after the October Revolution, it imposed a civil war on the workers' state through the White armies and the intervention of capitalist powers. Under such conditions, the armed defence of the revolution and its achievements is not only compatible with proletarian internationalism but is also an inseparable part of the class struggle and a duty of communists.

On this basis, the International Communist Party (il Partito) correctly assesses the current war in the Middle East as an imperialist war. The party also emphasises that, as long as the capitalist system remains in existence, imperialist wars will not be brought to an end through pacifism, diplomacy, the den of thieves (the United Nations)—an institution that serves the global capitalist order—or through any other

bourgeois institutions. Rather, imperialist wars can only be ended through the expansion of the proletariat's class struggle. This is because the class struggle, in the course of its development and deepening, leads to a revolutionary confrontation with the capitalist system, its overthrow, and the establishment of the political power of the proletariat. This assessment is regarded as one of the most fundamental shared positions of the Communist Left tradition regarding imperialist wars.

“Against the War Between Nations! For the Struggle Between Classes! The imperialist war between states can only be stopped by class struggle until capitalism is overthrown!”²

The ICP (il Partito) also correctly emphasises that Iran's nuclear programme, the security of Israel, or other justifications put forward by the imperialist states involved to initiate or escalate the war are not the real causes of the conflict, but merely ideological and propagandistic covers used to legitimise imperialist policies. The origins of war should not be sought in these pretexts, but rather in the internal logic of capitalism and the unavoidable competition between capitalist powers to preserve or expand their spheres of influence, markets, resources, and geopolitical positions. Therefore, imperialist war is not a deviation from the capitalist system, but one of the normal and inevitable forms of its existence in the era of capitalist decline.

“The issue of Iran's nuclear program or Israel's security is only a pretext.”³

The comrades of the ICP (il Partito) correctly emphasise that the current war in the Middle East is not an isolated or merely regional phenomenon, but rather part of a broader process extending from East Africa to the Mediterranean, from the Russia–Ukraine war in Europe to the growing tensions in the Indian subcontinent and other parts of the

² [Against the War Between Nations! For the Struggle Between Classes!](#)

³ [See source 2.](#)

world. These wars should not be regarded as a series of independent military conflicts, but rather as different manifestations of a single reality: the intensification of imperialist military tensions on a global scale.

This process demonstrates that, in its present stage, capitalism is increasingly tending towards the expansion and generalisation of military conflicts. This situation indicates that war has become one of the permanent forms of capitalist existence in the era of its decline, and that the various centres of military tension and conflict are becoming increasingly interconnected within the framework of imperialist rivalries.

“At the same time, two days before February 28, Pakistan declared war on Afghanistan, both bordering Iran to the east, accusing it of having become a “colony of India” and bombing the capital Kabul. With the forgotten conflict in Sudan, the war involves a territorial strip of over 5,000 kilometers, from East Africa to the Mediterranean to the Indian subcontinent.”⁴

The ICP (il Partito) correctly emphasises that the first victims of imperialist wars are workers and civilians—those who pay the price of competition and conflicts between capitalist states with their lives, livelihoods, and futures. However, the consequences of these wars are not limited to the areas subjected to bombardment. In other parts of the world, even where workers and civilians are not directly targeted by bombing, the costs of war are imposed on the working class through the expansion of the war economy, increased military spending, the intensification of austerity policies, rising inflation, and declining living standards. Therefore, imperialist war is not merely a war between states, but is, in its very nature, a war against the global working class and one that serves the interests of the international bourgeoisie.

“As always, it is the defenseless civilians, first and foremost the proletariat, who pay for the disputes between the capitalist

⁴ [Against the War Between Nations! For the Struggle Between Classes!](#)

*oligarchs. The real political content of imperialist war is to be against the proletariat of all countries and for the benefit of the international bourgeoisie. Even European and American workers who – for now – are not being bombed will see their living conditions worsen as prices and military spending rise.”*⁵

On 4 March 2026, *Internationalist Voice*, in a letter addressed to Communist Left currents, emphasised their historical responsibility to defend the independent positions of the proletariat and called on them, in the face of imperialist war, to adopt a common position and strengthen the voice of proletarian internationalism.

The question arises as to why this appeal was sent exclusively to Communist Left currents. The answer is clear. For more than a century, only the Communist Left tradition, despite all its weaknesses and fragmentation, has remained faithful to the principles of proletarian internationalism, refused to support any imperialist camp, and has not turned the working class into cannon fodder for capitalist wars.

For this reason, unlike many currents that, at various historical moments, have called on workers to defend one or another bourgeois camp, the blood of workers does not weigh on the hands of this tradition. Therefore, the intended recipients of this appeal were not a heterogeneous collection of political organisations, but rather currents that consider themselves heirs to this historical tradition. In part of its letter, *Internationalist Voice* wrote:

“The destructive tensions and wars of imperialism can only be confronted under the banner of proletarian internationalism. Over the past hundred years, it has been the communist left alone that has consistently remained loyal to internationalist principles, upholding the banner of proletarian internationalism with unwavering commitment. They have firmly raised this banner in opposition to all those forces that have sought to divide the

⁵ [Against the War Between Nations! For the Struggle Between Classes!](#)

*proletariat in the name of fighting 'fascism,' 'defending democracy,' 'defending the motherland,' or 'defending the socialist fatherland.'"*⁶

Given the positions of the ICP (il Partito) on imperialist war, which were briefly examined in the preceding sections, as well as the similar positions of other Communist Left currents, a fundamental question arises: Did signing the proposed joint statement put forward by *Internationalist Voice* require this party to retreat from its principled positions? In our view, the answer is no. If the party disagreed with the proposed text, it could have publicly expressed its criticisms, proposed the amendments it considered necessary, presented an alternative text, or even taken the initiative in drafting a joint statement based on its own formulations and invited other Communist Left currents to support it. None of these options would have required the party to abandon its political independence or theoretical principles.

Practical experience also demonstrates that political cooperation does not necessarily mean setting aside differences. For example, following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, *Internationalist Voice*, in order to ensure a wider dissemination of Communist Left positions within the political milieu, republished articles and statements from various currents of this tradition, including the International Communist Party ⁷. This approach continued after the outbreak of the Russia–Ukraine (NATO) war, when writings by the International Communist Party, the Internationalist Communist Tendency, and the International Communist Current were translated and made available to Persian-speaking audiences. These republications did not signify complete agreement with all the analyses and positions of these currents; rather, they were based on the assessment that their general orientation towards war was internationalist and fell within the framework of the Communist Left tradition. This experience demonstrates that cooperation in defence of

⁶ The full text of this letter will be published in Appendix “A” of this polemic.

⁷ For further information, readers are advised to consult Appendix “B”.

common positions does not mean the elimination of theoretical or organisational differences. Rather, it can take place alongside the preservation of political independence and the right to reciprocal criticism, and can contribute to greater clarity within the proletarian political milieu.

Therefore, the issue cannot simply be reduced to a disagreement over the wording of a statement. What is observed in practice is an evasion of political responsibility and a retreat into sectarianism. This approach has persisted even in circumstances where political common ground outweighs differences and where the defence of internationalist positions requires joint action. The consequence of such an approach is the weakening of the voice of the Communist Left, the restriction of the possibility of joint intervention against imperialist war, and a decline in political clarity within the proletarian camp.

In the chapter *Reducing the Revolutionary Organisation to a Passive Role*, we will argue that this approach is not merely an isolated error, but is connected to the International Communist Party's conception of the role of the revolutionary organisation, its place within the political milieu and the proletarian milieu, and its relationship to the class struggle and intervention in the actual course of social struggles. There, we will demonstrate that this conception, despite the party's theoretical claims regarding the vanguard role of the Communist Party, leads in practice to an essentially passive approach towards political and internationalist responsibilities.

Referencing Sources: A Requirement of Marxist Methodology

Marxism is not, for communists, merely a body of theories for revolutionary struggle; it is also a method of inquiry and a political commitment to the working class. The Marxist method requires that every analysis be grounded in objective reality, verifiable evidence, and concrete criticism, rather than in mere assertions or unsubstantiated quotations. This is not a matter of conforming to academic standards or the conventions of bourgeois scholarship; rather, it is one of the fundamental principles of proletarian struggle.

Within the Marxist tradition, no claim is accepted simply on the authority of the individual or organisation advancing it. The validity of any analysis depends upon the strength of its argument, the quality of its evidence, and its correspondence with reality. Every claim must therefore be open to verification and criticism.

Marx and Engels repeatedly insisted upon this principle. In the preface to the fourth German edition of *Capital*, Engels, and later Eleanor Marx in her response to the slanders of Brentano and Sedley Taylor, demonstrated that the defence of truth cannot rest upon the authority of the speaker or the prestige of an organisation⁸. It can be secured only through accurate quotation, proper referencing, and by enabling others to examine claims independently. From this standpoint, precise referencing is not merely a matter of academic convention; it is one of the requirements of the Marxist method in the investigation, analysis, and critique of social reality.

Applying this standard, one of the serious weaknesses of the writings of the International Communist Party is that a significant proportion of its articles and analyses do not cite the sources upon which they are based. As a result, readers are unable to determine whether a historical claim or political conclusion rests upon documentary evidence,

⁸[In the Case of Brentano vs. Marx. Regarding Alleged Falsifications of Quotation. The Story and Documents.](#)

archival material, published works, or other forms of research. Consequently, it is neither possible to verify these claims nor to critically assess the authors' line of argument. This diminishes the political and theoretical value of such writings, since, within the Marxist tradition, no analysis is accepted solely on the authority of those who present it.

This issue is not merely an editorial or technical shortcoming; it concerns the method of analysis itself. When a communist organisation makes statements about the history of the class struggle, the development of capitalism, or the positions of political forces, it has a responsibility to provide readers with the documented basis of its analysis. Otherwise, the distinction between Marxist analysis, journalistic accounts, and personal interpretation becomes blurred, and the possibility of collective criticism and correction is undermined.

Precise referencing of sources does not merely enable verification; it also reveals the evidence with which the author was working and explains why, among different interpretations, they arrived at a particular conclusion. Without such transparency, how can readers judge the validity of those conclusions? How can one determine whether an analysis is based on reliable documentation or on inaccurate quotations, incomplete data, or sources that themselves require serious criticism?

Of course, the use of bourgeois, state, or even openly anti-communist sources is not, in itself, problematic. Marx, Engels, and other communists repeatedly made use of official documents and statistics produced by bourgeois governments, parliamentary reports, and the writings of bourgeois economists. However, these sources were always precisely identified and subjected to criticism. The issue is not the class origin of a source, but rather the transparency with which it is used and the possibility of subjecting it to critical assessment. The omission of references deprives readers of this possibility and makes it impossible, or extremely difficult, to examine the accuracy of the evidence and the strength of the argument.

It is self-evident that any militant or political organisation may make mistakes in the selection or analysis of sources. However, the

essential difference is that, by providing precise references, the possibility of criticism, correction, and reconstruction of an argument is preserved. By contrast, the omission of sources places errors beyond the reach of criticism and makes independent assessment impossible.

For this reason, our question to the comrades of the International Communist Party is: how do they consider this practice to be compatible with the Marxist method and the tradition of Communist Left? In the course of this discussion, specific examples will be presented in which either the verification of claims is impossible due to the absence of references, or analyses are based on sources that have been accepted without critical evaluation and solely on the basis of the narratives they present. Our criticism is not directed at the use of these sources, but rather at the lack of transparency in their citation and the absence of a Marxist critique of them.

For this reason, it is expected that a party which considers itself part of the tradition of the communist Left should adhere to the same standards emphasised by Marx, Engels, and other communist internationalists: precise citation of sources, the possibility of independent verification, and the acceptance of evidence-based criticism. These are not merely rules of writing; they are part of the method and ethics of communist struggle. Only through such means can truth be tested through the process of collective criticism and distinguished from error and distortion.

The Party's Analysis of the Causes of the War in the Middle East

The International Communist Party (il Partito) correctly characterises the war in the Middle East as an imperialist war. This position reflects the comrades' commitment to the principles of proletarian internationalism. From this standpoint, the Party's insistence that only the independent class struggle of the proletariat can open the way to overcoming imperialist war is consistent with the tradition of the Communist left and with proletarian internationalism.

The proposed text for the joint statement was deliberately drafted in such a way that all the organisations to which it was addressed, despite their theoretical and analytical differences, could endorse it. This did not imply ignoring or concealing political disagreements. On the contrary, it is self-evident that different organisations and political tendencies advance different analyses and explanations of the causes, conditions, and dynamics of imperialist war. Such differences are entirely natural, since the development of class consciousness and the formation of the political vanguard of the proletariat are neither linear nor uniform processes. Consequently, the proletariat gives rise to a variety of political tendencies.

For this reason, the publication of a joint statement should not be interpreted as an attempt to "sweep differences under the carpet". On the contrary, from the standpoint of the Communist left, such an initiative is valuable only if it is founded upon the principles of proletarian internationalism and, at the same time, provides a comradely framework for presenting, criticising, and challenging differing political views. It is only through such open political debate that greater programmatic and political clarity can be achieved within the proletarian camp.

The reality is that the disagreement between the United States and the European powers does not concern the question of war in the Middle East as such, but rather the manner in which it should be prosecuted, its

timing, the division of roles, and each power's share in the redivision of spheres of influence, domination, and imperialist interests. These disagreements therefore do not represent a conflict between two fundamentally different policies, one warlike and the other peaceable. Rather, they reflect the rivalry between different poles of world capitalism in the pursuit of their respective imperialist interests.

The Party rightly emphasises that the European states, despite seeking to pursue their own independent imperialist interests and policies, lack the economic, political, and military capacity required to play an independent role in relation to the United States because of the relative decline of their position. Consequently, their policy continually oscillates between defending their own particular interests and aligning themselves with the strategic objectives of US imperialism. For this reason, despite occasional tactical and diplomatic differences with the United States, the European states have, in practice, acted within the framework of American warmongering policies and have frequently assumed the role of followers of US policy. As the Party writes:

“The various European states are tempted to pursue their own imperialist policies, but lacking the strength, they vacillate between serving their perennial master, the United States, and timidly distancing themselves from it.”⁹

The Party also correctly draws attention to the position of China and Russia within the present balance of forces in the imperialist system. In the Party's view, although these two powers seek to expand their influence, under present conditions they do not possess the capacity to challenge directly the military superiority of the United States. Consequently, their response has been confined primarily to political declarations, diplomatic support, and indirect backing for their regional allies, rather than to direct military confrontation with the United States. On this question, the Party writes:

⁹ [From Venezuela to Iran.](#)

“The Chinese and Russian imperialisms are in trouble: they lack the strength to oppose the militarily stronger US imperialism, so for now they appear to be doing nothing beyond making perfunctory declarations. Naturally, they will continue to arm Iran and assist it with the intelligence provided by their satellites: Iran is too important to China and Russia, economically, militarily, and strategically. Leaving that country in the hands of a rival imperialism would be a severe blow to both.”¹⁰

It cannot be overlooked that the collapse of the Islamic Republic of Iran would constitute a serious blow to the imperialist interests of both China and Russia. However, this does not mean that either of these powers possesses the willingness or the capacity to intervene directly and effectively in Iran’s defence. For this reason, the comrades’ claim that Iran has been extensively armed by China and Russia is not supported by documentary evidence. We have already examined the material basis of this question in detail, drawing upon concrete evidence from the standpoint of historical materialism, and there is therefore no need to repeat that discussion here.¹¹

What has been put forward so far has remained largely at the level of speculation concerning the possible transfer of satellite intelligence. Even Donald Trump’s statements, whatever his political motives may have been, support the conclusion that China and Russia refrained from direct intervention in the war. Trump described Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin as “neutral” during the conflict with Iran and stated that they neither obstructed the United States’ efforts to contain Iran’s nuclear

¹⁰ [From Venezuela to Iran.](#)

¹¹ Drawing upon statements by political and military officials of the Islamic bourgeoisie, together with extensive factual evidence presented in the booklet [The Middle East War and the Intensification of Imperialist Rivalry: Europe’s Efforts to Maintain Its Position Amid Global Chaos](#), we have examined the groundlessness of such claims. We have demonstrated that each imperialist power pursues its own imperialist interests, and that this leads China and Russia to refrain from arming Iran in order to preserve the regional balance of power, particularly in view of their own strategic interests in relation to the Arab states.

programme nor supported the supply of heavy military equipment and weapons to Iran. As he put it:

“I just want to thank them because they made it a lot better. I want to thank China, President Xi. I was with him, and he stayed neutral, totally neutral, and I appreciate it. And I want to thank Vladimir Putin, he was very neutral. They could have made it much more difficult for us...They could have sent in an oil ship with six destroyers alongside of it, on each side. They didn’t do that. President Xi helped me. He tried to help, and I think he probably helped get it solved.”¹²

This assessment, irrespective of whether every detail of it is correct, is consistent with the analysis previously cited from the Party, according to which the response of China and Russia under present conditions has been largely confined to political and diplomatic positions, and they have refrained from direct confrontation with the United States. This situation reflects the existing balance of forces within the global imperialist system, rather than any indication of neutrality or a peaceful orientation on the part of these powers.

In this respect, the Party’s subsequent conclusion lacks sufficient logical consistency. If, according to the Party’s own analysis, China and Russia currently possess neither the capacity nor the willingness to enter into direct military confrontation with the United States, and if their response has been largely limited to political declarations and restricted indirect support, then the following assertion:

“The war in Iran is a further stage in a process destined to lead to a third world war, if the proletariat does not prevent it.”¹³

At the very least, this claim requires further argument and explanation. The mere existence of capitalism’s inherent tendency towards generalised war is not sufficient to substantiate such a

¹² Independent.

¹³ From Venezuela to Iran.

conclusion. From a Marxist perspective, the transition from generalised war to world war requires, on the one hand, a qualitative change in the balance of forces among the major powers and the emergence of conditions in which imperialist rivalries are transformed into direct confrontation between the principal blocs of capitalism. On the other hand, it requires the historic defeat of the international working class and its inability to mount independent class resistance. Such conditions do not exist, at least not under present circumstances.

It is an undeniable fact that only the working class, through its independent class struggle, is capable of preventing the course of capitalist warmongering. There can be no doubt on this point. However, a distinction must be made between capitalism's general tendency towards war and the specific historical form of world war.

Today, military tensions and wars are no longer confined to limited and isolated regions; rather, they have spread in various forms across the world, from the Middle East to Latin America, from Southeast Asia to Europe. This situation reflects, above all, the historical crisis of capitalism and the manner in which it reproduces itself during its phase of historical decline. The capitalist system, which has no solution to its internal contradictions other than intensifying competition, destroying the productive forces, and imposing the costs of crisis upon the working class, increasingly resorts to violence and militarism.

From this perspective, the expansion of wars and military crises across the world is not accidental; rather, it expresses capitalism's general tendency towards militarism and war during its period of historical crisis. However, the existence of multiple wars and the spread of armed conflicts in different parts of the world do not, in themselves, signify that the world is moving towards world war. A war may expand on a global scale and involve different regions of the planet without necessarily taking the form of a world war between the principal imperialist powers.¹⁴

¹⁴ This question has been examined in detail in the article [*Capitalism and the Tendency Towards Generalised Imperialist War and the Internationalist Response*](#). For this reason, readers are encouraged to study it in order to gain a deeper understanding of the issue.

Before continuing the discussion, it is necessary to address a theoretical point. The comrades write the following concerning the relationship between widespread war and the danger it poses to the ruling classes:

“Mass warfare initially disciplines society under the authority of the state, but it also generates a dangerous contradiction for ruling classes: it arms and trains the very population that may later challenge its authority.”¹⁵

This analysis, in relation to certain wars of the twentieth century, particularly those accompanied by large-scale human mobilisation, has a specific historical basis. During that period, states conscripted millions of workers and peasants into the armed forces, provided them with military training, and supplied them with weapons; under conditions of revolutionary crisis, such a situation could potentially have become a factor against the ruling classes themselves.

However, the direct application of this analysis to the wars of the twenty-first century cannot be considered valid. Contemporary wars have increasingly become technological, industrial, and complex-system conflicts, in which drones, guided missiles, advanced air power, cyber warfare, and intelligence systems play decisive roles. Under such conditions, the role of the traditionally armed infantry soldier has declined in comparison with the past, and military capability depends above all on industrial, technological, and organisational infrastructure.¹⁶

Of course, there are also exceptions in which states continue to arm and provide military training to sections of the population. Israel is one of the most prominent examples in this regard. In this case, the ruling class has succeeded in influencing a significant section of the working class

¹⁵[The High Price of War: A Rearmed Proletariat?](#)

¹⁶ This question has been examined in detail, with reference to specific historical facts, within the framework of the discussion with the Party (*il Programma Comunista*) entitled [A Polemic with the International Communist Party \(il Programma Comunista\): Marxism or Schapperism?](#) For this reason, we will refrain from repeating that discussion here.

and society through religious and nationalist ideologies, with the result that these forces, rather than forming an independent class resistance, are mobilised within the framework of the state's war policies and the requirements of its war economy.¹⁷

The alignment of a large section of the Israeli working class behind its own bourgeoisie and its support for the state's war policies demonstrates how the ruling class maintains and reproduces its ideological domination over society through nationalism and religion. Under such conditions, the mere arming and military training of the population, without the necessary material, political, and organisational conditions, does not in itself constitute a factor in the overthrow of the ruling class. What is decisive is not simply the existence of armed individuals, but the formation of a conscious and organised working class that possesses class independence and is free from the influence of all factions of the bourgeoisie.

With these explanations in mind, we can now return to the comrades' interpretation of the causes of the war in the Middle East. It appears that the comrades' analysis places excessive emphasis on economic factors and ultimately reduces oil and energy to the decisive factors behind imperialist wars.¹⁸ The Party writes:

¹⁷Even in the Russia–Ukraine war (within the framework of Russia's confrontation with NATO), although the Ukrainian working class has lined up behind its own bourgeoisie during the war, this does not mean that the entire society has fully accepted the state's war policy. Millions of people have left the country, while thousands have either refused to be sent to the front or have left the country in order to avoid mobilisation.

The refusal of Haredi Jews to undertake military service in Israel cannot simply be attributed to anti-war opposition. The roots of this issue lie primarily in religious considerations and the particular position of this current within Israel's political and social structure, comparable to cases such as the refusal of certain religious groups, including Jehovah's Witnesses, to perform military service in Western countries.

¹⁸This interpretation is not limited to the International Communist Party (il Partito); other tendencies within the tradition of the Communist left have also advanced similar analyses. Although we have addressed this issue briefly in various statements and critiques, the limitations of the present discussion do not permit a comprehensive and documented critique from a Marxist perspective. Therefore, the present critique will necessarily remain concise and limited in scope. It is hoped that, at an appropriate opportunity, this question can be examined independently and subjected to further critique and analysis on the basis of more extensive theoretical and historical research.

*“From Venezuela to Iran. American Blitz for Global Energy
“Dominance” Anticipates the Future World War.”¹⁹*

According to this analysis, the primary motive behind the US attacks on countries such as Iran and Venezuela is control over global energy resources. To assess this claim, it is necessary to examine the other arguments that the Party advances in support of it. Elsewhere, the Party writes:

“We were reminded of scenes of the “forever wars” of the early 2000’s where over one million Iraqi and Afghan proletarians died amid the U.S. struggle to conquer for Wall St, Iraqi oil, CIA management of Afghan opium fields, and enlarged stocks for Halliburton, Lockheed Martin and Blackwater.”²⁰

The fact that hundreds of thousands, and according to some estimates more than one million, people lost their lives as a result of the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq is undeniable. It is also beyond doubt that the US military-industrial complex and major arms corporations gained enormous profits from these wars. However, accepting these facts does not, in itself, demonstrate that the primary cause of these wars was the seizure of Iraqi oil or control over Afghanistan’s poppy fields.

To clarify this issue, it is sufficient to consider the costs of these two wars. Various estimates have placed the cost of the war in Afghanistan at more than \$2.3 trillion²¹ and the cost of the war in Iraq at around \$3 trillion²². Given such figures, the question arises: from the standpoint of capital accumulation, is it rational to spend trillions of dollars merely to gain control over Afghanistan’s poppy fields or the revenues derived from them?

¹⁹ [From Venezuela to Iran.](#)

²⁰ [From Venezuela to Iran.](#)

²¹ [Cost of the war in Afghanistan.](#)

²² [Cost of the war in Iraq.](#)

The reality is that, during the period of the US and NATO presence, opium poppy cultivation and opium production in Afghanistan increased dramatically, and this economy became an important source of financing for warlords and the Taliban. There is also considerable evidence showing that US and NATO forces, in many cases, turned a blind eye to the activities of local trafficking networks or cooperated with certain warlords. However, this differs from the claim that the CIA directly managed the cultivation and trafficking of narcotics; these two issues should not be treated as identical.

According to reports by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and international research, the total value of Afghanistan's opium and heroin economy between 2001 and 2021 has been estimated at approximately \$1.5 to \$4 billion annually.²³ Even if we assume, under an extremely optimistic estimate, that Afghanistan's entire opium and heroin economy amounted to \$80 billion over the course of 20 years, the enormous disparity between these figures and the multi-trillion-dollar cost of the war demonstrates that explaining the war on the basis of profits derived from the narcotics economy lacks theoretical coherence.

Furthermore, the majority of the profits from the narcotics economy went to trafficking networks, warlords, and transnational criminal organisations that controlled the processing, transit, and distribution of narcotics. The Taliban also largely financed themselves through the collection of taxes from farmers and traffickers. Therefore, although the narcotics economy was part of the reality of the war in Afghanistan, it cannot be regarded as the primary cause of the occupation of the country or as the fundamental objective of US imperialist policy.

The Party's claim regarding Iraq faces the same problem. The assertion that the aim of the war was the seizure of Iraqi oil for the benefit of Wall Street does not correspond to the actual course of the development of Iraq's oil industry after 2003. Following the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, the development of oil fields was carried out through international bidding processes by the Iraqi government. In the

²³ [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.](#)

major tenders of 2009 and 2010, US companies were only one group of participants and, alongside companies from China, Britain, Russia, the Netherlands, and other countries, received contracts as part of international consortia. Therefore, neither did the US gain a monopoly over Iraqi oil, nor did US companies obtain complete control over this sector. Examples of some of the most important contracts concluded are presented in the table below²⁴:

Oilfield	Successful bidders
Rumaila	BP (UK) + CNPC (China)
West Qurna-1	ExxonMobil (US) + Shell (UK/Netherlands)
West Qurna-2	Lukoil (Russia) + Statoil (Norway)
Majnoon	Shell (UK/Netherlands) + Petronas (Malaysia)
Halfaya	CNPC (China) + Total (France) + Petronas (Malaysia)
Zubair	Eni (Italy) + Occidental (US) + KOGAS (South Korea)

From a Marxist perspective, the essential point is that imperialist wars cannot be reduced to the interests of a single industry, a single corporation, or even a strategic commodity such as oil. Imperialist rivalry arises from the general logic of capital accumulation, competition between capitalist states to preserve or expand their geopolitical positions, and shifts in the balance of forces among the imperialist powers. Oil, raw materials, trade routes, markets, and the profits of military corporations all play a role in this rivalry, but none of them, taken in isolation, is sufficient to explain the nature of imperialist wars.

For this reason, the profitability of certain sectors of capital during wartime should not be conflated with the fundamental cause of war itself. The greater part of the United States' wars since 11 September has been financed through the issuance of government bonds and the expansion of public debt—a debt whose principal and interest have been, and will continue to be, repaid over decades at the expense of the working class and other labouring strata. In other words, the material cost of these wars

²⁴ [Iraq's Petroleum Industry: Unsettled Issues.](#)

has been borne by the working class, continues to be borne by it today, and will continue to be borne by it in the future.

There is no doubt that the US military industry and the major arms corporations have derived enormous profits from these wars. However, these profits should not be regarded as the cause of the wars. The economic cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has been estimated at several trillion dollars—a figure that far exceeds the direct profits of the arms industry and, in particular, the gains made by US oil companies in Iraq. Consequently, explaining these wars solely on the basis of the profitability of these industries is unconvincing, both economically and from a Marxist perspective.

The fundamental cause of the United States' wars following the end of the Cold War should instead be sought in its efforts to consolidate and preserve its imperialist hegemony. The United States sought to use its military superiority to consolidate its position as the dominant power within the global capitalist system, to contain resistance from rival powers, and at the same time to keep its allies aligned with its strategic objectives. Under such conditions, US political and military hegemony also created the conditions for the expansion and predominance of American capital on a global scale. The prominence of companies such as Microsoft, Apple, Google, Meta, Amazon, Nvidia, Tesla, SpaceX, and even the major arms manufacturers was not unrelated to this hegemonic position, although it cannot be reduced to it alone. Today, however, this hegemonic position is under greater challenge than ever before, and the signs of its erosion are becoming increasingly apparent.

The same analytical framework can also be applied to the recent war in the Middle East. This war cannot be explained solely in terms of the pursuit of economic profit or control over oil resources. At the general level, war is the means by which capitalism perpetuates itself in the epoch of imperialism and its historical decline; at the concrete level, however, the present war reflects the rivalry between imperialist and regional powers over the balance of forces and spheres of influence. From this perspective, the United States, its Western allies, and their regional allies

seek to limit the capacity of the Islamic Republic to act as a regional power and to contain its imperialist and geopolitical ambitions.

Of course, the fact that oil companies and the arms industry profit from war is undeniable. Such profits are one of the consequences of war, not its fundamental cause. In this respect, the Party is correct to draw attention to the profitability of the oil and arms industries, insofar as these profits are presented as a consequence of war. However, if this profitability is presented as the principal cause of war, the analysis is reduced to a form of economism that is incapable of explaining the nature of imperialist rivalries under contemporary capitalism. On this question, the Party writes:

“Ultimately, delivering a potential \$63 billion windfall to U.S. oil producers in the opening days. The conflict also boosted military spending, channeling billions toward U.S. defense contractors including Lockheed Martin, RTX Corporation, and Northrop Grumman, as new orders for missile defense systems, aircraft, and munitions pile up...Yet the United States whether or not it accomplishes its maximal aim will continue to reap massive rewards from an extension of the conflict. Commenting on the war Trump recently stated ‘The United States is the largest Oil Producer in the World... when oil prices go up, we make a lot of money.’”²⁵

The points raised in this quotation are not, in themselves, incorrect. There is no doubt that rising oil prices benefit US oil producers and that increased military expenditure benefits the country's military-industrial complex. However, these facts merely describe one of the consequences of war, not its cause or underlying logic. From a Marxist perspective, it is important not to conflate profiting from war with the causes of war. The Party itself subsequently acknowledges the limitations of this explanation and writes:

²⁵ [Of Drone Strikes and Oil Futures.](#)

“While higher oil prices in fact benefit the U.S., it must cautiously work to control how high they rise. Thus, U.S. strikes on Iranian energy sites have been carefully calibrated rather than aimed at completely destroying Iran’s entire oil industry. While some facilities linked to military logistics or shipping have reportedly been targeted, core export infrastructure, such as terminals and loading facilities that handle most Iranian crude, have so far largely remained operational, and tankers have continued leaving Iranian ports. The main reason appears to be concern over global energy markets. Destroying Iran’s infrastructure could trigger a major supply shock and drive prices sharply higher.”²⁶

This explanation itself appears to result from reducing the war to the question of oil, and it is precisely for this reason that it encounters analytical difficulties. If the principal reason for limiting the attacks was to prevent a crisis in the oil market, then the following question arises: could the elimination of Iran’s oil production, by itself, trigger a decisive crisis in the global energy market?

The experience of recent years does not support such a conclusion. In 2019 and 2020, as a result of US sanctions, Iran’s oil exports fell to fewer than 500,000 barrels per day and, in some months, even to around 200,000–300,000 barrels per day, without causing the global economy to experience a generalised energy crisis. Likewise, during the occupation of Iraq in 2003, although Iraq was one of the world’s major oil exporters, the global oil market did not experience a structural crisis.

Furthermore, the behaviour of oil prices in the two wars reveals a significant contrast. During the recent war in the Middle East, oil prices rose sharply at the height of the tensions, whereas during the Iraq War in 2003 the increase was considerably more limited. Indeed, contrary to the expectations of many analysts, once the US invasion formally began on 20 March 2003, most of the “war premium” disappeared within a matter

²⁶ [Of Drone Strikes and Oil Futures.](#)

of weeks, and by April and May of that year oil prices had returned to their pre-war levels.

The energy crisis during the recent war in the Middle East cannot be explained solely by the reduction or suspension of Iranian oil exports. Even during the war, Iran's oil exports did not come to a complete halt, and the Islamic Republic continued to export part of its oil, including through the sale of oil stored on tankers. What most concerned the global energy market was the Islamic bourgeoisie's control of the Strait of Hormuz and the threat posed to the security of energy transportation, together with attacks on the oil infrastructure of US allies in the region.

Within this framework, the Islamic bourgeoisie, like other capitalist states, acts in accordance with its imperialist interests and regional ambitions and employs military and destructive means to advance its objectives. Although the military and technological capabilities of the Iranian gangsters cannot be compared with those of the American gangsters, this difference does not alter the gangster character of the Islamic bourgeoisie. Underestimating the capacity of the Iranian gangsters to impose costs on their rivals has led to incorrect assessments of the course of the war. The initial expectation of the United States and its allies that the war would end within a short period did not correspond to the realities on the battlefield. The US even assured its regional allies that within a month "everything would be over", but the course of the war demonstrated otherwise. The comrades themselves have also referred to the attacks carried out against the oil infrastructure of countries in the region and their consequences, namely the reduction in oil production, writing:

"While the conflict is benefiting the US oil industry, it is also harming the Gulf countries, albeit to a different extent for each country. Saudi Arabia alone has reportedly reduced production by around 2–2.5 million barrels per day, down from 10–10.9 million barrels per day prior to the war. While the United Arab Emirates,

Kuwait, and Iraq have also cut output, bringing total regional reductions to more than five million barrels per day.”²⁷

This assessment, in fact, indicates that, rather than focusing solely on Iran’s oil exports, the primary concern of the global market was the possibility of disruption to oil production and transportation throughout the Persian Gulf region as a result of the military actions of the Islamic bourgeoisie. Therefore, the fundamental issue is not merely Iran’s oil exports, but the security of energy transportation routes, the risk of the war spreading across the entire region, and, consequently, a reduction in oil exports as a result of attacks and military threats posed by the Islamic bourgeoisie.

On the other hand, the structure of US oil production must also be taken into consideration in this analysis. The majority of US crude oil production, approximately 60 to 70 per cent, comes from shale oil resources, while only 30 to 40 per cent is obtained from conventional onshore and offshore reserves. This situation creates an important distinction between the United States and the major oil producers of the Middle East, since Middle Eastern oil is predominantly produced from conventional fields with significantly lower extraction costs.²⁸

As a result, shale oil producers are dependent on relatively high oil prices. The cost of extracting shale oil is considerably higher than that of conventional Middle Eastern oil and, in many cases, higher than that of a significant proportion of Russian oil production²⁹. Therefore, if global oil

²⁷ [Gulf Monarchies, Worn Out Cannon Fodder for U.S. Imperialism.](#)

²⁸ [How much shale \(tight\) oil is produced in the United States?](#)

²⁹ Shale oil differs structurally from conventional oil in terms of extraction. A conventional oil well extracts oil from large, permeable underground reservoirs and is generally developed through vertical drilling, natural pressure, or simpler extraction methods. By contrast, a shale oil well extracts oil from hard, low-permeability rock formations and requires horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing (the injection of water and other materials to fracture the rock) in order to release the oil. Shale wells also have another important characteristic:

- In the first year, they typically experience a 50 to 70 per cent decline in production.
- As a result, companies must continuously drill new wells.
- Consequently, this industry is far more dependent on continuous investment and access to credit.

prices were to remain below approximately \$40 per barrel for an extended period, a substantial number of shale oil producers would face economic losses.

With these points in mind, we can return to the comrades' argument. The fact that war has, temporarily, contributed to increased profitability for a section of the US shale oil industry cannot be denied. Rising oil prices, particularly in the short term, improve the profitability of shale producers and increase the incentive for investment in this sector. However, this fact does not justify the conclusion that the war was fundamentally initiated because of oil interests or in order to rescue the US shale industry. To clarify this issue, it is first necessary to examine the basis upon which the comrades' argument rests. The comrades write:

"Today many U.S. shale operations require oil prices roughly between \$50-70 per barrel to remain profitable according to the Federal Reserve Dallas Energy Survey. Likewise, a price above \$70 per barrel is needed for companies to start expanding drilling programs, while at \$80-90+ there are strong incentives for rapid production growth, and at \$90-\$120 there is estimated to be maximal growth potential.

*Prior to the war in Iran prices sat at around \$65 per barrel and as of March 7th they have grown to nearly \$120. Before the conflict, many industry analysts expected U.S. shale growth to slow or even decline due to global oversupply, and declining drilling investment with forecasts of oil prices declining to \$55 per barrel by 2027."*³⁰

These data show that rising oil prices can create more favourable conditions for the profitability of the US shale industry; however, this issue must be assessed within its proper context. From a Marxist perspective, the fact that one section of capital benefits from a war does not mean that the interests of that section were the fundamental cause of

³⁰ [Of Drone Strikes and Oil Futures.](#)

the war. Otherwise, every war could be reduced solely to the interests of a particular industry or group of capitalists, while neglecting the broader analysis of imperialist relations and competition between capitalist states.

Therefore, although a relative increase in oil prices may, in the short term, benefit a section of US oil capital, it does not follow that the war was organised in order to raise oil prices or to secure the interests of this particular section of capital. Such a conclusion once again reduces imperialist rivalries to the immediate interests of a single branch of capital, whereas imperialist wars must be analysed within the framework of the general logic of capital accumulation, the overall interests of national capital, competition between capitalist states, and shifts in the global balance of forces.

From a Marxist perspective, the development of shale oil technology does not mean that the United States has acquired a “natural advantage” over traditional oil producers, particularly those in the Middle East. On the contrary, shale oil demonstrates how capital, through technological advances, extensive credit, and access to financial resources, brings into the process of accumulation resources whose extraction was previously not economically viable.

For this reason, shale oil is more dependent than conventional oil on the general conditions of capital accumulation: global oil prices, financing costs, interest rates, access to credit, and the state of financial markets. Whenever oil prices decline for an extended period or the cost of capital increases, a significant proportion of shale production faces difficulties in maintaining profitability.

This issue can also be observed in the historical experience of the shale industry. Between 2014 and 2016, Saudi Arabia and other OPEC members sought to put pressure on higher-cost producers, including many US shale companies, by increasing production and exerting downward pressure on oil prices. This policy led to the bankruptcy of some companies and a decline in investment in the shale sector; however, the industry ultimately managed to preserve a significant proportion of its

production capacity through cost reductions, increased efficiency, and organisational restructuring.

Therefore, although the shale oil industry today is more resilient to low oil prices than it was a decade ago, it still has higher production costs than conventional Middle Eastern oil and remains dependent on favourable global market conditions in order to maintain profitability.

For this reason, while an increase in oil prices resulting from war may temporarily benefit a section of US oil capital, transforming this reality into the principal explanation for war amounts to replacing a secondary factor with the fundamental logic of imperialist competition.

Let us summarise the discussion and demonstrate that the war in the Middle East cannot be explained through the logic of direct economic gain for global capitalism. Contrary to an analysis that views war primarily as the result of the interests of a particular section of capital, such as the oil or military industries, an examination of its broader economic consequences shows that war, in general, creates serious disruptions to the process of capital accumulation.

Estimates by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund indicate that the intensification of geopolitical crises and war can reduce global economic growth by between 1.5 and 2 per cent. From a Marxist perspective, such a decline represents increased pressure on the process of capital accumulation, a reduction in profitability, and a heightened risk of stagflation in the global economy. Furthermore, the World Trade Organization forecasts that the volume of global merchandise trade could decline by between 5 and 8 per cent. This decline means that a portion of produced commodities reaches the market with greater difficulty, while capital faces greater obstacles in converting commodities into money and realising surplus value.

The threat of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, through which around 20 per cent of the world's oil passes, is another example of the impact of war on the global economy. A sharp rise in oil prices, even if it benefits some energy producers in the short term, means, at the level of the capitalist economy as a whole, higher production costs for various

industries, reduced profit margins for companies, and greater pressure on consumers. In addition, rising maritime transport costs, war-risk insurance premiums, and the rerouting of vessels make the circulation of capital and global trade slower and more costly.

Under conditions of war, geopolitical risk indices increase, and investors withdraw part of their capital from productive activities and redirect it towards safer assets, such as gold, US government bonds, and military industries. From a Marxist perspective, this process reflects the strengthening of the role of finance capital and the transfer of resources away from productive sectors of the economy towards areas primarily associated with crisis management, debt, and militarisation.

Therefore, although certain sections of capital, such as the military industries or parts of the energy sector, may benefit from war, these sectional profits cannot be equated with the overall logic of capital accumulation. War may create opportunities for profit for certain capitals, but, on the whole, it increases the costs of the reproduction of capital, intensifies economic instability, and deepens the internal contradictions of the capitalist system.

This section may be concluded by examining the comrades' argument concerning the social consequences of the crisis. The comrades rightly emphasise that the intensification of economic pressures, together with the transfer by states of the costs of the crisis onto the working class through austerity, inflation, and repression, may create the conditions for the development of future class struggles. They express the hope that this process will give rise to proletarian defeatism in opposition to war and the capitalist states, writing:

“Finally, the social dimension of this crisis is already visible. The rising unrest among the Iranian proletariat prior to the outbreak of war serves as a canary in the coal mine of future proletarian defeatism. As economic pressures mount and states shift the costs of crisis onto the working class through austerity, inflation, and

open repression, conditions are created for renewed waves of class struggle in the future.”³¹

This assessment, taken as a whole, expresses an important and valid point: economic crises, wars, and the transfer of their costs onto the working class can intensify the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and create the conditions for the development of class struggle. Nevertheless, this explanation alone does not capture the whole issue and, if presented without further qualification, may lead to a deterministic understanding of the relationship between the crisis of capitalism and the revolutionary consciousness of the working class.

From a Marxist perspective, economic crises and social pressures do not, in themselves or automatically, give rise to class consciousness, revolutionary defeatism, or the independent struggle of the proletariat. A crisis may create the objective conditions for struggle, but transforming those conditions into a conscious revolutionary force requires the subjective factor: a revolutionary communist organisation, a clear political programme, and the capacity to intervene in the class struggle.

Without such an organisation, the social anger and discontent generated by poverty, war, and repression may be diverted into scattered uprisings, spontaneous outbreaks, or even mobilisations led by different factions of the bourgeoisie. Historical experience has shown that the class struggle does not advance to a higher level solely through the objective conditions of crisis and the intensification of social contradictions; it also requires the existence of a revolutionary communist organisation capable of acting within the struggle as a political compass and playing an active role in the development of the proletariat’s class consciousness.

Without a militant communist organisation, the scattered struggles and spontaneous reactions of the working class, even under conditions of deep capitalist crisis, do not necessarily develop into revolutionary consciousness and an independent class struggle. After a period of heightened intensity, such struggles may subside without attaining a

³¹ [The High Price of War: A Rearmed Proletariat?](#)

higher level of organisation and class consciousness, or they may be diverted into other channels by non-proletarian forces. Under present conditions, the role of the communist organisation is decisive precisely at this point: to connect the everyday struggles of the working class with the historical perspective of proletarian emancipation and to transform scattered acts of resistance into a conscious and organised force against the capitalist system.

In this sense, revolutionary defeatism during the First World War was not simply the product of the suffering caused by war and social crisis. It depended upon the existence of an organised revolutionary current and the political intervention of the Bolsheviks under Lenin's leadership, who were able to establish the connection between the crisis of war, class contradictions, and the necessity of struggle against all imperialist states. Without such an organisation, mass discontent could have been channelled in other directions.

Therefore, the task of communists is not to wait passively for the crisis to deepen, but to build a revolutionary communist organisation and to intervene consciously in the ongoing struggles of the working class, so that the objective conditions of the crisis may contribute to the development of class consciousness and the independent struggle of the proletariat.

The Marxist Concept of Social Revolution

No social system collapses during the period of its historical flourishing and development; rather, it gives way to a superior system only when, after a period of evolution, it reaches a stage at which its relations of production become a barrier to the further development of the productive forces. It is precisely at such a stage that the material conditions for a social revolution—and, in the era of capitalism, for a communist revolution—are created.

Capitalism, while bringing about an immense expansion of the productive forces, also develops its fundamental contradiction. On the one hand, production increasingly acquires a social and global character, with millions of workers participating in the production process on an international scale; on the other hand, the appropriation of wealth remains based on private ownership of the means of production and capitalist relations of production. This contradiction between the socialisation of production and the private appropriation of its products manifests itself in the intensification of the contradiction between labour and capital, thereby creating the objective conditions for communist revolution. For this reason, the communist revolution is the first revolution in history in which the exploited class does not struggle for the establishment of a new form of exploitation, but rather for the abolition of all class relations, the abolition of private ownership of the means of production, and the creation of a classless society.

The communist revolution is inherently a global revolution because capitalism itself is a global system. In other words, the communist revolution is like a political earthquake whose epicentre may emerge in one or more countries, but whose ultimate victory depends on the international expansion of revolutionary struggle and the overthrow of the rule of capital on a global scale. The experience of the October Revolution also demonstrated that the isolation of a proletarian revolution, even in the face of the immense sacrifices of the working class, ultimately paves the way for the defeat of the revolution and the

victory of the counter-revolution. This is because socialist relations of production can only be realised and developed on a global scale, and it is impossible to create socialist islands within the framework of the capitalist system. For this reason, the Communist Left has always emphasised the principle that socialism cannot be built in one country.

We have briefly explained the Marxist concept of social revolution³². From the standpoint of Marxism, and particularly of the Communist Left tradition, in the era of imperialism, revolution is either global in character or it is not a proletarian revolution at all. Therefore, to speak of proletarian revolution as an isolated phenomenon, separate from the process of world revolution, is incompatible with the theoretical achievements of Marxism and the Communist Left tradition.

The wave of world revolution that began with the October Revolution of 1917 was expected to lead to the spread of proletarian revolution in the advanced capitalist countries. However, the defeat of the revolution in Germany, Hungary, and other countries meant that, by 1923, the defeat of this revolutionary wave had effectively been consolidated. With the defeat of world revolution, the conditions for the advance of the counter-revolution were created, and ultimately, in 1928, with the full consolidation of Stalinism and the formulation of the reactionary and anti-Marxist thesis of “Socialism in One Country”, the counter-revolution secured its victory upon the ruins of the wave of world revolution, including the magnificent October Revolution.

³² The Marxist concept of social revolution and the material conditions for world revolution have been examined in detail in the works listed below. Since this polemic is subject to limitations of length and scope, we shall refrain from repeating those discussions here and refer interested readers to the following works for a more detailed examination:

- [The Truth about the Communist Left](#)
- [The Truth According to Třidni Válka \(Class War\)](#)
- [Leftism in the Role of Metamorphosed Councilism](#)
- [Trotsky and Trotskyism – How Trotskyism was integrated into the left of capital](#)
- [Worker-communism Radical Conscience of the Left of Capital](#)

Although Trotsky and Trotskyist currents continued their struggle against Stalinism afterwards, from our perspective, the continuation of the revolutionary tradition of Marxism and the unwavering defence of proletarian internationalism found its expression after 1928 in the Communist Left tradition. This tradition never betrayed the principle of internationalism, never accepted the theory of “Socialism in One Country”, and consistently emphasised the necessity of world revolution as the material and historical condition for the transition to socialism.

Therefore, following the defeat of the wave of world revolution and under the historical domination of the counter-revolution, the material and political conditions for the emergence of a new wave of world revolution did not exist. Consequently, from a dialectical perspective and on the basis of the Marxist understanding of revolution, it is not possible to speak, in this period, of “social revolution” in a single country, regardless of whatever prefix or suffix may be attached to it; for proletarian revolution acquires meaning and historical possibility only as a moment within the process of world revolution.

From the late 1960s onwards, a new wave of class struggle began at the international level and gradually spread to different countries. This wave, which arose from the end of the post-Second World War reconstruction period and the intensification of capitalism’s contradictions, also reached Iran. From 1977 to 1980, Iran witnessed a rise in workers’ strikes, the expansion of mass struggles, and the intensification of social confrontations; struggles that formed part of the same international upsurge of the working class.

At the same time, owing to its geopolitical position in the Persian Gulf region and its decisive role in supplying energy to the capitalist world, Iran occupied a special place in the strategy of the Western bloc. Within the framework of the Cold War, the Shah’s regime served as one of the main pillars of the Western imperialist order in the region and as a barrier against the expansion of Soviet influence towards the Persian Gulf’s energy resources. Consequently, any instability in Iran could have threatened the regional balance of power and the strategic interests of the Western bloc.

On the other hand, left-wing currents in Iran's political landscape enjoyed considerable influence, and there was a possibility that a transfer of power could benefit bourgeois left-wing forces and result in the establishment of a left-oriented government. More importantly, the expansion of class struggle had generated concerns among different sections of the bourgeoisie, both inside and outside Iran, that workers' and mass struggles could escape their control and confront the capitalist order with a deeper crisis.

Under such conditions, the transfer of power from the royal bourgeoisie to the Islamic bourgeoisie did not signify a transformation in the class nature of the state, but rather represented a form of reconstruction of the capitalist state aimed at containing the political crisis and suppressing the advance of the class struggle. From this perspective, the establishment of the Islamic Republic represented a transfer of power between two factions of the bourgeoisie and served as a means of preserving the continuity of capitalist domination. The consolidation of the Islamic bourgeoisie also signified the temporary defeat of the wave of class struggle and the retreat of the proletariat in Iran.

From the standpoint of the Communist Left tradition, these events cannot be described as a "social revolution" or a "communist revolution". In 1979, not only in Iran but anywhere in the world, the material and historical conditions necessary for the victory of proletarian revolution did not exist. Following the defeat of the 1917–1923 wave of world revolution and the establishment of the period of counter-revolution, although class struggles began to intensify once again from the late 1960s onwards, these struggles had not yet reached a level at which the question of proletarian power and world revolution could once again be placed on the historical agenda.³³

³³ This subject has been examined in detail, with reference to the events of that period and through a concrete analysis of social developments from a dialectical perspective, in the book *The Truth According to Třidni Válka (Class War)*. Since revisiting these discussions in the present text is beyond its scope, we refer interested readers to that work for a more detailed examination.

The task of a militant communist organisation is not merely to describe historical events or provide an account of political developments; rather, it is to offer a dialectical analysis of the process of development of capitalist society and class struggle. Such an analysis must place at its centre both the movement of capital and the role of the working class as the only historical force capable of carrying out the transition to communism. From this perspective, any assessment of a historical event must examine it within the framework of the global struggle between classes, the balance of forces between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and the material conditions necessary for communist revolution.

The International Communist Party (il Partito) has addressed the events in Iran in two texts entitled “*Iran: Balance Sheet of the ‘Islamic Revolution’*” and “*Balance Sheet of the Iranian ‘Revolution’*”. However, particularly in the article “*Balance Sheet of the Iranian ‘Revolution’*”, the analysis presented is based less on the method of historical materialism and a Marxist critique of the concept of revolution, and is instead closer to a journalistic and sociological description of events.

Furthermore, in numerous sections of the article, the term “Iranian Revolution” is used—and at times even without placing the word “revolution” in quotation marks. From the perspective of the Communist Left, this raises important theoretical questions concerning the authors’ understanding of the Marxist concept of social revolution and the global character of proletarian revolution. To clarify this issue, we shall refer only to a few examples from the article:

- “He took the road to exile after the revolution.”³⁴
- “After the revolution the capital consisting of crown property and oil revenue...”³⁵
- “Who were absent as an autonomous movement during the revolution against the Shah...”³⁶

³⁴ *Iran: Balance Sheet of the ‘Islamic Revolution’*.

³⁵ *Balance Sheet of the Iranian ‘Revolution’*.

³⁶ *Balance Sheet of the Iranian ‘Revolution’*.

In these two texts, the working class, as the historical force of social transformation, and class struggle, as the driving force of history, do not occupy a decisive place. In particular, the broad wave of workers' and class struggles between 1977 and 1980, which was one of the most important features of that period, is omitted and plays no significant role in the narrative presented. Yet, from the perspective of Marxism and the Communist Left tradition, it is impossible to understand any political or social transformation without placing class struggle at the centre of analysis.

Furthermore, these writings contain, in some instances, inaccurate and at times entirely incorrect information. From a methodological standpoint, they are also closer to a journalistic and political description of events than to a dialectical analysis of material and class processes. Consequently, rather than presenting a coherent account of the development of the capitalist crisis, the balance of class forces, and the position of the proletariat, they offer the reader a series of fragmented descriptions. For example, the International Communist Party writes in the article *"Iran: Balance Sheet of the 'Islamic Revolution'"*:

*"The story of Modern Iran commences in 1925-26 when an officer of the Cossack army, Reza Khan would, with the support of the British, usurp the Persian throne and reign as Reza Shah Pahlavi. The new Shah would speed up the process of westernisation and rename the country 'Iran', thus embarking on a long trial of strength with the religious hierarchies. In the countryside he would introduce a reform of agriculture which was still based on latifundia, of a semi-feudal type."*³⁷

The above description, rather than being grounded in the method of historical materialism and dialectical analysis, reflects the dominant narrative of bourgeois ideology—particularly that of Western democracy—regarding the contemporary history of Iran. In this narrative, by

³⁷ *Iran: Balance Sheet of the 'Islamic Revolution'.*

highlighting the role of figures such as Reza Shah while marginalising class struggles and social contradictions, history is reduced to a series of political reforms and changes in ruling elites. From a Marxist perspective, however, history must be understood through the development of modes of production, class struggle, and the position of social forces within the process of social transformation, rather than merely through states and political figures.

If we are to examine, in very brief terms, the dialectical development of modern Iran, the starting point is the Constitutional Revolution of 1906; a revolution that had a bourgeois-democratic character and, influenced by the expansion of global capitalism and, to some extent, the experience of the French Revolution, advanced demands such as the rule of law, parliament, and a constitution. The Constitutional Revolution represented an attempt to dismantle the remnants of old social relations and create the conditions for the development of capitalism in Iran. Within this framework, the establishment of the National Consultative Assembly and the adoption of the first constitution were among its major achievements.

However, the Constitutional Revolution took place in a peripheral country with a weak bourgeoisie and in the context of intervention by imperialist powers seeking to suppress it. Moreover, shortly afterwards, world capitalism entered the stage of its historical decline, namely the era of imperialism; a stage in which the bourgeoisie, on a global scale, could no longer fulfil the same historically progressive role that it had played during the ascendant phase of capitalism. Consequently, the Iranian bourgeoisie was also unable to fully accomplish the historical tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution and create the conditions for the independent economic and political development of society.

An issue that is either ignored or marginalised in many official narratives and in the writings of Western ideologues is the suppression of the Constitutional Revolution and the role of imperialist powers in this process. Tsarist Russia and Britain, in pursuit of their own interests, supported reactionary forces and, with the bombardment of the National

Consultative Assembly on 23 June 1908, initiated the systematic suppression of the revolution. One of the most prominent episodes in this struggle was the heroic resistance of the people of Tabriz. While enduring nearly eleven months of military and economic siege, the people of the city faced unprecedented hunger and deprivation. In order to survive, they were forced to consume wild grasses and desert plants and to mix flour with sawdust and other inedible substances in order to increase the quantity of bread. Despite such unbearable conditions, this resistance became one of the most enduring chapters in the history of the Constitutional Revolution. Finally, in 1911, the Constitutional Revolution (the bourgeois-democratic revolution) was completely suppressed, paving the way for the renewed consolidation of the power of reactionary forces.

Meanwhile, Reza Khan, who would later rise to power as Reza Shah, was among the military officers who participated in the suppression of the Constitutionalists.³⁸ Consequently, narratives that trace the formation of modern Iran primarily to the era of Reza Shah not only marginalise the Constitutional Revolution and its role in the development of Iranian society, but also conceal the suppression of that revolution and its connection to the interests of domestic reactionary forces and imperialist powers.

Following the suppression of the Constitutional Revolution, the Iranian bourgeoisie was no longer able to fulfil the historical tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. Under these conditions, the coup of 21 February 1921, carried out with British support and led by Reza Khan, represented a turning point in the reconstruction of the capitalist state in Iran. Following the coup, Reza Khan became Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and Minister of War, and initiated the widespread suppression of political opponents, including the first Communist Party of Iran and other workers' and revolutionary forces.

Reza Khan became Prime Minister in 1923, and with Ahmad Shah's departure from Iran, the conditions were created for the transfer of power to the Pahlavi dynasty. Initially, he sought to transform the

³⁸[Reza Khan's Role in the Suppression of the Constitutionalists of Tabriz.](#)

monarchy into a republic, following the example of Atatürk's Turkey; however, this plan encountered strong opposition from the clergy, particularly Seyyed Hassan Modarres, and was subsequently abandoned.³⁹ The clergy and Modarres advised Reza Khan to become Shah. Therefore, contrary to some common narratives, the clergy were not a force opposed to the consolidation of Reza Khan's power; rather, they were among the factors that helped pave the way for the establishment of his monarchy.

After Reza Shah ascended the throne, the policy of top-down modernisation and Westernisation was pursued with greater intensity. Within this framework, tensions between the state and sections of the clergy increased. However, this conflict never amounted to the systematic and violent suppression of the clergy. In contrast, the suppression of the workers' movement, communist forces, and all forms of progressive opposition continued in an organised and uninterrupted manner, becoming one of the main pillars of the consolidation of the new capitalist state.

Furthermore, the final part of the Party's quotation is unfounded. No land reform was implemented during the reign of Reza Shah. Land reform was carried out several decades later, during the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah, as part of the "White Revolution". Therefore, attributing land reform to the period of Reza Shah is a historical error which, together with the theoretical ambiguities arising from the comrades' own perspective, will be examined in another section.

Of the two texts under discussion, the only paragraph that refers to the workers' movement and the struggles of the proletariat is the following. We shall first quote this paragraph and then examine, in concrete terms, the points and claims raised within it:

"After eight years of war, devastating not only for the economy but also for civil society, the proletariat, which had dared to take heaven by storm, is exhausted by the slaughter which has cut down

³⁹ Reza Khan's republican proposal was incompatible with Islamic jurisprudence.

young and old alike. But even though betrayed by the democratic and reformist parties, it will still find it within itself, after this terrible decade of profound crisis, to launch fierce industrial battles, particularly in 2004, 2005 and 2006 when a series of strikes would shake Iran to its very foundations. A change of government would be the response.”⁴⁰

The first sentence of this paragraph, taken as a whole, provides a description of the condition of the proletariat at that historical juncture and is, in this respect, acceptable. However, it is precisely at the most important point—namely, the explanation of how the class struggle was defeated and the Islamic Republic was established—that the Party’s account encounters serious ambiguities. From the perspective of Marxism and the tradition of Communist Left, what must be placed at the centre of the analysis is how the Islamic bourgeoisie was able to violently suppress the working class, crush the independent proletarian movement, and consolidate its rule. It must also be explained how the left of capital contributed to the defeat of the class struggle and the establishment of the Islamic bourgeoisie, and how a significant section of those same forces, after playing this role, were themselves suppressed and massacred by the very Islamic bourgeoisie that had benefited from their actions.

However, instead of explaining this process, the Party reduces the issue to the betrayal of “democratic” and “reformist” parties. Such a formulation not only fails to clarify the class character of the political forces of that period, but also obscures the boundary between the camp of capital and the camp of the proletariat. The task of a communist organisation is to act as a political compass: to clearly delineate class boundaries and demonstrate the role played by each tendency in the defeat or advancement of the proletarian struggle, rather than, through the use of ambiguous concepts, contributing to the existing confusion within the political landscape.

⁴⁰ *Balance Sheet of the Iranian ‘Revolution’.*

For this reason, when the Party refers to “democratic” and “reformist” parties, it should identify these forces concretely, so that it becomes clear precisely which political tendencies are being referred to and what position they occupied within the class structure of society. Furthermore, the use of the concept of “betrayal” itself requires theoretical clarification. To speak of “betrayal” implies the assumption that these forces had, at some point, represented the interests of the proletariat and subsequently abandoned that position. However, the Party neither demonstrates the validity of this assumption nor explains precisely how and at what point this “betrayal” occurred.

In our view, the Party will be unable either to provide a clear list of these “democratic” and “reformist” parties or to explain the concept of “betrayal” in a theoretically substantiated manner. From the perspective of Communist Left theory, the issue is not fundamentally one of “betrayal”. These forces were, from the outset, part of the camp of capital and represented different factions of the bourgeoisie, and their actions were entirely consistent with their class character. Therefore, what occurred was not a departure from a proletarian position, but rather the fulfilment of the role that a bourgeois tendency plays in the preservation and reproduction of capitalist relations.

Consequently, the source of the ambiguity does not lie in the actions of these forces, but rather in the Party’s analysis, which, through the use of unclear concepts, obscures the boundary between the camp of the proletariat and the camp of capital. Instead of clarifying the political landscape, such an analysis contributes to further confusion within it.

In another section, we will examine in detail the Party’s theoretical ambiguities regarding “the left of capital” or the left wing of the bourgeoisie. Here, we shall limit ourselves to the following point: between the two principal camps, namely the proletariat and capital, there exist various political tendencies; however, they cannot simply be characterised as “reformist”. With capitalism’s entry into the era of decline and the opening of the historical period of communist revolutions, the historical horizon of the proletariat is no longer the reform of capitalist relations, but communist revolution. Therefore, these tendencies

must be assessed not on the basis of their reformist slogans, but according to their class position and their actual role in preserving and reproducing capitalist relations.

In the paragraph under discussion, reference is made only to the years 2004, 2005, and 2006, without explaining to the reader the substance of the workers' struggles during this period. Yet each of these years represented specific moments in the struggle of the working class against the attacks of capital. In 2004, the most significant event was the massacre of the Khatoonabad copper mine workers.⁴¹ In 2005, the

⁴¹ On 5 January 2004, the management of the Khatoonabad copper mine decided to dismiss 200 workers. This decision was met with widespread opposition from the workers, who organised a protest gathering demanding the cancellation of the dismissals and their reinstatement. In response to these protests, the mine management promised that the workers would be returned to their jobs; however, after two weeks, none of these promises had been fulfilled. As a result, the workers, together with their families, were forced to block the road leading to the mine in order to make their protest heard.

On 23 January, the bourgeois state of the Islamic Republic, resorting to organised force, launched a bloody repression against the workers. Special forces, supported by helicopters, attacked the workers' gathering and, using live ammunition and widespread violence, crushed their protest. During this assault, dozens of people were injured, and one worker lost his life that same day. On 24 January, the protesting workers, together with their families, extended their protests to the city of Babak and gathered in front of the governor's office. Once again, the response of the state of capital was bullets. On the order of the governor, repressive forces opened fire on the protesting workers, committing one of the bloodiest atrocities against the Iranian workers' movement. In this assault, four workers and one school student were killed, while hundreds more were injured.

This bloody repression, which took place under the so-called reformist government of Mohammad Khatami, clearly demonstrated that all factions of the capitalist state, whenever the defence of capitalist relations and class domination is at stake, stand together against the working class. This event once again revealed that reformism within the framework of capitalism is nothing more than an attempt to preserve and reproduce the existing order and prevent any challenge to its foundations.

In the capitalist system, whenever the working class moves beyond the limits of demands considered tolerable by the bourgeoisie and challenges the fundamental interests of capital, all factions of the ruling order — from conservatives to reformists — set aside their internal differences and unite in defence of capitalist relations and the suppression of workers' struggles. The Khatoonabad experience once again demonstrated this fundamental truth of class struggle: that the state, regardless of its political form or the faction in power, ultimately remains an instrument of bourgeois class domination, and that the emancipation of the working class cannot be achieved through the replacement of one ruling faction by another, but only through the expansion of independent class struggle and the abolition of the capitalist system.

protests of the workers of the Tehran Bus Company, as well as the struggles of textile workers, were among the most prominent events of the workers' movement. In 2006, the protests of the Alborz Rubber workers (Kian Tire), together with strikes and protests by workers in sections of the auto-parts industry connected to Iran Khodro and SAIPA, were among the most important manifestations of the continuation of the class struggle.

On the other hand, the final claim of this paragraph—namely, a change of government would be the response—in other words, that the government changed as a result of the intensification of class struggle—is entirely unfounded and constitutes an irresponsible assertion. The reality is that, following the defeat of the wave of struggles between 1977 and 1980, class struggle in Iran, despite numerous fluctuations and developments, never reached a level at which it could genuinely challenge the political power of the bourgeoisie.

For this reason, the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005, following the end of Mohammad Khatami's presidency, cannot be regarded as a response to workers' struggles. This transition represented merely a transfer of power between two factions of the bourgeoisie within the Islamic Republic. Furthermore, contrary to the prevailing democratic narrative, Khatami's presidency did not represent an opening for the working class; rather, a significant part of the workers' struggles during this period was met with severe repression. In other words, the suppression of the workers' movement under the so-called reformist government was, in many cases, more extensive and more systematically organised than under the conservative government that followed.

In addition to direct repression, the reformist government also employed various forms of "soft repression", including the containment and control of workers' organisations, the diversion of workers' independent demands, and the incorporation or neutralisation of protests within official institutional frameworks. These policies became some of the principal instruments used by the state to contain class struggle and prevent the formation of an independent proletarian organisation.

Class Struggle: The Motor of History

From the perspective of Marxism and the tradition of the Communist Left, class struggle is the motor of history. The history of all class societies is the history of the struggle between antagonistic classes, and capitalism is no exception to this law. The development of the capitalist mode of production, together with the development of the productive forces, deepens the contradiction between labour and capital and transforms the proletariat into the only material force capable of abolishing capitalist relations and bringing about the transition to socialist society.

On this basis, the task of the communist organisation is neither to trail behind social events nor to follow the ebb and flow of the workers' day-to-day struggles. The role of the revolutionary organisation is to serve as the political compass of the class, defend the political independence of the proletariat, elucidate the material laws of class struggle, and clarify its historical and revolutionary perspective. Through political intervention, the critique of bourgeois ideology, and the preservation of the continuity of the communist programme, the communist organisation contributes to the development and consolidation of class consciousness. Without such consciousness, the workers' defensive struggles cannot be elevated into a revolutionary struggle for the abolition of capitalist relations.

In the previous chapter, we showed that the International Communist Party (il Partito), in its analysis of modern Iranian history, begins primarily with the period of Reza Shah. However, what is most strikingly absent from this account is the place of class struggle as the central axis of historical development. This omission is not merely a methodological shortcoming or the result of unfamiliarity with Iranian history, for placing class struggle at the centre of the analysis is the fundamental task of every communist organisation and an indispensable condition of any Marxist analysis of social development.

Closer examination reveals that this deficiency is rooted in the Party's theoretical ambiguity concerning the nature of class struggle and the role of the revolutionary organisation. Once class struggle is displaced from its decisive position, the communist organisation, instead of serving as the political expression of the historical movement of the proletariat, is reduced to a mere interpreter of political developments or a journalistic commentator on events. In this regard, the Party states:

*"In the late 1950s, Iran was a country on the cusp of capitalism."*⁴²

The Party's claim that "in the late 1950s, Iran was country on the cusp of capitalism" is not only historically inaccurate, but also methodologically incompatible with the Marxist understanding of capitalism. The source of this error lies in treating capitalism as a national phenomenon rather than as a global mode of production.

From the perspective of Marxism and the tradition of the Communist Left, capitalism is not a collection of independent national economies, but a global social relation whose laws of motion operate on an international scale. Consequently, communists do not begin their analysis with the level of development of an individual country; rather, they examine that country's place within the overall development of world capitalism. During its period of historical ascendancy, capitalism played a revolutionary and progressive role by sweeping away feudal relations and developing the productive forces, thereby creating the material conditions for communist society. However, with the completion of the world market and capitalism's entry into the imperialist epoch, this historical role came to an end. From that point onwards, capitalism became a reactionary system on a world scale, no longer possessing any progressive historical tasks to fulfil. The fundamental question was therefore no longer which country had yet to achieve "fully developed capitalism" or which bourgeoisie had yet to accomplish its "historical tasks", but rather that all countries, despite their different levels of

⁴² [Modern History of Iran The Pahlavi Monarchy](#).

development, formed constituent parts of a single global system that had become an obstacle to the further historical development of humanity.

From this perspective, the Party's formulation, which presents Iran in the late 1950s as being on the verge of a transition to capitalism, reduces capitalism to a purely national phenomenon and overlooks the relationship between Iran's internal developments and the evolution of world capitalism.

To clarify the issue, it is sufficient to return to the Constitutional Revolution (the bourgeois-democratic revolution) of 1906. The omission of the Constitutional Revolution from the analysis is not merely the omission of a historical event; it is the omission of class struggle as the motor of social transformation. The Constitutional Revolution represented a bourgeois-democratic attempt to dismantle the old social relations and establish a political form corresponding to the expansion of capitalist relations. Although the revolution was defeated as a result of the intervention of Tsarist Russia and Britain, together with the support of domestic reactionary forces, and therefore failed to accomplish all of its political tasks, its defeat did not alter its class character. Consequently, the fact that certain bourgeois-democratic tasks remained unfulfilled cannot justify the conclusion that Iran was still on the verge of entering capitalism in the late 1950s. Capitalist relations had already developed in Iran prior to this period and had expanded through their integration into the world market. What remained incomplete was the fulfilment of the bourgeois-democratic tasks, not Iran's incorporation into the world capitalist system itself.

However, from a Marxist perspective, even this point must be understood within the framework of the historical periodisation of capitalism. While the Constitutional Revolution belonged to the period of capitalism's historical ascendancy, the global conditions underwent a qualitative transformation after the First World War. The entry of capitalism into the imperialist epoch meant that no national bourgeoisie, even in the peripheral countries of capitalism, could any longer act as the bearer of a progressive historical mission for the development of society.

From this period onwards, all factions of the bourgeoisie, regardless of their democratic or anti-colonial slogans, became part of the global order of capital, and the proletarian revolution became the only historical perspective before humanity.

This is precisely why, after returning from exile in April 1917 and arriving in Petrograd, Lenin, standing on an armoured train carriage at the railway station before thousands of workers and soldiers who had gathered to welcome him, articulated the perspective of revolution not within the framework of a merely national or bourgeois-democratic stage, but directly within the framework of the world socialist revolution. He concluded his speech with the slogan: “Long live the world socialist revolution!” The significance of this position lay not merely in the expression of a political slogan, but in the theoretical and political break it represented with the conception that the proletariat should first assist in completing the historical project of the bourgeoisie and only at some indefinite point in the future struggle for socialism. From this moment onwards, the historical task of the proletariat was no longer the development of capitalism, but the organisation of class struggle on an international scale for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of communism. Lenin, without ambiguity or compromise, emphasised the necessity of world socialist revolution:

“Dear comrades, soldiers, sailors, and workers! I am happy to greet in your persons the victorious Russian revolution, and greet you as the vanguard of the worldwide proletarian army ... The piratical imperialist war is the beginning of civil war throughout Europe ... The hour is not far distant when at the call of our comrade, Karl Liebknecht, the peoples will turn their arms against their own capitalist exploiters ... The worldwide socialist revolution has already dawned ... Germany is seething ... Any day now the whole of European capitalism may crash. The Russian

revolution accomplished by you has prepared the way and opened a new epoch. Long live the worldwide socialist revolution!”⁴³

First, it is necessary to answer a fundamental question: was Russia in 1917 a capitalist society in which Lenin advocated socialist revolution? More importantly, was the world system at that time capitalist in such a way that Lenin formulated the perspective of revolution not within the framework of Russia alone, but as a world socialist revolution? From the perspective of Marxism and the tradition of the Communist Left, the answer to both questions is affirmative.

The reason for this answer is clear. Communists do not derive the nature of a revolution from the level of development of an individual country; rather, they understand it within the framework of the historical development of capitalism as a global system. The First World War represented a turning point in this process. It demonstrated that capitalism had entered a stage in which it was no longer capable of fulfilling its progressive historical role, and that competition between national states had led to imperialist wars for the redivision of the world. Therefore, the First World War was not merely a war between states, but a manifestation of capitalism's entry into an epoch of historical decline and the opening of the period of proletarian revolutions. This is why Lenin and the communists regarded the October Revolution as the beginning of the world proletarian revolution, rather than as a revolution whose task was to complete the development of Russian capitalism.

Since the Party itself regards the October Revolution as a proletarian revolution, its claim regarding Iran can be compared with the experience of Russia. If the criterion is the level of capitalist development or the size of the working class, is there any difference that could justify the conclusion that Russia in 1917 was prepared for proletarian revolution, whereas Iran in the late 1950s was still on the verge of a transition to capitalism?

⁴³ [At the Finland Station](#)

Historical estimates indicate that the working class in Russia in 1917 constituted approximately 15 to 16 per cent of the population. By contrast, in the late 1950s, the proportion of Iran's proletariat, according to various estimates, was also around 13 to 15 per cent of the population⁴⁴. Therefore, in terms of the relative weight of the proletariat within society as a whole, there was no decisive difference between the two countries. The principal difference lay in the composition and concentration of the class: the Russian proletariat was largely concentrated in large-scale industries and major centres of production, which increased its capacity for organisation and political intervention, whereas the Iranian working class was more dispersed across small and medium-sized enterprises, a factor that influenced both the forms of class struggle and the degree of organisational concentration.

However, even this comparison should not become the primary criterion of analysis. From the perspective of Marxism and the Communist Left, the dominant mode of production in a country cannot be determined solely by the numerical proportion of the proletariat, the volume of industrial production, the quantity of goods produced, or even the balance of class forces within that country. These indicators are important, but they are not decisive. The fundamental criterion is the position of that country within the totality of the global capitalist system and the laws governing the reproduction of this system on an international scale. For this reason, the relative backwardness or advancement of a country, the persistence of remnants of pre-capitalist relations, or the weakness of a national bourgeoisie does not, in itself, mean that the country is still on the verge of a transition to capitalism.

In other words, if it is accepted that Russia in 1917, despite its economic backwardness, peasant majority, and the limited numerical

⁴⁴Precise and direct statistical data, particularly concerning Iran in the late 1950s, are not available. Therefore, in order to arrive at a reliable estimate, we have compared and synthesised the available data and analyses from sources such as *Iran Between Two Revolutions* by Ervand Abrahamian, *The Economic Development of Iran*, *Iran: A Country Study*, and several other research works. On the basis of this comparative analysis, an average has been derived from the existing estimates, which provides the basis for the figures presented in this discussion.

weight of the proletariat, was part of the global capitalist system and that the October Revolution was a proletarian revolution, then the claim that Iran in the late 1950s was still on the verge of a transition to capitalism requires an argument far beyond a reference to the level of economic development or the internal characteristics of Iranian society. Otherwise, such a claim would be incompatible with the very theoretical premises upon which the October Revolution was based.

The Party's formulation that Iran remained on the verge of becoming capitalist until the late 1950s is not merely a historical error; rather, it reflects a method of analysis that, instead of proceeding from the material contradictions of society, begins with political and institutional descriptions. As a result, the Party's analysis, rather than examining society from the perspective of Marxism and the Communist Left, comes closer to the prevailing narratives of liberal historiography and bourgeois sociology—narratives whose focus is on the state, reforms, and political elites rather than on class struggle.

Whereas the task of a communist organisation is to highlight the contradiction between labour and capital, reveal the real movement of class struggle, and act as the political compass of the proletariat, in the Party's account class struggle is either entirely absent or relegated to the margins.⁴⁵ In such a narrative, the working class is no longer the subject

⁴⁵ The same ambiguities can be observed in the Party's analysis of contemporary developments. Rather than acting as the political compass of the proletariat and clarifying the political direction of class struggle through an independent analysis of the contradiction between labour and capital, the Party obscures the distinction between class struggle and democratic struggles. As a result, the independent struggle of the proletariat becomes absorbed into inter-class struggles, and the political independence of the working class is weakened.

Whenever the political independence of the proletariat is weakened, class struggle is reduced to a struggle for the democratisation of the capitalist state and loses its communist perspective. Under such conditions, instead of fulfilling the role of providing the proletariat with political and programmatic leadership, a communist organisation inadvertently contributes to the reproduction of theoretical and political ambiguity and creates the conditions for the influence of democratic ideology within the working class. In our view, this is precisely the weakness that can also be observed in the Party's recent positions, and in the following sections we will examine it in a specific and documented manner.

of history, but is reduced to a passive backdrop for the actions of the state and the ruling classes.

To demonstrate the weakness of this narrative, there is no need to list dozens of strikes and workers' struggles that took place before the 1960s; a single example is sufficient. The major strike by workers at the Abadan oil refinery in 1929, that is, more than twenty years before the point at which the Party considers Iran to have been on the verge of becoming capitalist, alone calls many of these claims into question. In this strike, approximately 9,000 oil industry workers, employed at one of the largest centres of capitalist production in the Middle East, halted production.⁴⁶ At that time, Iran's oil industry was controlled by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. The strike continued for three days and was eventually suppressed through the collaboration of the Iranian government and British military intelligence. Historical documents show that British officials were so concerned about the spread of the strike that the British consul requested that the Royal Navy vessel HMS *Cyclamen* patrol near the area so that it could be dispatched to Abadan if necessary.

This event raises a fundamental question: if Iran was still on the verge of capitalism, how could thousands of wage workers at the heart of the oil industry have gone on strike against capital, and how could this struggle have become so significant that both the Iranian state and British imperialism intervened in a coordinated effort to suppress it? Such an event was not an exception, but rather an expression of social relations in which the contradiction between labour and capital had objectively taken shape and manifested itself through class struggle.

This example demonstrates that the central issue is not the existence or absence of capitalism, but rather the neglect of class struggle in historical analysis. When this struggle is removed from the centre of analysis, the history of society is likewise reduced to the history of the state, reforms, and the decisions of political elites—precisely the approach

⁴⁶ This figure refers to the workers who initiated the strike action during the initial phase or in one of the refinery's main sections. As workers from other sections, as well as the workers' families, joined the protest, the number of participants gradually increased. It is estimated that the final number of strikers was between 11,000 and 14,000.

followed by bourgeois historiography and journalism. This analytical pattern is repeated in the Party's account of the 1960s. Regarding the "White Revolution", the Party writes:

*"After the death of Ayatollah Kasciani in 1962, the regime, which until then had governed with "moderation" out of respect for the powerful Shi'ite clergy, launched a plan of social and economic reforms in response to discontent over the social disparities that had characterized the previous years, with the aim of transforming Persian society into a modern, Westernized industrial power: a series of measures by the monarchical regime that would come to be known as the "White Revolution." With substantial oil revenues—of which the Iranian state retained 50% of the royalties—a massive transformation program was launched in 1963 to be implemented over a 15-year period. Some measures implemented immediately were approved by a plebiscite with 99% of votes in favor, driven by the hope of improving the difficult living conditions of the time."*⁴⁷

What is striking in this narrative is not merely a number of historical inaccuracies, but rather its analytical perspective. Throughout this explanation, the state, the Shah, the clergy, reform programmes, oil revenues, and the referendum occupy the centre of the narrative, while the working class, class struggle, and the requirements of capital accumulation are almost entirely absent. Land reform and the White Revolution are presented not as responses to the crisis of capital accumulation and the need to restructure capitalist relations of production, but primarily as a set of state modernisation policies.

If the Party's name were removed from this text, it would be difficult to distinguish it from a conventional narrative found in departments of political science, sociology, or even the official historiography of liberal states. The difference between a communist

⁴⁷ [Modern History of Iran The Pahlavi Monarchy.](#)

organisation and such narratives becomes precisely clear at this point. Marxism explains history from the perspective of class struggle, the movement of capital, and the material contradictions of society, rather than from the perspective of the decisions of states or modernisation projects. Once this method is abandoned, even when Marxist terminology is employed, the result is nothing other than the reproduction of the bourgeois narrative of history.

The Iranian state, both during the Qajar period and under the Pahlavi dynasty, consistently presented itself as the defender and guardian of Twelver Shi'a Islam. Mohammad Reza Shah also declared at his coronation ceremony that the protection of Shi'a Islam was one of the pillars of his monarchy's legitimacy. He not only regarded Twelver Shi'ism as one of the ideological foundations of the state, but also portrayed himself personally as a religious figure endowed with the support of supernatural forces. The Shah repeatedly claimed that he had been entrusted with a divine mission to save and guide Iran. In his book *Mission for My Country*, as well as in numerous interviews, he spoke of religious experiences throughout his life, including his claims of being cured of typhoid fever after seeing Imam Ali in a dream, being saved from a fall from a horse through the intervention of Abbas ibn Ali, and encountering the Hidden Imam during his adolescence.

However, from the perspective of Marxism, the significance of these personal beliefs is secondary. What is of fundamental importance is the social and political function of religion in preserving class relations. The Pahlavi state, like other bourgeois states, utilised religious institutions not merely as expressions of religious belief, but as one of the instruments through which class domination is reproduced. During the Cold War, Shi'a Islam, in addition to its traditional role in legitimising the state, became an ideological barrier against the influence of the Soviet bloc and against currents that the regime identified as "communism".

Within this framework, the Pahlavi regime sought to present itself as a religious monarchy and a defender of the clergy. The reconstruction of the shrine of Imam Reza in Mashhad, support for religious seminaries, official visits to Mecca and the holy sites of Iraq, and the regime's

continuous emphasis on its Shi'a identity were all part of the state's ideological apparatus for consolidating political legitimacy and reproducing the capitalist order in Iran.

Contrary to the ambiguity created by the ICP, its account of the "White Revolution" is based on the assumption that the Shah's regime introduced reforms in response to "dissatisfaction arising from social divisions". This formulation, rather than beginning its analysis from the laws of motion of capital, reduces the reforms to the political will of the government and its response to social discontent. From the perspective of Marxism, such an interpretation reverses the relationship between cause and effect.

The reality is that, following the Second World War, the reconstruction of war-devastated economies propelled global capitalism into one of the greatest periods of capital accumulation in its history. Although Iran did not suffer direct destruction on the scale experienced by the European countries, its vast oil resources and its increasing integration into the world market gave it considerable capacity to attract investment and expand industry. During this period, the oil industry expanded, existing industries were modernised, and assembly industries grew rapidly. This process required increased investment in constant capital and, consequently, an expanding demand for wage labour.

However, capital accumulation requires more than constant capital; it also depends upon a continuous supply of free wage labour. For this reason, in order to sustain accumulation, capital was compelled to detach millions of people from small-scale rural production and draw them into the wage labour market. It is within this context that land reform must be understood. Its primary purpose was not to respond to the demands of the peasantry, but to accelerate the creation of a free wage labour force and establish the conditions necessary for the further expansion of capitalist relations. The other components of the "White Revolution"—from the expansion of public education and healthcare to the extension of voting rights to women—should likewise be understood within this framework: namely, as measures designed to adapt Iran's social and political structure to the requirements of capital accumulation.

Within this framework, the Party reproduces the regime's official claim that 99 per cent voted in favour of the "White Revolution" referendum without subjecting it to any critical scrutiny. Yet unofficial estimates differ considerably regarding the proportion of affirmative votes, with some sources, for example, putting the figure at 91 per cent.⁴⁸ The Party goes even further by claiming that these votes were "*driven by the hope of improving the difficult living conditions of the time*". However, this assertion is neither substantiated nor grounded in any class analysis.

Moreover, historical experience has repeatedly demonstrated that the official results of referendums and elections in bourgeois regimes, particularly in authoritarian systems, do not constitute a reliable measure of either the balance of class forces or the legitimacy of a government. The announcement of overwhelmingly favourable results does not, in itself, reflect the actual condition of society or the real relationship between the classes and the state. Even in a bourgeois democracy, the ballot box is not a direct reflection of class struggle, but merely one of the political mechanisms through which capitalist rule is reproduced. For example, following the 2002 referendum in Iraq, the government announced that Saddam Hussein had been re-elected for a further term with 100 per cent of the vote.⁴⁹ Likewise, following the 2021 presidential election in Syria, the government declared that Bashar al-Assad had secured more than 95 per cent of the vote.⁵⁰ Regardless of the accuracy of these figures, such results, in themselves, prove nothing about the actual condition of society, the balance of class forces, or the stability of a regime.

From the perspective of Marxism, the criterion for analysis is not the official statistics issued by states, but the real movement of class

⁴⁸ [Donya-a-Egtesad](#).

⁴⁹ The chaos, savagery, and barbarism that engulfed Iraq following the fall of Saddam Hussein were not the result of the Iraqi people defending Saddam's regime, but rather the product of the settling of accounts among imperialist states, criminal armed groups, and rival reactionary forces; a process which, in the final analysis, was nothing other than a manifestation of the barbarism and crisis of the capitalist system.

⁵⁰ [Euronews](#).

struggle, the process of capital accumulation, and the actual balance of social forces. For this reason, the task of a communist organisation is not to reproduce the state's official narratives or to invent psychological explanations for them, but to act as the political compass of the proletariat by distinguishing the political spectacles of the bourgeoisie from the reality of class struggle and exposing their class character. In this instance, the Party has not merely failed to fulfil this task; by accepting the official statistics uncritically and attributing unsubstantiated motives to those who voted, it has further contributed to theoretical confusion. Participation in elections or referendums, even in bourgeois democracies where electoral competition is relatively more genuine, is not a direct reflection of developments within society or of class struggle, let alone in the case of referendums conducted from the outset under the full control of the state apparatus.

For this reason, it is striking that a Party claiming to defend the tradition of the Communist Left, for which class struggle should be the point of departure and the central axis of all analysis, here effectively adopts the standpoint of bourgeois journalism and recounts history from the perspective of state reforms, referendums, and government decisions. In such a narrative, class struggle, workers' strikes, proletarian resistance, and the real contradictions of society are either relegated to the margins or disappear altogether, as though history were made by governments rather than by the struggle between classes. At the same time, according to the Party's own account, the opposition also conducted a significant part of its organisational activity through the network of mosques and religious institutions, a process that ultimately culminated in the collapse of the monarchical regime⁵¹:

⁵¹ At first glance, it might appear that the Party's theoretical ambiguities, its journalistic descriptions of social developments, and the absence of class struggle from these accounts stem from a lack of familiarity with Iranian history and its social transformations. However, an examination of the Party's positions on other countries demonstrates that the issue extends far beyond a mere lack of information about a particular region. The roots of these ambiguities lie in the comrades' own theoretical outlook rather than in any unfamiliarity with local realities. This can also be observed, for example, in the Party's analyses of Turkey, a country in which it has an organisation. We shall examine this case in the following sections.

“Modernization was superficial and limited to a few, favoring a narrow elite, which led to widespread resentment among various social strata—peasants, the urban proletariat, and the petty bourgeoisie—who began to see the clergy (the monarchy’s historic enemy in recent decades) as an ally and supporter of the national cause, against the Crown, which was viewed as foreign and Western, authoritarian and corrupt... In the countryside, the agrarian reform—the central pillar of the initiative—shattered the old feudal and serfdom relationships and distributed the land, accelerated the development of capitalist farms and a new landowning bourgeoisie, which became the dominant class in a country still deeply agrarian, gaining great power, even over the still-minority industrial bourgeoisie. The latter, still in its formative stages, was already brutally exploiting the working class... As the crisis and tensions intensified, SAVAK assumed ever greater power and a central role, benefiting from progressive and substantial increases in state funding. Many opposition groups began organizing clandestinely, mainly in mosques. This occurred very gradually: it would take another 15 years before the fall of the monarchy.”⁵²

Contrary to the account presented by the comrades, capitalism had become the dominant global system long before this period, and commodity relations had extended even to the most remote regions of the world. This does not, of course, mean the complete disappearance of remnants of previous modes of production. In every capitalist society, forms and remnants of earlier relations can continue to exist, particularly at the level of the superstructure or within certain social relations, without negating the capitalist character of the dominant mode of production. Even in the most advanced capitalist countries, such as Britain, Sweden, Denmark, and Belgium, among others, the institution of monarchy continues to exist as part of the political superstructure; an institution

⁵²[Modern History of Iran The Pahlavi Monarchy.](#)

whose roots lie in the period of feudalism, but whose survival does not mean that these societies are feudal.

The same logic applies to Iran. The exclusion of the Constitutional Revolution, as a bourgeois-democratic revolution, from the historical narrative neither alters the material realities of society nor changes the course of capitalist development. The only result of such an approach is that class struggle and its historical role in the formation of Iranian capitalist society are removed from the analysis. From this perspective, the issue is not the reality of history itself, but rather the Party's inability to provide a coherent analysis based on historical materialism.

Before continuing the discussion, it is necessary to briefly clarify the position of workers' councils from a Marxist perspective, in order to distinguish this tradition from the various forms of leftism and councilism. From the standpoint of Marxism, workers' councils are, above all, organs of the political power of the proletariat. Their decisive role is not the management of individual production units, but the organisation of the working class for the destruction of the bourgeois state and the seizure of political power. Councils acquire their historical significance only during periods of revolutionary upsurge and as organs through which the dictatorship of the proletariat is exercised.

It is precisely here that the fundamental distinction between the Communist Left and councilist and self-management tendencies becomes clear. As comrade Bordiga argued, if the workers of a factory merely assume the management or ownership of that particular production unit, they have not yet moved beyond the framework of capitalist relations. As long as the law of value, commodity production, exchange, and market competition remain in place, changing the ownership of a single production unit amounts to nothing more than replacing the private capitalist with a workers' cooperative. Such a situation represents not the abolition of capitalism, but another form of its reproduction. Therefore, workers' councils must not be reduced to institutions for the independent management of individual factories; rather, they must serve as instruments for the exercise of the political power of the working class, so

that the whole of social production, after the destruction of the bourgeois state, can be organised according to a unified social plan rather than on the basis of the law of value and commodity exchange.

With this theoretical distinction in mind, we can turn to the experience of Iran during the years 1978 and 1979. During the intensification of class struggle, sections of the working class, rather than restricting themselves to forms of organisation such as syndicates and trade unions, began to establish bodies whose aims were to exercise control over production, supervise management, or organise the affairs of factories and workplaces. However, from a Marxist perspective, these bodies cannot be considered workers' councils in the strict sense of the term, because they largely remained confined to the level of the factory or workplace and did not develop into organs of the political power of the working class. They were more akin to factory committees or workplace committees than councils capable of fulfilling their historical role in the process of proletarian revolution. Nevertheless, since these bodies referred to themselves as "councils" and were also known in the political literature of the period as the "council movement", we shall continue to refer to them by this name, while always keeping this theoretical distinction in mind.

Providing an extensive list of all political and social developments, from land reform to the transfer of power from the monarchic bourgeoisie to the Islamic bourgeoisie, is neither necessary for the purpose of this discussion nor possible within the framework of a theoretical debate. What is important for the present discussion is not a recounting of every event, but rather the highlighting of their central axis: namely, class struggle—an axis that is either absent from the Party's account or relegated to the margins.

Between 1978 and 1980, Iranian society experienced one of the most intense periods of class confrontation in its modern history. Workers' struggles went beyond the level of economic demands and, in many production centres, developed into struggles over control of production, independent organisation, and challenges to the authority of

capital. This process, regardless of its political limitations and weaknesses, represented a deepening of class struggle rather than merely the replacement of one faction of the bourgeoisie by another.

Following the collapse of the monarchical state apparatus in February 1979, the departure of many managers and owners, together with the crisis in management structures, placed workers before the necessity of organising production directly. In many factories, workers spontaneously established bodies known as “workers’ councils”. These bodies assumed responsibilities such as supervising production, preventing factory closures, removing managers associated with the previous regime, and defending workers’ demands. Since these organisations were formed at the level of individual production units and lacked nationwide coordination and an independent role in the sphere of political power, from a Marxist perspective they resembled factory or workplace committees more than workers’ councils in the strict sense of the term. Nevertheless, as noted earlier, because these bodies themselves adopted the name “council”, we shall continue to use this designation throughout the following discussion.

With the gradual consolidation of the new state, the Islamic bourgeoisie, like any other capitalist state, came to view the existence of independent workers’ organisations as incompatible with its interests. From the spring of 1980, the policy of containing and dismantling these organisations was openly placed on the government’s agenda. By the summer of that year, the confrontation between organised workers and the state had entered a more direct phase, and a wave of pressure, dissolution, purges, and repression against the councils began. By the autumn of 1980, the majority of these independent bodies had either been dissolved, brought under state control, or eliminated through direct repression.

In this process, while suppressing independent organisations, the government simultaneously moved to establish and strengthen institutions under its own control. Islamic associations in factories and workplaces expanded as ideological and organisational instruments of the state,

aimed at countering independent workers' organisations. The purpose of these institutions was not to organise class struggle, but to contain it, undermine the political independence of workers, and integrate them into the new capitalist order. Therefore, the replacement of independent councils with state-controlled institutions should be understood as part of the process of consolidating the rule of the Islamic bourgeoisie and reconstructing the authority of the capitalist state following the upheavals of 1979. The table below presents only some of the most significant events of this period, with an emphasis on the course of class struggle and the repression of independent workers' organisations.

Date	Workplace / Industry	Nature of Struggle
Spring 1977	Melli Shoe Factory	Strike for wage increases, improved working conditions, and opposition to management
Spring 1977	Tehran construction workers	Protest against wages and conditions of casual employment
Summer 1977	General Motors Iran	Strike against worker dismissals and demands for higher wages
Summer 1977	Tabriz Machine Manufacturing	Strike for wage increases, job security, and improved working conditions
Summer 1977	Tehran printing houses	Strike for wage increases and reduction of working hours
Autumn 1977	Tabriz Tractor Manufacturing	Protest against factory management and wage demands
Winter 1977	Iran National	Production-line workers' strike for wage increases and reduction of work pressure
Winter 1977	Isfahan textile factories	Protest against wages and working conditions
Spring 1978	Isfahan Steel Mill	Large-scale strike accompanied by the election of workers' representatives
Spring 1978	Mazandaran textile factories	Strike over wages and job security
May 1978	Abadan Refinery	Strike for wage increases, improved working conditions, and the release of workers' activists
June 1978	Tehran Refinery	Strike by production and maintenance workers demanding wage increases and improved working conditions
July 1978	Tabriz Refinery	Strike in protest against employment conditions and wage levels
Summer 1978	Southern Tehran brick kilns (Khavaran,	Strike for wage increases, shorter working hours, improved living conditions, and the

	Khatounabad, Mahmoudabad, etc.)	abolition of the intermediary system (ostabashi)
August 1978	Ahvaz oil industries	Strike accompanied by the formation of strike committees
September 1978	National Iranian Oil Company	Nationwide strike that severely reduced oil production and exports and led to the formation of strike committees
September 1978	Railways	Strike for wage increases and solidarity with nationwide strikes
October 1978	Tehran Bus Company	Strike by drivers and service workers
October 1978	Telecommunications	Workers' strike and disruption of the communications network
October 1978	Bank Melli Iran	Employees' strike and suspension of part of banking activities
October 1978	Bank Saderat Iran	Strike in protest against management and employment conditions
October 1978	Customs	Work stoppage and support for the wave of nationwide strikes
October 1978	Ports (especially Khorramshahr)	Strike by loading and unloading workers
November 1978	Oil industry throughout Iran	General strike accompanied by the formation of elected workers' committees and partial workers' control over production processes
November 1978	Abadan Refinery	Formation of a strike committee and workers' supervision over refinery operations
November 1978	Tehran Refinery	Formation of an elected workers' committee to manage the strike
November 1978	Varamin brick kilns	Strike and creation of workers' committees
December 1978	Arj Factory	Strike and demand for the removal of managers affiliated with the government
December 1978	Pars Electric	Strike accompanied by the election of workers' representatives
January 1979	Iran National (Iran Khodro)	Formation of a workers' council and participation in factory management
January 1979	Southern Tehran brick kilns	Formation of workers' councils and direct negotiations with kiln owners
February 1979	General Motors Iran	Formation of a factory council and supervision of management
February 1979	Melli Shoe Factory	Formation of a workers' council and intervention in recruitment, production, and administrative affairs
February 1979	Tehran printing houses	Creation of workers' councils
November	Varamin brick kilns	Strike and creation of workers' committees

1978		
March 1979	Tabriz Machine Manufacturing	Formation of a factory council and participation in managing the production unit
March 1979	Tabriz Tractor Manufacturing	Creation of an elected workers' council and supervision of management
March 1979	Isfahan Steel Mill	Formation of a workers' council and participation in production management
March 1979	Southern oil industries	Workers' councils in production and refinery centres
Spring 1979	Mazandaran textile factories	Formation of a council and demands for wage increases and job security
Spring 1979	Isfahan textile industry	Strike and formation of a factory council
Spring 1979	Southern Tehran brick kilns	Formation of workers' councils and attempts to manage production
Spring 1979	Kerman coal mines	Strike for improved safety, wage increases, and job security
Summer 1979	Tehran Chit Manufacturing	Strike for wage increases and protest against management
Summer 1979	Rey Cement Factory	Strike in protest against wages and working conditions
Summer 1979	Arak Machine Manufacturing	Strike and demand for workers' participation in factory management
Summer 1979	Behshahr Industrial Group	Strike over wages, job security, and the authority of councils
Summer 1979	Construction workers	Protest for insurance, establishment of a minimum wage, and regulation of employment
Autumn 1979	Iran National (present-day Iran Khodro)	Confrontation between the workers' council, management, and the state over council authority
Autumn 1979	Oil industries	Conflict between workers' councils and the state over management and control of production
Winter 1979	Tehran and Varamin brick kilns	Protest against dismissal of seasonal workers and restrictions placed on councils
Spring 1980	Isfahan Steel Mill	Strike and dispute over the authority of the workers' council and management
Spring 1980	Abadan Refinery	Protest against the restriction of workers' council powers
Spring 1980	Many major factories	Resistance by independent councils against their replacement by Islamic associations
Summer 1980	Various industries	Decline in the scope of strikes following increased state control over workplaces
Autumn 1980	Most major factories	Gradual dissolution of independent councils with the beginning of the war and the securitisation of the political environment

Having examined the independent organisation of workers, we now turn to an assessment of political forces from the perspective of the International Communist Party (il Partito). As we have seen above, by excluding the Constitutional Revolution, understood as a bourgeois-democratic revolution, the Party removes from its analysis a crucial part of the historical development of capitalism and class struggle in Iran. The same method is repeated in its treatment of the history of the communist movement in Iran.

In its account of Iran's political forces, the International Communist Party (il Partito) effectively overlooks the first Communist Party of Iran and an entire generation of revolutionary communists, as if the history of the communist movement in Iran began with the Tudeh Party. This is despite the fact that the Communist Party of Iran, particularly its left wing under the leadership of Avetis Mikaelian (Sultan-Zadeh)⁵³, was among the earliest and most resolute defenders of the world proletarian revolution and the communist programme.

The importance of this issue lies not merely in the recording of a historical event; rather, it concerns the continuity of the communist programme and tradition. From the perspective of the Communist Left, the history of the communist movement should not be assessed on the basis of the successes or failures of organisations, but according to the continuity or rupture of the revolutionary tradition and programme. From this standpoint, the omission of the first Communist Party of Iran amounts to the removal of a part of the historical experience of proletarian struggle and the severing of its connection with the internationalist tradition.

This issue is clearly evident in Sultan-Zadeh's positions. At the Second Congress of the Communist International, during one of the Congress's most fundamental debates—namely, the question of national and colonial movements—he aligned himself with the Left wing of the

⁵³ For a fuller understanding of the events of that period and Sultan-Zadeh's political positions, readers are encouraged to consult the article "[Avetis Mikaelian: An Inspiration Source for the Proletariat](#)".

Congress and opposed any compromise with bourgeois nationalism or any reduction of the proletariat's tasks to supporting national movements. In the Fifth Session of the Congress, Sultan-Zadeh stated:

“Just imagine that the Communist Revolution has begun in India. Could the workers in this country, without the help of a revolutionary movement in Britain and Europe, resist an attack against the bourgeoisie? Naturally not...the revolution that has begun in the West has also prepared the background in Iran and Turkey and has given power to the revolutionaries. The era of World Revolution has begun....The issue is that, unlike the bourgeois-democratic movements, a true Communist movement must be created and be kept on foot. Any other assessment of the realities can lead to unfortunate results.”

Stalinism built its victory upon the ruins of the magnificent October Revolution and over the bodies of thousands of internationalist communists. The consolidation of the Stalinist counter-revolution was achieved not through the continuation of the Bolshevik tradition, but through the suppression and destruction of the very generation that had brought the October Revolution to victory. During the Stalinist purges, many of the most honourable and devoted communists—the very revolutionaries who had made the October Revolution possible—were imprisoned, exiled, and executed in the name of “defending socialism” and “communism”.

The suppression of the Left wing of the Communist Party of Iran was part of this same global process of counter-revolution. By destroying internationalist communists, including Avetis Mikaelian (Sultan-Zadeh), Stalinism sought to eliminate any continuity with the communist tradition and the programme of world revolution. However, these crimes neither diminish the historical significance of that generation of communists nor their place within the international proletarian movement. On the contrary, their role in defending proletarian internationalism and participating in the October Revolution, irrespective of the tragic fate

imposed upon them by the Stalinist counter-revolution, remains part of the legacy of the communist movement.

From that point onwards, the history of Iran's political milieu has been the history of the dominance of the capitalist Left, particularly Stalinism. With these points established, we can now examine how the International Communist Party (il Partito) describes and evaluates the formation and activities of the Tudeh Party:

“It is worth recalling here the role of the historic “Communist” party, the Stalinist Tudeh, which, after having supported the nationalization of the AIOC, the Iranian oil company, in the previous decade, maintained close ties with Moscow throughout the 1960s, operating de facto underground following the growing repression by the Pahlavis, with its cadres often in prison or in exile. This party, which had already sided on previous occasions with the Shi’ite ayatollahs—who were also opposed to Western interference in the country—aimed for an “anti-imperialist” policy—that is, one aimed at supporting greater intervention and hegemony by the USSR in Iranian oil affairs—influencing part of the protests and contributing to the emergence of various left-wing groups, especially among university students, who were hostile to the American dictatorship, increasingly perceived as the sole evil to be overthrown.”⁵⁴

Much of the above statement is inconsistent with reality not only in theoretical terms but also in historical fact. Before turning to a political and theoretical critique, it is therefore necessary first to correct a number of factual errors, since any Marxist critique must be grounded in historical reality.

The Tudeh Party of Iran was founded in October 1941, during the Allied occupation of Iran, in line with the foreign policy and imperialist objectives of the Soviet Union, with Britain's approval and within the

⁵⁴ [Modern History of Iran The Pahlavi Monarchy](#).

framework of Allied interests. Its emergence must be understood in the context of the Stalinist Comintern's policy of the Popular Front and the imperatives of the Second World War as an imperialist war. From the outset, the Party sought to advance Soviet policy in Iran. Accordingly, at the time of its foundation, the Tudeh Party neither claimed to continue the tradition of revolutionary communism nor presented itself as the party of the proletarian revolution.

The first General Secretary of the Tudeh Party of Iran, Soleiman Mirza Eskandari, was a leading figure of the democratic constitutionalist movement, not a revolutionary communist. Numerous memoirs and historical sources, including the account of Nouredin Kianouri (who later became the Party's General Secretary), relate that during political and Party meetings, whenever the time for prayer arrived, Soleiman Mirza would either leave the meeting to perform his prayers or pray there and then. Indeed, some members jokingly or sarcastically referred to him as "Soleiman the Prayerful".

The issue here is not merely the religious beliefs of an individual, but the gulf between the Party's communist claims and the theoretical foundations and worldview of those who stood at its head. Even if one sets aside historical materialism, which Marx developed through his critique of Feuerbach's materialism, Eskandari's outlook was not even consistent with that earlier, pre-Marxist materialism. From this perspective, the presence of such figures in the leadership of the Tudeh Party demonstrates that, from its very inception, the Party was not founded upon a revolutionary communist programme and a materialist worldview. Rather, it was the product of a political and historical alliance formed within the framework of the Stalinist Comintern's United Front policy.

Ruhollah Khomeini, the first Supreme Leader of the Islamic bourgeoisie, later recalled travelling to Mecca with Soleiman Mirza Eskandari and referred to him by the nickname "Soleiman the Prayerful". Khomeini recounted the journey and his encounter with Soleiman Mirza as follows:

“The man who founded the Tudeh Party was my travelling companion on the pilgrimage to Mecca... Soleiman Mirza. He himself was a man who prayed regularly and was quite devout...”⁵⁵

In 1946, as part of Qavam al-Saltaneh’s efforts to maintain a balance between the competing powers involved in Iran and to secure the Soviet Union’s support, the Tudeh Party entered Ahmad Qavam’s cabinet with three members of its Central Committee. Morteza Yazdi was appointed Minister of Health, Iraj Eskandari Minister of Industries and Commerce, and Fereydoun Kashavarz Minister of Education. This participation in government formed part of the Tudeh Party’s coalition strategy within the political power dynamics of that period.

With the onset of the Cold War, the Tudeh Party increasingly operated within the framework of Soviet foreign policy and played a central role in defending and promoting Stalinist policies in Iran. In addition to its espionage activities, the party presented the Soviet Union as an example of “existing socialism” and, in practice, sought to justify Soviet government policies, attack critics of Stalinism, and defend the interests of the Eastern imperial bloc.⁵⁶

Following the 1953 coup, the Tudeh Party was subjected to widespread repression. This repression should be analysed within the context of the contradictions of the Cold War era and the rivalry between the two imperialist blocs of East and West. It was part of the consolidation of the Western bloc’s hegemony in Iran and the suppression of forces associated with the Soviet bloc. Afterwards, the majority of the party’s surviving cadres and members continued their activities in countries within the Eastern bloc.

Following the events of 1979 and the transfer of political power to the Islamic bourgeoisie, the Tudeh Party began supporting the Islamic bourgeoisie. The party not only supported the new government but went

⁵⁵ [The Khomeini Portal](#).

⁵⁶ For further information on this subject, readers are advised to consult the article *“In Response to the Distortions, Lies and Demagoguery of the Tudeh Party: Study the True History of Russian Communist Left!”*

so far as to become an appendage of its security apparatus. Nevertheless, this support did not prevent the Tudeh Party from being suppressed by the very government it had defended.

Despite this, parts of the International Communist Party's analysis of the historical consequences of the Tudeh Party remain worthy of consideration. Reza Shah's collaboration with Stalinism in suppressing Iran's revolutionary communists was one of the factors that disrupted the continuity of the communist tradition in Iran. In the vacuum created by the destruction of a significant section of the internationalist communists, the Tudeh Party was able to present itself as the representative of the communist tradition by distorting Marxism and promoting a Stalinist version of it; whereas, in reality, it represented the counter-revolutionary policies of Stalinism.

Subsequently, later generations of forces opposed to the ruling system criticised the Tudeh Party for its dependence on the Soviet Union, its conciliatory approach, its lack of political independence, and its weakness in struggle. However, many of these currents, rather than making a theoretical break with Stalinist principles, reproduced the same fundamental frameworks through more radical rhetoric and seemingly more "revolutionary" forms. As a result, criticism of the Tudeh Party in many cases remained limited to an examination of its practices and methods, without fully challenging the theoretical foundations of Stalinism.

We agree with comrades on the point that, without a militant communist organisation, the class struggle cannot be raised to the level of historical and political consciousness necessary for the revolutionary transformation of society, nor can it overcome the limitations of spontaneous struggles. The fundamental issue, however, is that a communist organisation is defined not merely by its name or its claim to be communist, but by its commitment to a revolutionary programme, proletarian internationalism, and the defence of the working class's political independence. In this regard, the International Communist Party (Italian Left Communist) writes:

“The working and peasant classes, lacking their own class-based political autonomy and an authentically revolutionary Marxist party, could do nothing but follow the impulses of the merchants, the petty bourgeoisie, and its reactionary and anti-proletarian leaderships, the national-communist “anti-imperialist” movements, to student movements, and to anti-Western religious movements.”⁵⁷

As demonstrated in previous analyses, the comrades’ approach has, unfortunately, not been directed towards clarifying class contradictions or presenting an independent proletarian orientation; rather, it has largely contributed to theoretical and political confusion. The task of a communist organisation, particularly from the perspective of Communist Left, is to act as a political compass: to clarify the path of the class struggle for the proletariat, define class boundaries, and indicate the revolutionary horizon of the struggle.

However, the approaches under examination not only fail to fulfil such a role but, by obscuring the distinction between proletarian positions and bourgeois tendencies, contribute to the weakening of the working class’s political independence. Therefore, even if the comrades had maintained a direct physical presence in the political arena during that historical period, without a reassessment of these theoretical foundations, their presence would not have contributed to greater clarity in the class struggle; rather, it would have reinforced the same political and theoretical ambiguities.

⁵⁷ [Modern History of Iran The Pahlavi Monarchy](#).

Portraying Popular Protests as Class Struggle

One of the fundamental tasks of the revolutionary organisation is to play a vanguard role in the class struggle. To be a vanguard does not mean following behind the working class, still less tailing individual workers or, worse still, “the people”. Rather, the role of the revolutionary organisation is to clarify the direction of the struggle through political clarity and a materialist analysis of the balance of class forces, while advancing the independent perspective of the proletariat in opposition to all other social forces.

One of the defining characteristics of leftist currents is their use of radical rhetoric to dissolve the proletariat’s class struggle into popular, democratic or interclassist movements. The consequence of this approach is that the working class is prevented from emerging as an independent class, pursuing its own historical aims and interests in the class struggle. Within this framework, although these currents speak of the proletariat in rhetoric, in practice they reduce it not to an independent, history-making subject, but to merely one component of an undifferentiated and heterogeneous “people”.

This tendency can be observed both in the metropolitan capitalist countries and in the capitalist periphery. Although its ideological forms differ in these two contexts, its political function remains the same: to blur class boundaries and create political confusion. For this reason, clarity of communist positions in identifying the class character of social movements and determining the actual position of the working class is of decisive importance.

Within this framework, the question arises: what positions have the currents operating under the name of the International Communist Party adopted, and how have they acted in relation to this issue? Our assessment is that they all share a common feature: ambiguity in their analysis, resulting in political confusion. This ambiguity does not remain confined to the theoretical level; it is also reflected in their assessment of

concrete events and in their determination of the actual position of the working class.

We have previously examined the unfounded claims and politically confusing practice of the International Communist Party (il Programma Comunista)⁵⁸, drawing on both the Party's own published positions and the historical record. Our assessment is that those discussions have, at the very least, led the comrades of this current to adopt a more cautious and politically responsible approach in their assessment of the recent protests in Iran.

In future polemics, we shall examine the unfounded claims and politically confusing practice of the International Communist Party (Proletarian) in portraying popular, interclassist and democratic movements as expressions of class struggle. We shall also demonstrate that, rather than contributing to political clarity and the class independence of the proletariat, this approach serves in practice to generate political confusion and blur class boundaries.

In this polemic, our focus is on the positions of the International Communist Party (il Partito). Without providing any concrete Marxist analysis, and without referring to historical events or the actual dynamics of the protests, the Party, in statements that were largely agitational in character, claimed that the proletariat of Iran had risen up and that it was leading the struggle in the recent riots. This claim is based neither on a concrete analysis of concrete conditions nor on historical evidence, and it bears no relation to the objective reality of the protests. Even Iranian leftists, who have consistently sought to portray popular protests as expressions of the working-class struggle, have not made such a claim. The International Communist Party (il Partito) wrote:

“The blood of the rebels will be avenged by the working class leading the struggle! Demonstrations involving tens of thousands

⁵⁸ This issue has been examined and analysed through reference to specific historical facts, in the context of the discussion with the Party (il Programma Comunista) entitled [“Polemic with the International Communist Party \(il Programma Comunista\): Marxism or Schapperism?”](#)

*of young people, women, workers, students, and bazaar traders chanting for Khamenei's death in dozens of cities and most of the country's provinces – with fierce clashes in which the repressive forces were overwhelmed, and many of their henchmen killed in some cases – were not enough. However weakened, the regime maintains a social base sufficient to withstand the shocks of increasingly harsh revolts!”*⁵⁹

In this description, the only part that corresponds to reality is the claim that protests took place in dozens of cities, with the participation of young people, women, workers, students, and sections of the bazaar. However, from this point onwards, the statement moves away from describing reality and replaces it with unsubstantiated assertions.

The presence of workers in these protests referred to the participation of individual workers alongside other sections of society, not to the entry of the working class as an independent class with its own demands, forms of struggle, and political perspective. Atomised workers, like other citizens, participated in these protests; however, the proletariat did not enter the arena as a social class. Indeed, one of the common criticisms made by leftist currents of these protests was precisely that the working class had not entered the scene independently.

Furthermore, the statement's claim that these protests took place under the slogan “Death to Khamenei” and with the participation of bazaar merchants does not correspond to the historical reality. On the first day of the protests, the Islamic Republic's state media itself covered the bazaar merchants' protest, and no such slogan was raised during those gatherings.

The main ambiguity, however, concerns the Party's description of the clashes. According to the Party's account, demonstrators consisting of women, young people, students, bazaar merchants, and workers confronted the security forces, and during these clashes a number of regime agents were killed. This account is based neither on historical

⁵⁹ [The blood of the rebels will be avenged by the working class leading the struggle!](#)

documentation nor is it consistent with the actual dynamics of the protests. The fact is that a number of security forces were killed; however, the circumstances in which these events occurred, the actors involved, and their political context are matters that must be examined on the basis of specific evidence and concrete events, rather than being attributed, without any concrete analysis, to the “leadership of the proletariat”.⁶⁰ We shall return to this issue later.

In contrast to this approach of creating ambiguity, *Internationalist Voice*, in an article entitled “*From the Bazaar to the Streets: The Crisis of Capitalism and the Necessity of Independent Working-Class Struggle*”, sought to analyse the protests from the standpoint of the proletariat’s class independence. In that article, the protests of 2016, 2018, and 2022 were compared with those of January 2026, and it was argued that the 2026 protests, both in terms of their initial demands and their subsequent political transformation, did not even reach the level of the interclassist movement of 2022 and were, in fact, more politically backward. For this reason, these protests provided even greater opportunities than before for ultra-reactionary forces, monarchists, and other adventurist currents to intervene and assert themselves. The article states in part:

“Social protests and street mobilisations can play a leading role only when they serve the workers’ class movement. The streets must become spaces for family gatherings, the formation of public assemblies, and the connection between different sections of society. Only under such conditions can protests move beyond mere dissatisfaction or anti-regime and pro-democracy demonstrations to become an anti-capitalist struggle—a struggle that can lay the groundwork for the formation of factory

⁶⁰Similar claims regarding the seizure of police centres by the proletariat and the killing of police forces during previous popular protests have been examined and criticised in detail in the book *The Truth According to Třídní Válka (Class War)*, with reference to historical events and available evidence. Therefore, we shall refrain from repeating those arguments here and recommend reading the book for a fuller understanding of the reasoning and documentation underpinning this critique.

committees, strikes, local organisations, and other forms of independent, class-based organisation.”⁶¹

In the recent round of protests related to Iran, among the currents associated with Communist Left, apart from *Internationalist Voice*⁶², it was only the Internationalist Communist Tendency that did not limit itself to abstract rhetoric and the usual generalisations, but instead sought to provide a concrete analysis of concrete conditions; an analysis that, in terms of methodology, was more consistent with the tradition of Communist Left and contributed to strengthening the defence of communist left positions.⁶³

With this clarification, we return to the statements of the International Communist Party (il Partito). According to the Party’s propaganda, an image is presented in which tens of thousands of young people, women, workers, students, and bazaar merchants have risen in revolt, and not merely sections of workers, but the working class itself is portrayed as leading this struggle. The Party also declares that the working class will avenge the blood of the rebels, without explaining within what class framework, through what forms of struggle, and in what historical process this vengeance is supposed to be realised.

This type of language, although it may appear radical on the surface, is alien to the historical aims of the working class. From the perspective of the Communist Left, the struggle of the proletariat is not aimed at taking revenge against individuals, agents of repression, or particular government officials, but at destroying the social relations that reproduce exploitation and barbarism. If one can speak of the “historical

⁶¹ [From the Bazaar to the Streets: The Crisis of Capitalism and the Necessity of Independent Working-Class Struggle](#).

⁶² A list of articles related to the protests and the subsequent imperialist war, together with clickable links, will be published in Appendix “C”.

⁶³ Although Internationalist Voice did not agree with all the issues raised in the article by the Internationalist Communist Tendency, it considered the article’s overall orientation to be positive. In order to advance and defend the positions of the Communist Left, it therefore translated the article into Persian. The Persian translation of the article, entitled “[Iran: Workers Face Enemies on All Sides](#)”, can be accessed [here](#).

revenge of the proletariat”, this revenge consists of nothing other than the overthrow of the capitalist system through communist revolution; for the primary source of barbarism lies not merely in individuals or repressive institutions, but in capitalist social relations themselves.

However, the more fundamental issue with the party’s position is not simply its use of such language, but rather its assumption of an unproven premise: that the protests in question constituted a “proletarian uprising”. According to the party’s account, the only deficiency of this uprising is that it lacked the leadership of the International Party of the Communist Revolution. In other words, the party first assumes the existence of a proletarian uprising and then presents the absence of party leadership as its principal problem. It is within this framework that the party writes:

*“The Uprising of the Iranian Proletariat Lacks the Leadership of the International Party of the Communist Revolution.”*⁶⁴

The preliminary question, however, is this: can these protests, in the first place, be described as a “proletarian uprising”? Did the working class, as an independent class with its own historical interests, organisational forms, and specific class objectives, enter the arena of struggle?

In order to make the claim of a “proletarian uprising” appear plausible, the party resorts to creating ambiguity rather than offering a Marxist analysis; an approach that stands in direct opposition to the historical task of a Communist Left current. The task of the Communist Left, based on its own historical experience, is not to obscure class boundaries, but to clarify class relations, identify the position of social forces, and orientate the independent struggle of the proletariat.

One of the main forms of this creation of ambiguity is the conflation of the workers’ movement with the democratic movement; or,

⁶⁴[The Uprising of the Iranian Proletariat Lacks the Leadership of the International Party of the Communist Revolution.](#)

more precisely, the placing of workers' struggles within the framework of a broader democratic movement and then presenting them as an expression of class struggle. In this account, workers' protests and strikes, student protests, women's demands, shopkeepers' protests, and other social movements are presented as components of a single class movement; whereas such an approach obscures the fundamental differences between the class positions, political objectives, and social dynamics of these various forms of struggle. This is the most fundamental and damaging form of the party's creation of ambiguity, because, rather than highlighting the proletariat's class independence, it erases the boundaries between workers' struggles and inter-class movements. To examine this issue, let us first turn to a section of the analysis of the International Communist Party (il Partito):

*"The now-uncontrollable discontent has exploded with shop closures in the bazaars and student demonstrations in universities in 31 regions and over 200 cities, some of which, such as Abadan, Ahvaz, and Malekshahi County, seem to have fallen into the hands of the demonstrators, with police forces forced to flee. However, there has been a rise in workers' strikes for months, intensifying in December, mainly in the oil and mining sectors. In early December, thousands of employees at the South Pars gas complex in Asaluyeh, on the Persian Gulf coast, protested at several refineries with strikes and demonstrations. During the same period, workers at the North Drilling Company have halted operations on several onshore and offshore platforms. These actions have followed previous strikes in the mines, including the Zarshuran Gold Mine in the south-southeast of Tabriz, as well as steelworkers in Hamadan (300 km west-southwest of Tehran) and in industries in the province of Fars. Pensioners and public sector workers have protested alongside industrial workers, demanding the payment of pensions and access to healthcare."*⁶⁵

⁶⁵ [The Uprising of the Iranian Proletariat Lacks the Leadership of the International Party of the Communist Revolution.](#)

First, it must be made clear that, contrary to the party's claim, no city was, in the true sense of the term, taken over by the protesters during these protests. Such expressions, without the presentation of specific evidence, resemble political exaggeration rather than political analysis. More importantly, however, is the way in which the party uses workers' protests. The party is unable, within the framework of the democratic protests under discussion, to provide an example of the independent entry of the working class into the struggle. It therefore has no choice but to link a series of earlier workers' protests to these events and use them as evidence for the existence of a proletarian uprising.

This is precisely the point at which the boundary between independent class struggle and general inter-class movements becomes obscured. As we have argued in previous writings, with reference to historical experience, the relationship between the independent workers' movement and democratic movements is neither simple nor one of alignment; rather, it is an inverse relationship. The integration of workers' struggles into general movements prevents the formation of the proletariat's class independence.

Regarding the workers' protests referred to above, the main issue is not merely their number or extent, but rather the dangers that threaten these struggles. In the pamphlet published by Internationalist Voice on this subject, it emphasises that, given the considerable potential of oil workers and the strategic importance of this industry for the bourgeoisie, the control and channelling of workers' struggles are of particular importance to the ruling class.⁶⁶

On this basis, the peripheral Islamic bourgeoisie, despite its specific historical and structural characteristics, as well as its short-sightedness, superficiality, and structural immaturity, seeks to draw upon the experiences and methods of the metropolitan bourgeoisie in order to contain and control workers' struggles. Such control is not necessarily exercised solely through direct repression; it may also be achieved

⁶⁶ [The Intensification of Anger and Discontent among Oil Workers: Organised Attempts to Contain the Class Struggle.](#)

through institutions, political instruments, and attempts to direct workers' struggles towards paths that are non-class-based and compatible with the interests of capital.

This is precisely the issue that the pamphlet seeks to emphasise in opposition to the various tendencies of the left of capital: the danger of obscuring the independent proletarian struggle and the obstacles that stand in the way of its formation and development. The aim of the pamphlet is to defend the necessity of the proletariat's class independence and to demonstrate the importance of this question within the tradition of the Communist Left; a task that can contribute to strengthening the positions of the Communist Left in defence of the independent workers' struggle.

Unlike the right and left tendencies of capital, the Communist Left emphasises that the roots of widespread unemployment, inflation, declining living standards, the expansion of poverty, and other forms of social barbarism must be sought in capitalist social relations themselves, rather than in the incompetence of this or that government, the personal characteristics of rulers, or the absence or presence of bourgeois democracy. From this perspective, exploitation, crisis, and poverty are inevitable consequences of the capitalist mode of production and cannot be eliminated through changes in the form of government or the replacement of political administrators.

Of course, this does not mean that the working class experiences the crises of capitalism in the same way in every country. One of the characteristics of peripheral capitalism is that the general crises of capital, due to its position within the global division of labour, economic dependency, and structural fragility, manifest themselves with greater intensity and severity. Therefore, although the origins of the crisis lie within capitalism itself, its consequences in peripheral capitalism generally emerge in a deeper and more destructive form than in metropolitan capitalism.

Alongside this reality, another factor must also be taken into consideration. Imperialist rivalries are not confined solely to the military

sphere; economic warfare is also one of the essential instruments used by imperialist powers to advance their geopolitical and economic objectives. Economic sanctions, financial blockades, restrictions on access to global markets, and the freezing of assets are all tools employed to weaken rival economies or exert pressure on them.

In the case of Iran, the United States and its allies have for many years used such instruments to exert pressure on the bourgeoisie of the Islamic Republic. The aim of these policies is not merely to restrict the economic capacity of the Iranian state; the creation of economic pressure, the intensification of social discontent, and the alteration of the balance of political forces in favour of imperialist interests are also parts of this strategy. The statements of Scott Bessent, the United States Secretary of the Treasury, regarding the role of US policies in intensifying economic pressure on Iran, which we will discuss below, can be examined within this framework.

It is now necessary to examine how the International Communist Party (il Partito) assesses the economic warfare waged by imperialist powers against the bourgeoisie of the Islamic Republic and its impact on the deepening economic crisis and social protests, including protests by bazaar merchants. The party writes:

“The Iranian economy has been in crisis for well over a decade, with average GDP growth over the last 10 years of only 1%, worsened this year in June by the 12-day war against the U.S. and Israel and, at the end of September, by the reintroduction of sanctions by the UN and the EU in response to Iran’s alleged non-compliance with nuclear agreements, with measures to freeze bank assets and restrict oil sales.”⁶⁷

Regardless of the party’s political analysis, the accuracy of its economic data must first be examined. Contrary to the claim made in this

⁶⁷ [The Uprising of the Iranian Proletariat Lacks the Leadership of the International Party of the Communist Revolution.](#)

quotation, the average growth rate of Iran’s gross domestic product between 2014 and 2025 was approximately 3 per cent, not 1 per cent.⁶⁸ The difference is not merely a matter of two percentage points; rather, the choice of this time period and the method used to calculate the average shape our understanding of the trajectory of Iran’s capitalist crisis, the impact of economic warfare and imperialist sanctions, the role of internal and external factors in economic fluctuations, and ultimately the influence of these factors on the intensification of public discontent. Therefore, before proceeding to a political assessment, it is necessary to examine the trend of gross domestic product growth during this period in detail.

Year	GDP growth (%)
2014	4.3
2015	-1.4
2016	13.6
2017	3.8
2018	-6.0
2019	-3.1
2020	3.3
2021	4.7
2022	4.8
2023	5.0
2024	3.5
2025	3.0

Examining the trend in gross domestic product growth shown in the table above, rather than relying on abstract averages, provides a more accurate picture of the issue under discussion. The table demonstrates that, in order to understand the crisis of Iranian capitalism, two levels of analysis must be distinguished. The first is the general crisis of capitalism, rooted in capitalist social relations themselves, which

⁶⁸ GDP growth (annual %) - Iran, Islamic Rep.

manifests itself with greater intensity and severity in peripheral countries, including Iran, owing to their more vulnerable position. The second is the impact of imperialist rivalries and economic warfare, which can intensify this crisis or alter the form in which it manifests itself. Neglecting either of these two levels leads to a one-sided and, ultimately, flawed analysis.

Within this framework, from 2012 onwards the United States and the European Union imposed extensive sanctions on Iran's oil exports, oil tanker insurance, and banking transactions. Following the Interim Geneva Agreement in late 2013, no new sanctions were imposed, but the principal sanctions remained in force. Iran's oil exports stabilised at around 1 to 1.2 million barrels per day, and only five countries—China, India, Japan, Turkey, and Taiwan—were permitted to continue purchasing Iranian oil within the prescribed quota. Other countries were effectively prevented from importing Iranian oil. In addition, the revenue from these oil sales was held in restricted accounts in banks in the purchasing countries, and the Islamic Republic was permitted to use these funds only to import non-sanctioned goods, such as food, medicines, and medical equipment.

During the same period, the sharp fall in global oil prices from the second half of 2014 onwards also drastically reduced the foreign currency revenues of the Islamic bourgeoisie, thereby intensifying the pressure created by the sanctions. By contrast, the surge in economic growth in 2016 was largely the result of the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the temporary suspension of certain oil and banking sanctions, which made it possible to increase oil exports and partially restore foreign currency revenues. This surge, therefore, cannot be regarded as evidence that the Iranian economy had emerged from the structural crisis of capitalism; rather, it should be understood as a temporary consequence of the easing of the pressures generated by imperialist economic warfare.

Following the withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA in May 2018, oil, banking, and financial sanctions were reimposed with even greater severity. The consequences included the collapse of the

value of the rial, a sharp decline in oil exports, severely restricted access to foreign currency, and the deepest economic recession during the period under review. The sanctions were not merely an instrument of diplomatic pressure; they directly affected the process of capital reproduction, increased the cost of the circulation of capital, and intensified the crisis of capital accumulation. In the following year, the Iranian economy continued to suffer the effects of the shock caused by the 2018 sanctions. The collapse of oil exports to fewer than half a million barrels per day, the decline in foreign currency revenues, falling household consumption, and reduced investment all contributed to the continuation of negative economic growth.

From the perspective of the Communist Left, emphasising the role of imperialist economic warfare does not mean absolving the bourgeoisie of the Islamic Republic of responsibility. The crisis of the Iranian economy is neither simply the product of sanctions nor merely the result of the policies of the Iranian state; rather, it is the outcome of the interaction between the structural crisis of capitalism and the intensification of imperialist rivalries. The sanctions did not create this crisis; they deepened it and made its social consequences for the working class and other exploited strata even more devastating.

Within this framework, the remarks made by Scott Bessent, the United States Secretary of the Treasury, at the government cabinet meeting held at Camp David on 31 July 2026 are of particular importance, because he explicitly referred to the role of the US government's economic policies in intensifying inflationary pressures on the Iranian economy—pressures which, alongside other factors, contributed to growing social discontent and the outbreak of protests, including those by bazaar merchants. Bessent stated:

*“We started in March 2025. In December 2025, the largest bank in Iran collapsed. The central bank had to print money, and that caused inflation.”*⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Scott Bessent.

So far, we have briefly examined the economic conditions that gave rise to the protests of January 2026. We must now address the question of the basis on which the International Communist Party (il Partito) describes these protests as a “proletarian uprising”. If a protest is characterised as a proletarian uprising, it follows that its driving force must be the working class, and that its demands and perspective must express the independent interests and objectives of the proletariat. But does the party provide historical evidence and a Marxist analysis to support this claim?

The fundamental problem is that, rather than drawing upon the actual course of events and providing a concrete analysis of social conditions, the party contents itself with general and agitational statements. This approach appears to stem, at least in part, from the position the party assigns to itself as an international current. An international party is inevitably required to take a position on major world events; however, when such a position is not grounded in a concrete analysis of objective developments, it readily degenerates into the reproduction of fragmented information, drawn mainly from the bourgeois media, and its transformation into statements couched in radical language but lacking theoretical coherence. As a result, instead of presenting a communist analysis, it offers a collection of abstract and agitational assertions as a communist position. Let us first examine how the party assesses these protests:

“In the West, a certain ‘nationalist left’ has from the outset downplayed the street clashes as the result of a conspiracy, a covert manoeuvre by the CIA and Mossad. In reality, today as yesterday, even without the incitement of any secret service, countless demonstrators, many of whom have been arrested and killed, are protesting for better living conditions and spontaneously hate a regime that starves them, represses them, and eliminates all forms of civil and trade union rights. Promoting the interests of a bourgeoisie that hides behind Islamic priests and uses its own

working class as cannon fodder as 'popular resistance' or 'anti-imperialist' reveals the nature and position of parties that are entirely internal to the needs, conflicts, and wars of bourgeois States, Stalinist and ex-Stalinist parties and currents that not only have nothing to do with communism but are not even an expression of the working class, imprisoning and subjugating its immediate and historical interests in the lie of 'national reality.' ”⁷⁰

The final part of this quotation, regardless of whether it is correct or incorrect, consists largely of a series of abstract propositions which, rather than providing a concrete analysis of the protests in Iran, primarily serves to legitimise the opening lines of the text.

Before proceeding to a critique of this section, it is necessary to emphasise that, according to the historical tradition of the Communist Left, all capitalist states, regardless of their ideological and political form—including bourgeois democracies, dictatorships, fascism, and so-called “socialist” and “workers” states—are bourgeois states that ultimately defend capitalist social relations and the exploitation of wage labour. The Islamic Republic is no exception to this rule; it too is a bourgeois state which, like other states, operates within the framework of imperialist rivalries and conflicts.

For this reason, from the perspective of the Communist Left, the struggle against imperialism cannot be separated from the struggle against capitalism. Any form of “anti-imperialism” that leads to the defence of a capitalist state, an imperialist bloc, or a section of the bourgeoisie stands in contradiction to the historical interests of the proletariat. Therefore, an anti-imperialist struggle possesses a proletarian content only when it is linked to the struggle against global capitalism and all bourgeois states, regardless of their position within imperialist rivalries.

⁷⁰ [The Uprising of the Iranian Proletariat Lacks the Leadership of the International Party of the Communist Revolution.](#)

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However, this principled position does not exempt the party from the task of providing a concrete analysis of social events. Our criticism of the party begins precisely at this point. Without documented reference to the actual course of events, and without examining the conditions that gave rise to the protests, their transformation, and the social forces that came to dominate them at different stages, the party presents an abstract narrative that ultimately serves to justify the claim of a “proletarian uprising”.

The task of a communist current, by contrast, is to analyse the entire process: from the economic and social conditions that gave rise to the protests, through their transformation, the changing composition of social forces, and the manner in which different tendencies came to dominate the course of the movement. This is the approach adopted by Internationalist Voice in its pamphlet, “Bloody Repression and Bourgeois Alternatives as Instruments of Defeat; The Necessity of Independent and Internationalist Working-Class Struggle”.⁷¹

⁷¹ Reading the pamphlet “*Bloody Repression and Bourgeois Alternatives as Instruments of Defeat; The Necessity of Independent and Internationalist Working-Class Struggle*” is recommended for understanding the process through which the protests of that period emerged, transformed, and ultimately unfolded. The pamphlet demonstrates that the Communist Left, despite isolation, political pressures, and extremely difficult conditions, did not abandon the independent and internationalist positions of the proletariat. Instead, it continued, with political clarity, to defend workers’ class independence and to criticise all bourgeois alternatives. From this perspective, the pamphlet represents an effort to defend the tradition of the Communist Left against political ambiguity and to emphasise the necessity of maintaining an independent proletarian perspective during periods of crisis and social unrest.

The protests that began on 28 December 2025, owing to their inter-class and ‘all-together’ character, underwent a transformation during the subsequent developments and became a movement with different characteristics. On 8 and 9 January, the most reactionary bourgeois forces, relying on their political, media, and propaganda resources, were able to seize the initiative and, by promoting a figure such as the son of the Pahlavi tyrant, attempted to steer the protests in a direction aligned with the interests of the bourgeoisie and reactionary alternatives; a process that ultimately led to bloody repression and the massacre of thousands of people.

From this perspective, contrary to the party’s claims, in the protests that began on 28 December 2025 and ended with bloody repression on 8 and 9 January 2026, the specific and independent demands of the working class—such as bread, wages, employment, independent organisation, or other class demands—were not at the centre of the protests. A protest that began in the bazaar rapidly transformed into a general inter-class movement; a movement which, due to the absence of the proletariat’s political and organisational independence, created the conditions for the intervention and hegemony of various bourgeois forces. Therefore, presenting such a process as a “proletarian uprising” is not based on a Marxist analysis, but rather results from obscuring the boundary between independent class struggle and inter-class movements.

The fact that the International Communist Party (il Partito) denies the role of intelligence organisations such as the CIA, Mossad, and other foreign forces in the course of the protests is less the result of a concrete analysis of the development of events than an indication of the party’s inability to explain the origins of the protests, their transformation, and their eventual evolution into a bloody confrontation and widespread repression. The fundamental issue is not whether the intervention of foreign forces can, by itself, explain a social movement; rather, it is that a communist analysis must be capable of examining all the factors involved

in the actual course of events, from internal social and class contradictions to imperialist interventions and rivalries.

Mike Pompeo, the former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and former United States Secretary of State, congratulated the protesters on the New Year in a message addressed to them and referred to the presence of Mossad agents among them. The Jerusalem Post also published reports concerning Mossad's role in supporting the protests, claiming that this support was not limited merely to indirect and remote actions, but also involved a presence on the ground during the protests. Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, a retired US Army officer and former Chief of Staff to Colin Powell, has also emphasised the role of Israel and Mossad in this process. An Iranian leftist activist, in a television interview with the BBC, referred to the role of Mossad agents in the protests.

Despite such claims and information being presented, the International Communist Party has ignored this issue and denied the role of imperialist forces in the course of the protests. The party's blanket rejection of this information is not based on a concrete examination of the actual course of events, but rather stems from its predetermined narrative concerning a "proletarian uprising". This is because accepting the role of bourgeois and imperialist forces in the transformation of the protests would contradict the image of an independent proletarian uprising presented by the party.

These issues are examined in the pamphlet *"Bloody Repression and Bourgeois Alternatives as Instruments of Defeat; The Necessity of Independent and Internationalist Working-Class Struggle"*, with reference to historical events, documents, statements, and various sources. Reading this pamphlet is recommended for a more detailed examination of the course of the protests, the role of different forces, and the necessity of defending the proletariat's class independence.

Earlier, in examining the party's quotations, we observed that the party claims that, during the uprising which, in its view, was led by the

working class, a number of repressive forces were killed; a claim made without reference to historical events, specific evidence, or an analysis of the actual course of the clashes.

As previously noted, in a street protest, even when a protest becomes violent, the likelihood of large numbers of security and police forces being killed is generally very low, unless the protesters are not merely ordinary demonstrators and other forms of organisation, direct or indirect guidance by other forces, and consequently a change in the nature of the confrontation, are involved. Therefore, the claim that repressive forces were killed, without a concrete examination of the nature of the confrontation, the level of organisation of the forces involved, and the factors influencing it, cannot be regarded as evidence of an independent proletarian uprising. Nevertheless, the party continues to make general claims unsupported by evidence. For example, the party writes:

“The brutal repression of the uprising, with tens of thousands of Iranians killed, tortured, or arrested, took place almost two months ago. The US and Israel are intervening only now, after the dirty work has been done.”⁷²

Here, too, the party presents a series of claims concerning tens of thousands of people killed, tortured, or arrested, without identifying any specific source for these figures. A communist current cannot simply reproduce statistics and narratives circulated by the bourgeois media; its task is to subject such information to critical analysis, examine its sources, and provide an independent account of the actual course of social developments.

The reality is that, on 8 and 9 January 2026, the disgraceful Islamic bourgeoisie, acting through its bourgeois state, carried out a bloody repression of the protests and succeeded in suppressing them temporarily.

⁷² [Against the War Between Nations! For the Struggle Between Classes!](#)

Contrary to the party's account, however, the United States and its allies did not enter the scene only two months later. Just four days after the repression, once the Western governments had concluded that the protests had subsided, they sought, through political and media messaging, to encourage their continuation, called upon the protesters to seize state institutions, and promised them their support. It was in this context that Donald Trump, in a message addressed to the Iranian protesters, wrote:

*"Iranian Patriots, KEEP PROTESTING – TAKE OVER YOUR INSTITUTIONS!!! ... HELP IS ON ITS WAY."*⁷³

After extensive propaganda about a "proletarian uprising" and repeated claims that the working class was leading the revolt, the party is subsequently compelled to acknowledge a reality that contradicts its initial assertions: the working class has not yet entered the struggle as an independent class force. From this perspective, the question arises as to whether the party's earlier statements were merely propagandistic, intended to demonstrate that it, too, had adopted a "proletarian" position in relation to the protests. The party writes:

*"In Iran too, until the working class mobilizes, organized in class unions, with a generalized strike movement that overcomes divisions between companies, categories, and localities and blocks the national capitalist economy to the bitter end, the revolts will continue to break like waves against the regime's dam, nullifying the enormous sacrifice of the lives of young people, women, and proletarians."*⁷⁴

Here, contrary to its earlier claims concerning a "proletarian uprising" and the leadership of the struggle by the working class, the

⁷³ Reuters.

⁷⁴ In Iran too the working-class uprising—led by its party—will be anti-capitalist, not anti-imperialist or democratic.

party effectively acknowledges that the working class has not yet entered the struggle as an independent class force. In the end, the party is compelled to admit this reality, with the qualification that, in this specific case, the term “people” should be used instead of “working class”. In other words, what we actually observe is not the independent struggle of the proletariat, but the participation of the protesting masses within the framework of a general movement, in which the people follow the interests of the merchants and the petty bourgeoisie and embrace the illusion that a mere change in the political superstructure can provide a solution to social and economic problems. The party writes:

“In Iran too, the working class, without the presence of a revolutionary communist party, will once again be forced to fight at the tail end of the interests of merchants and the petty bourgeoisie, deluding itself in a change of government, as has happened many times before in the country’s history. The workers’ struggle for better living conditions against their own governments is always objectively revolutionary.”⁷⁵

In this section, the comrades of the party point to a fundamental issue: the role of the revolutionary organisation in the class struggle. From the perspective of the Communist Left, the importance of the revolutionary organisation lies not merely in proclaiming radical positions, but in consistently defending the political independence of the proletariat, providing political clarity, exposing the bourgeoisie’s ideological and political traps, contributing to the development of class consciousness, and ultimately playing a political leadership role in the class struggle.

However, it is precisely here that the central contradiction becomes apparent. A party that emphasises the necessity of political clarity and the

⁷⁵ [The Uprising of the Iranian Proletariat Lacks the Leadership of the International Party of the Communist Revolution.](#)

role of the revolutionary organisation, in its concrete analysis of the recent protests, not only fails to provide such clarity but also, by creating ambiguity about the nature of the protests, obscures the boundary between independent class struggle and inter-class movements. The practical outcome of such an approach is not the strengthening of proletarian independence, but the creation of illusions about the nature of a general, “all-together” movement.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ The party’s conduct during these protests likewise reveals this contradiction. On 23 January 2026, one of the party’s activists was posting the party’s statements in a Telegram group called “*Communists*”. The claims made in these statements diverged so markedly from the actual course of events that they provoked criticism even from some Iranian leftists. One Iranian leftist, who had personally participated in the protests, challenged the picture presented by the party and pointed out that, in some places, slogans had even been directed against left-wing forces.

During this exchange, the leftist realised that the party advocate had little knowledge of the actual conditions of the protests and that his analysis was based largely on the party’s general narrative. He therefore concluded that continuing the discussion would serve no useful purpose. In an attempt to understand how such a wide gap could exist between the party’s account and the realities on the ground, he asked, “Which country are you from?” The reply was: “What does it matter? Working class country.” For security reasons, the user subsequently deleted the account.

This example is not merely an isolated personal encounter; rather, it illustrates the gap that can exist between an organisation’s theoretical claims and its actual relationship to the class struggle.

Sanctions: An Instrument of Imperialist Hegemony

Sanctions are one of the instruments used by imperialist states to impose hegemony, alter the balance of global forces, and compel rival states to comply with the requirements of the imperialist order. Just as war, diplomacy, military threats and direct intervention represent different forms of advancing imperialist policy, sanctions are another expression of the same policy: an instrument that, without resorting directly to war, seeks to pursue the same political, economic and strategic objectives while imposing lower costs on the sanctioning power.

At their core, sanctions are an attempt to weaken the economic, financial, military and political capacities of a rival state; restrict its capacity for capital accumulation; disrupt the process of capital reproduction; and increase the costs of that reproduction within the sanctioned country. The aim of this policy is to compel the rival state to retreat, alter its behaviour, or accept a balance of power favourable to imperialist powers.

However, as with war, the principal burden of sanctions does not fall upon the ruling class, but upon the working class and the wider masses of working people. The devaluation of the national currency, inflation, unemployment, the decline of real wages, shortages of essential goods, disruptions to production, and the intensification of austerity measures are all costs that capitalism imposes upon the working class. Even in cases where sanctions formally exempt food and medicines, the paralysis of banking, financial, insurance and transport systems means that such exemptions become largely ineffective in practice, with the consequences directly affecting the lives of working-class people.

Therefore, sanctions should be understood, like war, as part of the various forms of competition between capitalist states in the age of imperialism and the historical decline of capitalism. Like war, sanctions represent a continuation of imperialist policy by different means, serving to preserve or reshape the balance of power among capitalist powers.

Consequently, the proletarian response to sanctions is neither the defence of the “national economy”, nor aligning itself with the “anti-sanctions” bourgeoisie, nor supporting the sanctioning states. The only independent response of the working class is the expansion of class struggle, the defence of proletarian internationalism, and the struggle against all capitalist states and every form of imperialist policy.

With these points in mind, let us now examine how the International Communist Party (il Partito) analyses the question of sanctions. In this analysis, sanctions are understood primarily within the framework of the United States’ efforts to control global oil flows and weaken oil-producing countries. The Party writes:

“The reality is that the Iran war is merely the latest development in a years-long conflict of escalating sanctions by the U.S. against foreign oil producing countries and increased use of the U.S. armed forces to regulate and control transportation of competitors’ oil across the world. The connection between the inter-imperialist war in Ukraine and the U.S. quarrel with Russian imperialism, along with the recent attack on Venezuela and Iran are all threaded together under the U.S. quest to cut into these oil producing countries who for years have fueled the growth of Chinese industrial power and now offer to do the same for India.”⁷⁷

This analysis faces serious problems, both theoretically and in terms of its correspondence with objective realities. There is no doubt that containing China’s rise and preventing a shift in the global balance of power are among the fundamental objectives of US imperialist strategy. It is also clear that, in pursuit of this objective, the United States seeks to restrict the economic and political capacities of states that could serve as China’s strategic partners. However, this does not allow us to conclude that the primary causes of sanctions or wars are simply oil or control over

⁷⁷ [The Buildup to War in Iran: The Global Sanctions Regime.](#)

its flows. Such an interpretation reduces complex imperialist competition to a single economic factor and ultimately amounts to a form of economic determinism.

If the rationale for sanctions were merely to secure China's oil supplies, this policy would face obvious contradictions. Russia, Iran and Venezuela together account for approximately 30 to 35 per cent of China's oil imports, while the remaining 65 to 70 per cent is supplied by countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Brazil, African countries, Canada, and even the United States itself. Saudi Arabia is one of the largest exporters of oil to China; yet it has not only avoided US sanctions but is also regarded as one of Washington's closest strategic allies in the region. Iraq likewise supplies China with a share of oil roughly comparable to Iran's, but it is not subject to a sanctions regime similar to that imposed on Iran. These facts demonstrate that oil, in itself, cannot be regarded as the determining factor behind US sanctions policy.

With these points clarified, we now return to the specific case of Iran. The Party continues:

"The sanctions reimposed by the Trump administration on Iran in 2018, after withdrawing from the nuclear treaty negotiated by Obama, were explicitly directed at the oil sector and introduced at a moment when U.S. officials argued that rising American production gave Washington new freedom to wield economic pressure. Oil had been targeted in earlier sanctions, particularly the U.S. and EU measures imposed in 2012 that cut Iranian exports roughly in half. However, the 2018 campaign marked a renewed effort to choke off Iran's main source of state revenue. Announcing the sanctions, Donald Trump pledged the "highest level of economic sanctions," aiming to reduce Iran's oil exports to "zero." U.S. officials argued that rising American oil and gas production had changed the strategic landscape, allowing Washington to sanction rival producers without triggering supply

*crises. Within this framework, the “maximum pressure” campaign sought not only to force concessions over Iran’s nuclear program but also to cut down to size a major exporter from global markets and reinforce the role of U.S. and allied producers in the international energy market.”*⁷⁸

The Party’s argument appears to suggest that, by imposing sanctions on Iran’s oil sector, the United States sought to marginalise one of the world’s major oil exporters from the global market and thereby strengthen the position of US producers and its allies within the international energy market. Such an analysis is, at least from a Marxist perspective, highly reductionist.

There is no doubt that oil has occupied a central place in the sanctions imposed on Iran, since oil exports constitute the most important source of revenue for the Iranian state. However, reducing the “maximum pressure” campaign to the question of oil distorts the actual character of US imperialist policy. US sanctions have not targeted merely the oil sector; rather, they have encompassed almost all the pillars of capital reproduction in Iran—from the banking and financial system, the central bank, shipping, insurance, petrochemical industries, steel, metals, automobile manufacturing and transport, to missile and drone programmes, advanced industries, and international commercial and financial networks. The aim of this policy was not simply to reduce oil exports, but to comprehensively weaken the economic, financial, military and geopolitical capacities of the Iranian state and increase the costs of capital reproduction within the country. From this perspective, oil is merely one instrument of pressure, not the fundamental cause of sanctions nor the key to explaining US imperialist policy.

In reality, the United States and its allies have targeted not only Iran’s oil industry, but almost every sector of the Iranian economy, from banking and financial services to insurance, transport, steel, petrochemicals, automobile manufacturing, technology, agriculture, and

⁷⁸ [The Buildup to War in Iran: The Global Sanctions Regime.](#)

even the supply chains of essential goods. This must also be considered alongside secondary sanctions, which effectively expose any company or bank engaging in business with Iran to punitive measures.

Thus, although sanctions formally exempt food, medicines and agricultural products, by paralysing the banking, financial, transport and insurance systems they disrupt the entire process of capital reproduction and exchange. The result is that even sectors which are legally “exempt” are, in practice, not protected from the effects of sanctions. The distinction between legal exemption and the actual possibility of carrying out transactions lies precisely here. When the transfer of funds, transport insurance, or the opening of bank credit is impossible, how can medicines, medical equipment, or even essential goods be imported?

It is above all the working class and the poorer sections of society who experience this reality in the most direct and tangible way. A cancer patient, an unemployed worker, or a family unable to afford essential medicines experiences the real consequences of sanctions not through economic statistics, but through the realities of everyday life.⁷⁹

Iraq’s experience in the 1990s provides a clear example of this reality. The direct consequence of the devastating sanctions imposed by the United States and the Security Council of the thieves’ den (the United Nations) was the death of approximately 500,000 Iraqi children, who died as a result of shortages of medicines, medical equipment, food supplies and malnutrition. When Madeleine Albright, the then US ambassador to

⁷⁹The real consequences of the sanctions imposed by the “civilised barbarians” can be observed above all in public hospitals, where the working class and the poorer sections of society experience shortages of medicines, medical equipment, spare parts, and rising healthcare costs in the most direct and tangible way. By contrast, a large section of the bourgeoisie remains shielded from a significant proportion of the effects of sanctions through access to private hospitals. These hospitals, equipped with advanced facilities and experienced medical staff, provide services of a very high standard; services that in many cases are comparable to those offered by advanced healthcare centres in Western Europe, but whose costs remain entirely beyond the reach of the majority of the working class. Therefore, just as capitalism organises society on the basis of class divisions, sanctions likewise constitute, above all, a form of class warfare, with the principal burden falling upon the working class and the masses of working people rather than upon the bourgeoisie.

the thieves' den (the United Nations) and one of the architects of the sanctions regime, was asked in 1996 on the programme *60 Minutes* whether the deaths of half a million children were "worth it", she replied:

The question: Stahl asked: "We have heard that half a million children have died. I mean, that's more children than died in Hiroshima. And, you know, is the price worth it?"

The response: Madeleine Albright replied: "I think this is a very hard choice, but the price—we think the price is worth it."⁸⁰

This mass death was not the result of "oil sanctions", but rather of a comprehensive sanctions regime that targeted the entire Iraqi economy and social life. For this reason, comrades, the deaths of half a million Iraqi children cannot be reduced to "oil sanctions". Similarly, reducing Iran's devastating sanctions regime to oil sanctions overlooks a substantial part of the reality. Such an analysis ignores the deadly consequences of comprehensive sanctions for the everyday lives of the working class and poorer sections of society—consequences that manifest themselves daily in the form of shortages of medicines, disruptions to healthcare, poverty, malnutrition, unemployment and rising mortality rates. Therefore, reducing sanctions to the question of oil is not only theoretically inadequate; it also obscures the true scale of the human catastrophe produced by this imperialist policy.

The repeated bankruptcy of productive and industrial enterprises as a result of devastating sanctions—many of which have no connection whatsoever to the oil industry—provides clear evidence that sanctions have targeted the entire economy, rather than merely the oil sector. This process has, if not led to the unemployment of millions of workers, undoubtedly driven hundreds of thousands of workers in various industries into unemployment and affected the livelihoods of millions of working-class families. The closure of factories, shortages of raw materials, the loss of access to international financial and banking systems, and the difficulties involved in importing machinery,

⁸⁰ [Madeleine Albright.](#)

components, technology, and even essential inputs all demonstrate that sanctions have directly disrupted the process of capital reproduction.

Nevertheless, the principal burden of this policy has not fallen upon the bourgeoisie, but upon the working class—a class that bears its consequences in the form of unemployment, poverty, declining real wages, and a deterioration in its everyday standard of living.

Furthermore, historical experience demonstrates that sanctions have never been confined either to oil-exporting countries or even to the oil industry itself. At various points, the United States and other Western powers have imposed different forms of sanctions on countries such as Cuba, North Korea, Serbia, Belarus, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Zimbabwe, Haiti, Mali, Ethiopia, Somalia and the Central African Republic, despite the fact that many of these countries have neither been major oil exporters nor occupied a decisive position in the global energy market. This reality clearly demonstrates that oil is not the general cause of sanctions.

Sanctions, like war, are instruments serving competition between capitalist states in their efforts to preserve or alter the imperialist balance of forces. Reducing this policy to the question of oil is no less inadequate than reducing imperialist wars to the interests of a particular industry or a specific commodity. From a Marxist perspective, sanctions must be analysed within the framework of the overall interests of capital, competition among capitalist states, and the struggle to preserve or transform imperialist hegemony, rather than through the lens of the interests of a particular branch of capital.

The Immediate Defeat of the Bourgeoisie Without Class Struggle

The notion that the proletariat would benefit simply from the “immediate defeat” of its own bourgeoisie, independently of class struggle, is incompatible with the Marxist understanding of proletarian revolution and the principles of the Communist Left. The military defeat or collapse of a capitalist state does not, in itself, signify an advance in the class struggle; under certain conditions, it may even work to its detriment. So long as the proletariat does not enter the struggle as an independent class force, equipped with its revolutionary political organisation, its communist programme, and its conscious class struggle, any power vacuum will not automatically be filled in the interests of the working class. More often than not, it will instead be occupied by another faction of the bourgeoisie or by rival imperialist powers. The experiences of Libya, Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan clearly demonstrate that the collapse of a bourgeois state, in the absence of the independent intervention of the proletariat, has led not to social revolution but to an intensification of capitalist chaos, proxy wars, territorial fragmentation, or the establishment of another form of bourgeois rule.

From the standpoint of the Communist Left, the emancipation of the working class is never the product of the military defeat of one state or another. It can arise only through the independent, internationalist and revolutionary struggle of the proletariat against every faction of the bourgeoisie. For this reason, the task of communists is neither to hope for the victory nor the defeat of any of the states involved, but to strive to transform imperialist war into class struggle, extend revolutionary defeatism, and create the conditions for the overthrow of the capitalist system as a whole. The fundamental question, therefore, is not the “immediate defeat” of a particular bourgeoisie, but whether the proletariat will be able, through its independent organisation and communist leadership, to transform crisis and war into a revolutionary struggle against capitalism as a whole.

With these points in mind, let us now examine how the International Communist Party formulates this question. The Party has published an article entitled *“The Proletariat of Ukraine and Russia Would Benefit from the Immediate Defeat of Their Own Bourgeoisies”*, in which the following appears:

“Russia, with an army that has been on the offensive across the entire front for more than a year, has no interest in peace unless it obtains most of what it demanded when it invaded in February 2022... The Ukrainian army is falling apart while the Russian army is growing stronger. It is winning the war and is therefore in a position to dictate the terms of a possible peace agreement, or to impose it de facto once it has achieved its objectives.

The situation also favors Russia in terms of recruitment. According to various sources, the Ukrainian army endured approximately 300,000 desertions in 2025, at least 850,000 men of draft age are hiding from recruiters, and approximately 650,000 remain abroad to avoid wearing the uniform. The Russian army, on the other hand, fights by enlisting between 360,000 and 400,000 contract volunteers per year, rather than sending conscripts to the front, and suffers from fewer desertions as a result. It has already planned to enlist 409,000 in 2026.

It seems clear to us that if Russian soldiers were sent to their deaths in “mass assaults”, as the Ukrainian general staff claims, there would not be so many volunteers, despite the good pay.

Western propaganda continues to claim that Russia is in the throes of a serious economic crisis and high inflation, caused mainly by Western sanctions, which should soon lead to political and military collapse.

This too is an illusion. Before the economic crisis causes internal divisions and social unrest that would force an end to the war – something we hope for but which, unfortunately, will not happen in the short term – the Russian army will force Ukraine to surrender

unconditionally, the Ukrainian bourgeoisie will lose all its wealth, and its allies will have to come to terms with this.”⁸¹

A strength of the article lies in its clear defence of proletarian internationalism and its rejection of both imperialist camps. This position is one of the fundamental principles of the Communist Left and must be defended. Nevertheless, the article suffers from serious theoretical ambiguities and weaknesses in its analysis of the causes of war, the nature of imperialist rivalry, the relationship between war and class struggle, and, above all, the role of the revolutionary organisation. The most significant of these weaknesses are discussed below.

First, rather than analysing war on the basis of the laws governing the movement of capital in the imperialist stage of capitalism, much of the article is devoted to a diplomatic, military and geopolitical description of state policy. From a Marxist standpoint, the central question is not what Putin, Zelenskyy, Trump or European leaders want, but why capitalism, in its imperialist stage, is compelled constantly to reproduce war, militarism and competition over markets, spheres of influence and the redivision of the world. Unless this material foundation is analysed, the discussion inevitably remains at the level of state foreign policy and falls short of a critique of the political economy of war.

Second, by placing considerable emphasis on a “Russian victory” and providing a detailed account of the military balance, the article inadvertently creates the impression that the outcome of the war is of decisive importance from the standpoint of the proletariat. Yet, from the perspective of the Communist Left, the victory or defeat of either camp does not alter the nature of the war. Regardless of which state gains the upper hand, this remains an imperialist war in which workers on both sides of the front are reduced to cannon fodder in the rivalries of capital. The task of communists is not to determine the winner of the war, but to expose the class character of both camps and defend the political independence of the proletariat.

⁸¹ The proletarians of Ukraine and Russia would benefit from the immediate defeat of their own bourgeoisies.

Third, in substantial sections, the language of the article resembles a military staff report more than a Marxist analysis. Discussions of the extent of military advances, the number of missiles, drones and air defence systems, the size of mobilised forces, or the number of military volunteers may well be of journalistic interest, but they cannot substitute for a class analysis. By contrast, the article pays insufficient attention to the war economy, capital accumulation, the militarisation of production, the intensification of exploitation, the destruction of the productive forces, the decline in the working class's standard of living, and the transformation of labour power into cannon fodder. Yet these are precisely the issues that should stand at the centre of a communist analysis of war.

Fourth, the article argues that the war in Ukraine is not, primarily, a war between NATO and Russia, but rather a conflict between the United States and Europe. This formulation is not defensible from a Marxist standpoint. The war in Ukraine is one manifestation of the broader competition among all capitalist powers over the redivision of the global balance of forces. The United States, Russia, the European powers and other capitalist states are each participating in this competition on the basis of their own imperialist interests. Reducing the war to a conflict between the United States and Europe inadvertently diminishes the independent role of Russian imperialism. Imperialism is not merely the foreign policy of the United States; it is a stage in the development of capitalism. Therefore, all capitalist states participate in imperialist relations according to their respective economic, military and political weight.

However, the most fundamental weakness of the article is its tendency towards passivity. In various sections, the article suggests that the intensification of the economic crisis, the attrition of war and the growth of social pressures will, in themselves, lead to the development of class struggle, proletarian defeatism and, ultimately, a transformation of the situation. This view, even if not consciously intended, encourages a form of passive expectation in practice—an expectation that the crisis of

capitalism will automatically raise class consciousness and transform conditions in favour of the proletariat.

Yet this is precisely contrary to the teachings of the Communist Left. Economic crisis, in and of itself, neither creates revolution, nor raises the class struggle to a higher level, nor gives rise to revolutionary defeatism. Crisis merely intensifies the objective conditions. Whether these conditions lead to proletarian revolution, blind uprisings, the rise of another faction of the bourgeoisie, imperialist interventions, or more brutal forms of capitalist barbarism depends on the subjective factor: the level of class consciousness, the degree of organisation of the proletariat, and the conscious intervention of the communist party.

For this reason, the greatest weakness of this article is the practical marginalisation of the role of the revolutionary organisation. Comrades, although at an abstract level they repeatedly emphasise the necessity of the communist party and its role in the class struggle, in their concrete analyses and political interventions this role is effectively relegated to the margins. As a result, a form of historical determinism and passivity dominates the text, as if crisis, war and economic collapse automatically create the conditions for the advance of the class struggle.

Throughout the article, there is almost no serious discussion of the concrete tasks of the communist party, the role of the revolutionary minority, or the necessity of the conscious intervention of communists under conditions of war. The impression is therefore created that the war will continue, the economic crisis will deepen, and that social developments, independently of the organisation and revolutionary leadership of the proletariat, will automatically unfold in favour of the workers' movement.

This is precisely the kind of passivity that is incompatible with the tradition of the Communist Left. If the communist party merely observes the deepening of the crisis and reduces its role to recording events or predicting the collapse of capitalism, what distinction remains between a revolutionary party and a political observer? The task of the party is not to wait for the crisis to reach a particular point, but to intervene actively

in the class struggle, raise the consciousness of the proletariat, organise revolutionary forces, and strive to transform imperialist war into class war against all factions of the bourgeoisie.

From this perspective, the notion that the defeat or collapse of a bourgeois state, independently of the organised struggle of the proletariat, can benefit the working class is incompatible with the Marxist understanding of proletarian revolution. Historical experience has repeatedly demonstrated that the collapse of bourgeois states, in the absence of the independent and organised intervention of the working class, has led not to social revolution, but to the rise of other factions of the bourgeoisie, imperialist interventions, imperialist wars within national borders, or more brutal forms of capitalist barbarism. Therefore, the fundamental issue is not to wait for the automatic consequences of crisis, but rather to consciously organise the class struggle and ensure the active role of the revolutionary party in transforming imperialist war into class war against the capitalist system as a whole.

This, rather than a passive expectation of the spontaneous operation of the laws of history, constitutes the essence of the Communist Left's critique of all forms of determinism and passivity.

Trade Unions: Part of the Capitalist State

When the capitalist mode of production had not yet encompassed the entire world and the bourgeoisie still played a progressive role in society, a distinction was made between political and economic struggle. Trade unions were regarded as purely economic organisations, while political struggle was left to the party, which pursued it through parliament. Trade unions were seen as schools for struggle, and struggle itself as a school for communism. Reforms were regarded as an opportunity for the working class to achieve a relative improvement in its living conditions within capitalist society. It was believed that capitalist society could be made more humane through the workers' everyday struggles. However, the separation of political struggle from economic struggle ultimately laid the foundations for the integration of trade unions into the capitalist state.

With the outbreak of the First World War, which marked capitalism's entry into its age of decline, the Social Democratic parties became integrated into the camp of capital, while the trade unions likewise placed themselves at the service of military recruitment and the provision of services to the capitalist state. The mobilisation of workers for the imperialist war by the trade unions demonstrated that they had become integrated into the capitalist state and were no longer workers' organisations, but institutions of capital in the workplace.

Subsequently, during the German Revolution, as part of the world revolution, the role of the trade unions in suppressing workers' struggles constituted another bloody chapter, leaving the working class with unforgettable lessons. In November 1918, the German trade unions established a counter-revolutionary guard in support of **Ebert**, helping to suppress the workers by fostering illusions in the existence of a 'workers' government'.

The permanent integration of trade unions into the capitalist state is of great importance to the bourgeoisie, both for the dissemination of bourgeois ideology within the working class and for the utilisation of the

close relations between lower-ranking union officials and workers in the workplace.

Today, in most countries, part of the role of trade unions, as the officially recognised and sanctioned representatives of the ‘working class’, is to advise employers and the state and to make bourgeois legislation appear acceptable within the workplace. This is a role they perform as part of the functioning of the capitalist state.

More specifically, the role of trade unions is to act as advisers to the bourgeoisie, to regulate the sale of labour-power, and to channel the class struggle in ways that contain and control it.

Of course, the more short-sighted sections of the bourgeoisie continue to oppose trade unions. This helps to create a radical image of the unions. In dictatorial capitalist regimes, where trade unions are associated with the opposition, their integration into the capitalist state takes on a more concealed and ambiguous form. Nevertheless, even in these countries, the principal aim of the trade unions remains to secure official recognition and acceptance as legitimate institutions.

During periods of crisis, trade unions reduce negotiation to the sole objective of the struggle and strip workers of their class identity, which is bound up with their fighting spirit. Whenever necessary, they also contain and dissipate the workers’ revolutionary potential by organising carefully controlled and pre-planned strikes.

With these brief explanations⁸², we can now return to the positions and practice of the International Communist Party (il Partito) concerning trade unions. As noted above, the historical development of trade unions cannot be understood independently of the historical development of the capitalist mode of production. Trade unions emerged in a period when capitalism still played a progressive role in the development of the productive forces, and when the struggle for lasting reforms within the framework of this system still appeared possible. However, with

⁸²A detailed historical and theoretical examination of trade unions is provided in the book *Leftism in the Role Of Metamorphosed Councilism*. For a more in-depth understanding of the subject, readers are encouraged to consult the book.

capitalism's entry into the age of imperialism, the historical conditions under which trade unions operated underwent a qualitative transformation. The International Communist Party summarises this transformation as follows:

“Across history, the relationship between trade unions and the bourgeois state has passed through successive phases corresponding to the historically developed phase of capital. At first prohibited outright, then tolerated, the established unions were eventually subordinated once capitalism entered its imperialist phase. In this final phase which predominates today, most of the existing unions are no longer merely pressured from outside by the bourgeois state. They are structurally integrated into the state and into the management of production.”⁸³

The essential point in the Party's analysis is that the anti-working-class character of trade unions cannot be reduced to the misguided policies of one leader or another, or to the betrayal of individuals; rather, it is rooted in a historical and structural transformation. From the Party's perspective, the integration of trade unions into the capitalist state is a consequence of the development of capitalism and the increasing concentration of capital within the state. Consequently, changing the leaders or political tendencies of trade unions cannot alter their fundamental function, because this function derives from the objective position of trade unions within contemporary capitalism, rather than from the characteristics of individual leaders or leadership factions. The Party states this point clearly:

“This degeneration is not due to mistaken leadership or individual betrayal. It flows from the centralization of the forces of the bourgeois class in its State.”⁸⁴

⁸³ [From Class Collaboration to Class Unions.](#)

⁸⁴ See source 83.

The International Communist Party also rightly emphasises that, as the capitalist crisis intensifies and the class struggle reaches a higher level, trade unions become increasingly unable to contain and channel workers' struggles. Under such conditions, the struggle moves beyond legal and trade-union frameworks, and workers, breaking with the trade-union apparatus or even coming into conflict with it, develop new forms of organisation directly out of their own struggles. During this period, strikes increasingly take the form of spontaneous actions outside the control of the trade unions, commonly known as 'wildcat strikes', and the class struggle moves beyond the mere defence of living conditions towards a more direct confrontation with capitalist relations. The Party explains this process as follows:

*"When crisis sharpens exploitation, destroys reformist buffers, and renders collaboration untenable, workers are driven to recreate organs of immediate defense, often outside, against, or in rupture with the existing union apparatus. These organs typically arise directly from struggle itself, not from organizational blueprints. They are marked by mass participation, militant strike action, demands around wages and conditions, and hostility to state mediation. As capitalist contradictions intensify and growing sections of the proletariat are compelled onto the terrain of struggle simply to secure their means of existence, legality, arbitration, and social peace lose their material foundation."*⁸⁵

On this basis, the Party argues that as the class struggle rises to a more offensive level, the corresponding forms of proletarian organisation also undergo transformation. General assemblies of workers, factory committees, strike committees, inter-factory committees and, in revolutionary conditions, the tendency towards the formation of workers' councils are all direct products of the living struggle of the class, rather than the result of pre-designed organisational models. Unlike trade

⁸⁵ [From Class Collaboration to Class Unions.](#)

unions, these forms of organisation are based on the direct participation of workers, the extension of the struggle, and class unity beyond professional, occupational and legal divisions. The Party describes this development as follows:

“When capitalism enters a phase of acute crisis and legality ceases to regulate class conflict, new proletarian defensive organs tend to arise as fluid, interconnected networks rather than fixed institutions. In such moments, class organization may take the form of workers’ assemblies, strike committees, inter-factory councils, and territorial bodies, linking workplaces, sectors, and regions without regard for juridical boundaries. These organs coordinate strikes, mutual defense, and material support across the class, functioning as a network of struggle that converges and consolidates only later, if conditions permit. This is not a regression to “disorganization,” but a higher form of proletarian association corresponding to the breakdown of contracts, legal representation, and industry segmentation.”⁸⁶

In our earlier discussion, we saw that the International Communist Party regards trade unions in the age of imperialism not merely as organisations compromised by the betrayal or mistakes of their leaders, but as institutions integrated into the capitalist state by virtue of their own position and structure. From this perspective, the issue is not simply one of reformist or conciliatory leadership; rather, the trade union itself, in its existing historical form, has become one of the mechanisms through which the workers’ economic struggle is integrated into capitalist relations. The Party goes on to argue that, as the class struggle intensifies and deepens, this situation can be transformed and, through a break with the existing trade unions, new forms of workers’ organisation may emerge—forms which the Party refers to as ‘class unions’. The Party writes:

⁸⁶ [What is the Class Union?](#)

“Only under such conditions can defensive organizations assume a genuinely class character and the resurgence of class unions on a wide scale become possible.”⁸⁷

But what exactly are ‘class unions’? Here we encounter the first fundamental ambiguity. If the existing trade union, by virtue of its integration into the capitalist state, is no longer an independent class organisation, what is supposed to re-emerge under the heading of a ‘class union’? Is the Party referring to a workers’ committee, a temporary organisation of workers in struggle, or some other form of direct class organisation? If so, why should this new form still be called a ‘union’?

In fact, the Party appears here to place several distinct concepts alongside one another rather than offering a coherent Marxist analysis of the transformation of the forms of working-class organisation. On the one hand, the Party’s analysis of the integration of existing trade unions into the capitalist state is significant; on the other, it presents the same form of organisation, under conditions of an intensifying class struggle, as a potential basis for the re-emergence of a ‘class union’. It is precisely here that the existing ambiguity needs to be examined more closely. The Party describes the formation of these ‘class unions’ as follows:

“The re-emergence of class unions will not take the same form as the stable, industry-bound, legally recognized unions familiar today. Depending on how struggle unfolds in each national context, class unions may arise either through the reconquest of existing unions by workers united behind an insurgent class program overthrowing legalist reformist leaderships, or through the creation of entirely new organs outside and against the established apparatus.”⁸⁸

⁸⁷ [From Class Collaboration to Class Unions.](#)

⁸⁸ [What is the Class Union?](#)

At first glance, one might assume that by ‘class unions’ the Party means workers’ committees or new forms of organisation that emerge from below in the course of struggle. However, this interpretation is not consistent with the Party’s earlier definition of trade unions. If existing trade unions, as the Party emphasises, are structurally integrated into the capitalist state, how can they be ‘reclaimed’? What would it actually mean to reclaim a trade union? Can workers take an organisation that is structurally part of the apparatus of the capitalist state and remove it from that structure simply by changing its leadership and programme? If the answer is yes, then the earlier claim concerning the structural integration of trade unions into the capitalist state requires reconsideration. If the answer is no, then the concept of ‘reclaiming the trade union’ lacks a clear meaning.

In other words, if the issue cannot be reduced to trade-union leadership, and the trade union’s own structure is integrated into the capitalist state, then removing a ‘reformist’ leadership and replacing it with a ‘class’ leadership cannot, in itself, change the nature of the organisation. Changing the leadership of an institution does not necessarily mean changing its social position or function.

In that case, ‘reclaiming the trade union’ would effectively mean reclaiming a part of the apparatus of the capitalist state for the workers. At least without a very clear theoretical explanation, this concept is not compatible with the Party’s earlier analysis. Just as a bourgeois Ministry of Justice cannot be transformed into an ‘organ of proletarian justice’ simply by changing the minister, an organisation integrated into the capitalist state cannot be transformed into an independent class organ simply by changing its leadership.

A second ambiguity also arises in the Party’s use of the concept of a ‘defensive organ of the proletariat’. On the one hand, the Party regards existing trade unions as lacking class independence because of their structural integration into the capitalist state; on the other, in its discussion of ‘class unions’, it speaks of defensive organisations of the proletariat. This raises the question: what exactly is meant by a ‘defensive

organ of the proletariat'? Is every organisation formed around workers' demands, or to control and contain the class struggle, regardless of its social position and function, a defensive organ of the proletariat? Or can this character be attributed only to organisations that genuinely operate under the direct control of workers and independently of the state and capital?

If existing trade unions are structurally integrated into the capitalist state, the proletariat's struggle for class independence cannot simply be reduced to 'reclaiming' those same institutions. During periods of intensified struggle, the issue may go beyond reviving old trade-union forms and instead lead to the creation of new forms of organisation—forms that arise directly from the struggle itself and its needs.

Therefore, the central question is not how to 'reclaim' the existing trade union, but what forms of organisation workers themselves develop as the class struggle intensifies, and how these forms relate to class independence, direct control over the struggle, and the proletariat's historic aims. If this is what the Party means by 'class unions', then using the term 'class union' not only adds nothing to the analysis but may also create confusion about the actual course of the development of proletarian organisation.

*"Yet this historical degeneration is not irreversible in principle, nor does it negate the necessity of unions as defensive organs of the proletariat. Class unions, properly understood, are not permanent institutions carried intact across epochs. They reappear on a general scale only when objective conditions force the working class back into open, large-scale conflict."*⁸⁹

Here we encounter another theoretical contradiction. On the one hand, the Party regards existing trade unions as products of historical degeneration, integrated into the institutions of the capitalist state; on the other, it insists on the necessity of trade unions as organs of proletarian

⁸⁹ [From Class Collaboration to Class Unions.](#)

defence. It then justifies communist activity within existing trade unions by arguing that, despite their degeneration, workers continue to come together in them as workers.

Yet the mere presence of workers within an institution cannot, in itself, provide a basis for determining the class character of that institution or for justifying communist activity within it. This argument is less a class argument than a sociological one concerning places where workers congregate. If the criterion is that communists should operate wherever significant numbers of workers are present, the same logic could be applied to social-democratic parties, bourgeois “workers’ parties”, and other institutions that organise sections of the working class. In that case, one would have to conclude that communists should also work within these parties simply because they have a substantial working-class membership.

Therefore, the issue cannot simply be that workers are present there. The fundamental question is what position the institution occupies within class relations, what relationship it maintains with the state and capital, in which direction it channels workers’ struggles, and whether it strengthens the proletariat’s capacity to organise itself independently and consciously, or instead contains and integrates that organisation within the framework of capitalist relations. The Party justifies its activity within existing trade unions as follows:

“It would be a fatal error to conclude that activity within existing unions in the United States should be abandoned in principle. Precisely because these organizations remain, despite their degeneration, one of the few spaces where workers are assembled as workers, they cannot be ignored. This intervention takes the form of building united fronts of class and combative forces: rank-and-file caucuses, oppositional groupings, and militant minorities resisting arbitration, no-strike clauses, and subordination to the political parties of the bosses while pushing for the extension of strikes, their unification above companies, categories, and

territories, with the goal of achieving the capacity to deploy a general strike.”⁹⁰

Here, a distinction must be made between two different questions. One is the defence of every genuine workers’ struggle, including struggles involving workers organised within existing trade unions; the other is the necessity of an organised Party presence within trade-union structures. These two cannot simply be equated on the basis of workers’ presence within trade unions.

If the Party maintains that existing trade unions are integrated into the structures of the capitalist state, it must explain how organised activity within those same structures can strengthen the proletariat’s class independence without reproducing the limitations and mechanisms of those institutions. If the aim is to extend strikes and strengthen workers’ unity in struggle beyond the boundaries of individual companies, industries and regions, this can be achieved through the struggle itself and through the direct self-organisation of workers; it does not necessarily require the reconstruction or capture of trade-union structures. Indeed, as the struggle develops and spreads, organisations may emerge from below that go beyond the limits of existing trade-union structures.

The starting point for communists should not be: “Workers are in trade unions, therefore we must also be in the trade unions”; rather, it should be: “Workers are engaged in struggle, and the task of communists is to strengthen the independence, unity, consciousness and organisation of that struggle.” The organisational form should be determined by the real needs of the struggle, rather than the struggle being made to conform to the requirements of preserving an existing organisational form.

The Party itself acknowledges the role of trade unions in suppressing and containing workers’ militancy and radicalism. According to the Party, trade-union leaderships prevent spontaneous radicalism and militancy, discourage workers from taking action, and even prevent them

⁹⁰ [The Party and the Unions.](#)

from voting on more militant forms of action. The Party describes this role as follows:

“The function of the business union leadership seen here is to suppress militancy wherever it organically erupts. By telling workers to not take action and not even bother voting on taking more serious militant action, this layer serves to neuter struggle and keep it legal.”⁹¹

This admission raises a more fundamental question for the Party. If existing trade unions, as the Party itself argues, restrain workers’ radical and militant tendencies not merely through the actions of conciliatory leaders, but through their own organisational and institutional mechanisms, how can it be expected that these same workers will be able to build up sufficient strength within those structures to take over the leadership of a trade union and transform it in the direction of class struggle?

The issue is not simply who the current trade-union leaders are. If the problem is structural, replacing a conciliatory leadership with a militant one does not, in itself, resolve the problem. The same structure that has restricted workers’ radicalism will subject the new leadership to the same pressures and constraints. The Party must therefore explain how an organisational structure which, according to its own analysis, plays a role in containing the class struggle can be used as a platform for developing a genuinely militant leadership. Nevertheless, the Party puts forward another scenario and writes:

“In certain moments, such forces may even temporarily capture leadership positions, not to administer labor peace, but to strengthen the workers’ struggle. The Communist Party fights within the labor and trade union movement to ensure that these achievements in terms of organizing the workers’ struggle become as strong and stable as possible.”⁹²

⁹¹ [Minneapolis-For a real general strike!](#)

⁹² [The Party and the Unions.](#)

Here the contradiction in the Party's argument becomes even clearer. On the one hand, the Party argues that the trade-union structure restrains workers' militancy and radicalism; on the other, it presents that same structure as an arena in which militant forces can temporarily take control of the leadership and strengthen the struggle.

But if the trade-union structure genuinely obstructs the independent development and consolidation of workers' radicalism, we must ask how these forces are supposed to acquire sufficient strength within that very structure to take over its leadership. If the answer is that the balance of forces changes at the height of the class struggle, then the decisive factor is the intensification of the class struggle itself, not the trade-union structure. Under such conditions, the struggle may also move beyond the framework of the trade union and give rise to new forms of organisation.

On the other hand, if militant forces take control of a trade union's leadership only for a short period, it must be made clear how they can transform it into an instrument of class independence without changing the union's social position and function. Merely changing the individuals at the head of an institution does not mean changing the nature of that institution.

The more fundamental issue is the relationship between organisational structure, class struggle and the actual power of workers. If workers' power derives from their direct struggle and collective self-organisation, that power should not be reduced to the power of a new leadership operating within a structural framework which the Party itself has previously identified as a means of containing the struggle.

From this perspective, the Party's argument risks becoming circular: trade unions restrain workers' radical struggle because of their structure; yet, in order to overcome this limitation, the Party proposes that radical forces organise within those same trade unions, temporarily take control of their leadership, and use the same structure to strengthen the struggle. But if workers' radicalism can genuinely develop at a given point and alter the balance of class forces, then, under such conditions, trade unions may be among the first obstacles that the proletariat moves

beyond—not in order to seize and reconstruct them, but to break through their limitations and create higher forms of organisation, including workers’ councils, on the basis of the independent and organised struggle of the proletariat.

From the perspective of communist left, therefore, the task of communists should not be to create illusions about the possibility of “capturing” institutions that the Party itself regards as instruments for containing the struggle. The task is to strengthen the independent struggle of workers and to help develop forms of organisation that place control of the struggle in the hands of the workers themselves. If, in the course of its development, the class struggle breaks through existing structures, communists should not seek to confine this movement to the reconstruction of those same structures.

The decisive question is whether the working class itself can, in the course of struggle, develop its own organised and independent power. Wherever such power emerges, the task of the revolutionary organisation and of communists is to strengthen it, help extend it, and defend its independence—not to create confusion over the possibility or necessity of reclaiming or recapturing trade unions.

From this perspective, the Party’s claim that activity within the workers’ and trade union movement can make the gains of the struggle “strong and lasting”, without explaining how the structural limitations of trade unions are to be overcome, amounts to little more than an assertion. If the Party itself acknowledges that these structures play a role in containing the radical struggle of workers, it must explain how activity within those same structures can strengthen class independence without reproducing their limitations. Otherwise, rather than strengthening the independence of the workers’ struggle, this approach risks creating confusion over the path of proletarian organisation, thereby weakening the independent struggle of workers and directing it towards the reconstruction of the very organisational forms whose historical and class limitations the Party itself has previously acknowledged.

The Party's point of departure is not the independent workers' struggle and the class struggle, but intervention within existing trade union structures. The Party makes the criterion for its intervention whether a particular union is "receptive to the Party's trade union programme"; and if there is only one union, even if it is not receptive to this programme, it nevertheless advises workers to join it and to fight from within that same structure to advance the Party's programme. The Party writes:

*"The party can choose which unions to intervene in where there are multiple trade union organizations in a given category, sector, region, or company, and it does so according to the criterion of how amenable they are to the party's trade union agenda. Where this is not possible, the party instructs workers to join the only existing union and fights within it to spread its trade union agenda."*⁹³

But the question is why workers' choice of organisation should be based on the degree to which existing trade unions are receptive to the Party's "trade union programme". If the point of departure is class independence and the actual needs of the workers' struggle, the criterion should instead be the real role played by each organisation in the struggle between labour and capital, its relationship with the state and capital, and its impact on the independent organisation of workers—not its readiness to accept the programme of a particular party.

Otherwise, instead of the central question being how to extend the independent struggle of workers and develop forms of organisation appropriate to the level and needs of the struggle, the issue is reduced to which trade union workers should choose, how to intervene in and influence it, and how the Party's programme can be advanced within its framework. In this case, the point of departure shifts from the actual needs of the class struggle to the organisational and political considerations of the Party.

⁹³[The Party and the Unions.](#)

Even if workers are, under certain circumstances, compelled to be members of an existing trade union, this presence should not be understood as acceptance of that structure as the desirable form of proletarian organisation. The real struggle of workers may, in the course of its development, go beyond the limits of the trade union and, as the class struggle intensifies, lead to the emergence of higher forms of organisation. Under such conditions, the task of communists is to strengthen this movement—that is, the independent organisation of workers—while at the same time making clear the limitations and even the dangers that trade union structures can pose to the independence and development of the class struggle.

Therefore, the fundamental question is not, “In which trade union can we work most effectively?” but rather, “What role does this organisation play in the class struggle, and does it contribute to the independence and organised power of the workers themselves, or does it contain their struggle within the framework of capitalist relations?” The difference between these two points of departure is the difference between communist politics and leftism.

Earlier, we saw that, in its historical analysis of trade unions, the International Communist Party examines the relationship between trade unions and the bourgeois state within the historical development of capitalism. According to this analysis, trade unions have moved, through different stages of capitalism, from being prohibited or tolerated to becoming structurally integrated into the state and involved in the management of production. This aspect of the analysis is important because it explains the position of trade unions not merely on the basis of their outward form or national characteristics, but within the context of the historical development of capitalism.

Unfortunately, the Party subsequently abandons this historical and class point of departure and, in its concrete analysis of trade unions, places greater emphasis on national differences and local conditions, thereby slipping into a form of local reductionism. For example, the Party writes about Italy:

“In Italy, where the party can boast a continuous presence within the trade union movement and has conducted a thorough examination of its history.”⁹⁴

And elsewhere it writes:

“The Party’s assessments and tactics regarding the current trade unions will therefore likely not be identical in all countries and circumstances. The Party’s directive to cease organizing within the CGIL and to rebuild the class-based union ‘outside and against the regime’s union’ is not a general principle of Party action, but the result of an assessment of the situation that has developed in Italy.”⁹⁵

The issue is not that we should disregard the specific conditions of individual countries or the different histories of workers’ movements. Marxism insists precisely on a concrete analysis of concrete conditions. The issue is that differences in national conditions should not lead to the negation of a common class and historical basis. If the Party accepts, on the one hand, that in the imperialist era trade unions have become structurally integrated into the bourgeois state and the management of production, then it must explain how, and according to what criteria, this integration changes—or does not change—under different national conditions.

Otherwise, a theoretical contradiction emerges: on the one hand, the integration of trade unions into the capitalist state is presented as a historical feature of capitalism in its imperialist stage; on the other hand, the Party’s approach to those same trade unions is determined largely by national characteristics, the Party’s historical experience, and the possibility or otherwise of working within them. In this case, what should be the outcome of a class analysis of the position of trade unions becomes

⁹⁴ [On the Party’s Trade Union Policy in Italy.](#)

⁹⁵ [See source 94.](#)

a tactical question of where, and in which trade union, the Party can intervene most effectively.

For this reason, the Party's long-standing presence within the trade union movement in Italy cannot, in itself, provide a basis for assessing the class character of trade unions. A party's history of involvement in an institution does not determine the nature of that institution. The criterion should instead be the organisation's social and political position, its relationship with the state and capital, its role in the struggle between labour and capital, and its impact on the organised independence of the proletariat.

If, according to the Party's own analysis, trade unions have become structurally integrated into the bourgeois state in the imperialist era, the fundamental question is no longer in which country it is possible to work more effectively within a trade union, but rather how communists defend the class independence of workers in the course of their actual struggles and how they contribute to the emergence of forms of organisation capable of moving beyond the restrictive framework of trade unionism.

Therefore, differences in national conditions should be taken into account at the level of tactics and concrete analysis, rather than becoming a basis for relativising the class character of trade unions. The point of departure must remain the same historical and class analysis: workers' organisation should be assessed according to its relationship to the struggle between labour and capital and the degree of its independence from the state and capital. The Party's tactics may change according to circumstances, but the principle of defending the class independence of the proletariat should not become subordinate to geography, the Party's history of activity, or the extent to which intervention in a particular trade union is possible.

The Party also faces another fundamental contradiction. On the one hand, in its historical analysis, it emphasises that, in the imperialist era, trade unions gradually moved beyond the stage of being tolerated and became structurally integrated into the bourgeois state and the management of production. On the other hand, when it turns to a concrete

analysis of trade unions in Italy, instead of maintaining this same class criterion, it once again resorts to distinctions such as “regime” and “non-regime” unions, or assesses trade unions according to their relationship to fascism and democracy. The Party writes about the Italian trade unions:

“We had already defined the trade unions founded in the postwar period—CGIL, CISL, and UIL, as ‘tailored to the Mussolini model,’ subservient to the state and representatives of the bourgeois parties, a reflection of the new inter-imperialist balances: we defined them as ‘regime’ unions.”⁹⁶

But being a “regime” union is not, in itself, a class category. The fundamental question for a communist analysis is not which political regime—fascist or democratic—directly controls a trade union; rather, it is what position that union occupies within the relations between labour and capital, what relationship it maintains with the state and capital, and whether its organisation contributes to the class independence of the proletariat or serves to integrate and contain the workers’ struggle.

If the criterion of being “regime” or “non-regime” replaces the class criterion, there is a danger of confusing differences in the political forms of the bourgeois state with differences in the class character of its institutions. A trade union may operate under a fascist, democratic or parliamentary regime, but this difference in the political form of the state does not, in itself, alter the class character of the trade union. The contradiction becomes even clearer when the Party explains the position of the CGIL:

“Up to that point the most militant section of the Italian proletariat had been found within the CGIL, which had been forced by workers’ pressure to lead major strikes. We therefore concluded that, up to that moment, the process of integrating the unions into the state machinery was still reversible, not yet complete, so the possibility could not be ruled out—in the wake of the workers’

⁹⁶ [On the Party’s Trade Union Policy in Italy.](#)

struggle—of winning back the CGIL to a class-based policy. “That is why we spoke of a ‘reconquest by force.’ If that had not happened, we said at the time, new class-based organizations would have had to emerge (...) That is why our militants waged the battle within the CGIL.””⁹⁷

This raises a fundamental question: if trade unions have become structurally integrated into the capitalist state in the imperialist era, how can an existing trade union be “reclaimed” and transformed into a class organisation? And if this integration is still reversible, then what exactly does the structural integration that the Party previously presented as a historical characteristic of trade unions in the imperialist era actually mean?

Of course, a trade union may, at a given point, under pressure from workers’ struggles, adopt apparently militant positions in order to channel their anger and discontent and thereby contain and control the class struggle more effectively.⁹⁸ But this should not be confused with a change in the social and historical character of the trade union itself. The militancy of workers within a trade union, or the adoption of radical tactics by its leadership, does not necessarily mean that the nature of the institution has changed. This, in fact, is precisely the central issue: a distinction must be made between the workers’ real struggle and the organisational structure that may serve to direct, channel and contain that struggle. The Party then states:

“From 1975 onward, while widespread workers’ struggles were openly sabotaged by the CGIL, ‘the most combative and conscious

⁹⁷ [On the Party’s Trade Union Policy in Italy.](#)

⁹⁸With regard to the role of trade unions in channelling workers’ discontent and pent-up anger and containing the class struggle, it may be useful to examine the following examples from the experience of metropolitan capitalism:

- [The Widespread Dissatisfaction of Canadian Railway Workers and the Union’s Maneuver to Vent the Workers’ Discontent](#)
- [The Widespread Dissatisfaction Among Public Service Workers in Canada and the Union’s Maneuver to Vent the Workers’ Discontent](#)

section of the proletariat tends to abandon the existing unions and give life to new organizations.’...[In] 1979, our slogan regarding Italy appeared: ‘Out of and against the current trade unions.’”⁹⁹

This change in position could be the subject of a serious historical analysis, but the problem arises when such tactical changes are not linked to a coherent theoretical framework concerning the nature of trade unions. If the CGIL was initially regarded as a “regime” union integrated into the state, then the possibility of “reclaiming” it was subsequently raised, the Party worked within it for years, and eventually adopted the slogan “out of and against the existing trade unions”, it must be made clear what objective and class transformation provided the basis for this change in assessment. Otherwise, there is a danger that the class position of a trade union will be determined not by its relationship to capital and the state, but by the extent to which the Party can operate within it and by temporary changes in the policies of the trade union leadership.

The Party goes on, in an attempt to defend its incoherent, confused and non-class-based position on trade unions and to explain its earlier position expressed in the slogan “out of and against the CGIL”, to stress that this position did not arise from an obsession with purism or sectarianism. To substantiate this claim, the Party refers to Lenin’s criticisms of “extremism” and writes that it fully accepts Lenin’s critique of “extremism” in his book *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, and states:

“The Party confirms all its positions and reiterates that our stance “outside and against” the CGIL is not due to a mania for purism or sectarianism, which we have always condemned as a manifestation of short-sightedness and revolutionary impotence. We fully share Lenin’s criticisms in his “Extremism” of the “left-wing infantilists.””¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ [On the Party’s Trade Union Policy in Italy.](#)

¹⁰⁰ [See source 99.](#)

Here, it is necessary to distinguish between respect for Lenin's historical role and a theoretical critique of the ambiguities in his positions. Lenin was undoubtedly one of the decisive figures in the communist movement and in the history of the world revolution. His position on the First World War and his unequivocal defence of revolutionary defeatism, at a time when even revolutionaries such as Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky adopted pacifist positions, as well as his role in the October Revolution, his struggle to build a revolutionary party, and his decisive contribution to the formation of the Communist International, are among the great achievements in the history of the communist movement. One could provide a long list of Lenin's achievements and strengths, and there can be no doubt about their historical significance.

But the greatness and historical importance of a revolutionary does not mean that their works and positions are beyond criticism. Marxism is not a collection of sacred texts and immutable doctrines; it is a method for critically analysing real social and historical relations. From this perspective, the book *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, which represents one of Lenin's theoretical weaknesses, should, like any other theoretical work, be subjected to criticism.

In other words, Lenin had theoretical ambiguities and limitations in several areas, including his analysis of trade unions, the national question, and the concept of imperialism. The fundamental problem here is that, instead of critically examining these ambiguities from a Marxist perspective and in the light of the historical and dialectical experience of class struggle, the Party turns them into dogmatic principles.

In this way, invoking Lenin's theoretical ambiguities, rather than contributing to a deeper theoretical discussion and a richer understanding of Marxism, can become an obstacle to communist critique and to the reassessment of theory on the basis of the actual experience of class struggle. Defending the tradition of the Communist Left does not mean turning theoretical ambiguities into dogma; rather, it means preserving its critical, revolutionary and Marxist spirit.

The Alleged Example of a Class Union

Earlier, we examined the position of the International Communist Party (il Partito) on trade unions and the ambiguity in its definition of a “class union”. In conditions of a rising and intensifying class struggle, the Party presents the “class union” as an alternative to existing trade unions. To understand this concept more precisely and clarify what the Party considers to constitute a “class union”, we will examine below one of the examples cited by the Party itself.

Before turning to this examination, it is necessary to make a methodological point so that the discussion is not reduced to a deterministic outlook. It is an undeniable fact that a crisis of capitalism can create favourable conditions for the rise and intensification of the class struggle; however, it does not follow from this that every capitalist crisis necessarily leads to an intensification of the class struggle, or that every crisis, in itself, creates the conditions for the formation and development of workers’ organisations.

A crisis of capitalism is only one of the objective conditions of the class struggle. Whether these conditions lead to a broad movement and organisation of the proletariat also depends on other factors: the level of class consciousness and experience among workers, the balance of class forces, existing organisational traditions, the extent and forms of state repression, and, above all, the ability of the class itself to transform scattered forms of resistance into a collective and organised struggle. Equally important is the role of the revolutionary organisation in providing direction and defending proletarian positions.

With this point in mind, we can now return to the Party’s claim concerning the “class union”. In explaining the conditions and circumstances in which such unions emerge, the Party

“Iran: Social Crisis Leads to Class Unionist Combativity”¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ [Iran: Social Crisis Leads to Class Unionist Combativity](#).

One of the fundamental ambiguities in the International Communist Party's position on trade unions concerns the concept of "independence". The Party defines the independence of a trade union or workers' organisation primarily as independence from the regime and the state's official mechanisms, rather than as independence from capital and capitalist relations. In our view, this shift in the meaning of independence is significant, because being independent of the state does not necessarily mean being independent of capital. A workers' organisation may be independent of the state and its official institutions while still operating within the framework of capitalist relations, pursuing economic demands and following the logic of bargaining between labour and capital.

The class character of an organisation cannot be determined simply by its organisational independence from the state. The fundamental question is what position the organisation occupies within the class struggle and what kind of struggle it organises. Therefore, being illegal, semi-clandestine, independent of the state, or lacking official recognition does not, in itself, make an organisation independent of capital.

This distinction becomes particularly important in the Party's analysis of conditions in Iran. In view of the political despotism, the prohibition of trade unions, and the absence of formal mechanisms for collective bargaining, the Party describes the situation of workers' organisation in Iran as follows:

"In Iran, independent unions are illegal and formal collective bargaining does not exist. There are no recognized opportunist labor parties or legal strike frameworks. Instead, coordination occurs through informal worker councils, online networks, and semi-clandestine labor organizations, such as associations of contract oil workers and independent labor activists. These bodies do not function as political parties and generally avoid explicit ideological programs, focusing instead on economic demands...Despite the absence of legal recognition, these worker organizations increasingly function as de facto class unions albeit

immature and absent a formal centralized organizational apparatus.”¹⁰²

Another important ambiguity in the International Communist Party’s analysis concerns its definition of an “opportunistic workers’ party”. In describing political tendencies, the Party categorises the left of capital under the heading of “opportunistic workers’ parties”. This formulation is conceptually problematic because, according to it, Social Democratic parties and other so-called “workers’ parties” are essentially regarded as workers’ parties that are merely opportunistic, rather than as bourgeois parties.

If we follow this logic through to its conclusion, we arrive at contradictory results. For example, the British Labour Party, which currently holds office, would have to be classified as an “opportunistic workers’ party”; and since this party is in government, one could implicitly arrive at the conclusion that the British government is also a form of “workers’ government”. From a Marxist perspective, however, the presence of a so-called “workers’ party” in government does not alter the class character of the state in any way. The state remains a bourgeois state, and the “Labour” Party, regardless of its name, when it administers the capitalist state, plays a role in reproducing capitalist relations and bourgeois domination.

Therefore, it is essential to distinguish between a party’s name and social origins, on the one hand, and its actual class role, on the other. If a party operates within the framework of the state and capitalist relations and plays a role in preserving and reproducing those relations, it cannot be regarded as a workers’ party simply because it bears the label “workers’ party”, while its bourgeois function is then explained merely by describing it as “opportunistic”. Social Democracy and other forms of the left of capital are part of the bourgeoisie’s political mechanisms for organising, controlling and containing the proletariat’s class struggle, even when sections of the working class constitute their social base.

¹⁰² [Iran: Social Crisis Leads to Class Unionist Combativity.](#)

Another ambiguity lies in the Party's use of the term "informal workers' councils". From a Marxist perspective, a "workers' council" is not simply another name for a workers' committee or workers' association. In its historical and political sense, a council is a form of organisation and exercise of the proletariat's class power that emerges under conditions of a rising class struggle and in connection with the broader movement of the class. Therefore, if a number of workers form a workers' committee or a fighting organisation and call it a "council", the mere use of this name does not turn that organisation into a workers' council. A council is not merely an administrative or legal category that can be defined as "formal" or "informal"; in its political sense, a council is bound up with the question of class power and the general organisation of the proletariat.

Precisely here, one would expect a party that considers itself communist, a party that defends the tradition of the communist left, not to blur conceptual boundaries through ambiguous expressions such as "informal workers' council", but rather to defend the historical and political concept of workers' councils and to make clear the distinction between them and committees, associations and other forms of workers' organisation.

But the Party's most significant source of ambiguity arises when it includes "workers' associations" among "class unions", or at least regards them as organisations that can develop into "class unions". The issue here is no longer merely a terminological disagreement; it goes to the very criteria by which a class organisation is identified. From a Marxist perspective, we must examine what role an organisation plays in the struggle between labour and capital, and whether it contributes to strengthening the class independence of the proletariat or instead functions to control and contain the workers' struggle.

With regard to "workers' associations" in Iran, the issue becomes particularly important because these organisations cannot be examined separately from the legal and political structure of the Islamic Republic and the experience of Islamic Labour Councils. Given the discredit and unpopularity of Islamic Labour Councils among sections of the working class, the state and capital resort to other organisational forms to control

and contain the class struggle—forms that do not necessarily rely on direct or police repression, but can operate through co-option, organisation, the channelling of demands, and the soft control of workers' struggles.

From this perspective, workers' associations serve to channel workers' demands into forms acceptable to the state and capital, and to dissipate their discontent and pent-up anger in such a way that this discontent does not develop into an independent and organised class struggle. The issue, therefore, is not merely the outward form or name of these organisations; rather, it is necessary to examine their actual function within the relationship between labour and capital and the role they play in containing or expanding the class struggle.

Therefore, in response to the Party's ambiguities, the Internationalist Voice defends the class independence of the proletariat against both the right and left of capital; that is, against all those tendencies which, despite their political and ideological differences, seek to control, contain or integrate workers' struggles within the framework of capitalist relations. Drawing on historical events, the experience of workers' struggles, and an examination of the actual forms of proletarian organisation, the Internationalist Voice has published a pamphlet aimed at strengthening communist positions in the context of the struggle between labour and capital. The ultimate issue is precisely this: the emancipation of the working class can only be the product of the independent, conscious and organised struggle of the working class itself.¹⁰³

¹⁰³In its pamphlet "*The Intensification of Anger and Discontent among Oil Workers: Organised Attempts to Contain the Class Struggle*", the Internationalist Voice emphasises that, given the high potential for struggle among oil workers and the strategic importance of the industry to the bourgeoisie, controlling and channelling workers' struggles is of particular importance to the ruling class. On this basis, the peripheral Islamic bourgeoisie, despite its short-sightedness, superficiality and structural immaturity, also seeks to draw on the experience and models of the metropolitan bourgeoisie in order to contain and control workers' struggles. The pamphlet examines how the Islamic bourgeoisie seeks to draw on the experience of the metropolitan bourgeoisie in controlling workers' struggles and, as a first step, to prevent the expansion, deepening and development of workers' struggles in the oil industry, not merely through direct repression, but by relying on its own instruments and institutions.

Unfortunately, in addition to these theoretical ambiguities, a considerable number of the Party's claims appear to be factually and historically inaccurate; the failure to provide references or sources for these claims is probably one of the reasons for this. For example, the Party claims that the Islamic bourgeoisie has permitted the establishment of trade unions independent of the state without requiring them to obtain official authorisation, and writes in this regard:

“In 2003 an amendment to the 1990 Labour Code allowed trade-unions independent of the State to be formed without the permission of the authorities.”¹⁰⁴

The Islamic bourgeoisie recognises only three types of authorised workers' organisations¹⁰⁵:

- Islamic Labour Councils
- Trade Associations (“workers' associations”)
- Workers' Representatives

Now that we have addressed the issue of workers' associations, we can turn to the only case that contains at least a minimal degree of a “workers' spirit” and which the Party presents as an example of a “class union”: the Syndicate of Workers of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company.

Before examining the Party's claims, it is necessary to clarify the position of this organisation more precisely. Unlike the associations we examined earlier, the Syndicate of Workers of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company has a genuine history of workers' organisation and struggle. However, from our perspective, during the period under consideration, this organisation more closely resembled a workers' committee than an established syndicate with a clearly defined syndical

¹⁰⁴ [The courageous strike of the Tehran tram-drivers.](#)

¹⁰⁵ All these issues are examined with reference to historical events and experiences in the pamphlet [“The Intensification of Anger and Discontent among Oil Workers: Organised Attempts to Contain the Class Struggle”](#). We recommend reading the pamphlet.

structure and function. A syndicate has specific organisational characteristics and functions in terms of its activities and its relationship with its members and the employer, and simply calling an organisation a “syndicate” is not sufficient to give it these characteristics.

Before examining the Party’s claims, it is necessary to clarify the position of this organisation more precisely. Unlike the associations we examined earlier, the Syndicate of Workers of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company has a history of workers’ organisation and struggle. However, from our perspective, during the period under consideration, this organisation more closely resembled a workers’ committee than an established syndicate with a stable syndical structure and function. A syndical organisation has its own specific characteristics and functions. At the same time, this syndicate has followed the formal procedures required for registration in order to obtain official recognition and operate legally, but has encountered government obstacles and opposition. This dual situation cannot continue indefinitely: it must either become a formally recognised and legal syndicate and become fully integrated into the structure of the capitalist state, or continue to operate as a workers’ committee.¹⁰⁶

With this clarification, we can now return to the Party’s claims concerning the Syndicate of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company. Without providing a specific reference, the Party writes about the struggles of the bus company’s workers during that period:

“The 17,000 employees of the Teheran bus companies, undistracted by the famous ‘blasphemous cartoon’¹⁰⁷ controversy,

¹⁰⁶ For further information on workers’ organisation, see the pamphlet *“The Intensification of Anger and Discontent among Oil Workers: Organised Attempts to Contain the Class Struggle”*

¹⁰⁷ In this text, the reference to “blasphemous cartoon” concerns the publication of cartoons depicting Muhammad by a Danish newspaper in 2005–2006. The Party’s point is that, while the media and governments were directing public attention towards the controversy surrounding the “blasphemous cartoon”, the workers of the bus company continued their struggle against their employer and the state, and did not allow the controversy over the cartoons to marginalise their class struggle.

have been fighting an extremely difficult battle against their employers and the State for two months now."¹⁰⁸

This statement requires some qualification. The figure of 17,000 at the time may have referred to the total workforce of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, including workers and drivers, as well as administrative staff, managers and other organisational levels. Therefore, it cannot be concluded, without specific evidence, that all 17,000 people participated in the struggles and protests in question. The reality is that thousands of workers and drivers took part in the protests and struggles of that period, and these struggles, despite their limitations, strengths and weaknesses, represent an important episode in the history of workers' struggle in Iran. However, equating the company's total workforce with the number of participants in the struggle is not historically defensible and requires specific evidence. The Party then recounts the history of the re-establishment of this organisation as follows:

*"Since 2003 the tramdrivers and workers at the Teheran and District Bus Company have been organising themselves within a new independent trade-union called the Trade Union of the Workers of the Teheran and District Bus Company. It has been formed on a truly class basis and currently has around 5,000 members. Despite this being the organisation which genuinely represents and defends the Teheran tramdrivers' interests, neither the company nor the civic authorities have afforded it recognition. This union had been founded earlier, back in 1968, but was then banned in the early eighties by the new Islamic regime which imposed its Khane-ye Kargar and Shora-ye Eslami."*¹⁰⁹

This account also requires historical scrutiny in several respects. Contrary to the Party's claim, the history of this syndicate does not date

¹⁰⁸ [The courageous strike of the Tehran tram-drivers.](#)

¹⁰⁹ [See source 108.](#)

back to 1968. The syndicate was registered in 1957 under registration number 82. Since the board of directors was elected in 1958 and the inauguration ceremony was also held that year, 1958 is therefore cited as the year in which it was established or began its official activities.

The first strike by workers of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company dates back to 1960. In that year, the company's drivers went on strike, despite opposition from the syndicate's board of directors, in protest against issues relating to family allowances and working on Fridays, and refused to drive the buses. Security forces intervened after learning of the strike; the strike was broken up, and the striking workers were dismissed and arrested. The drivers were gradually released, and some of them returned to work.

During the upheavals of 1979, as we examined earlier, sections of the working class were also seeking broader and more advanced forms of organisation. From this perspective, despite its historical record, the Bus Company Syndicate was unable at that point to play a role comparable to that of some of the new forms of workers' organisation and struggle. Following the suppression of the workers' movement and the consolidation of the reactionary Islamic bourgeoisie, the syndicate effectively withdrew from the field of independent workers' organisation.

To understand the re-establishment of the Bus Company Syndicate in the 2000s, it is necessary to take into account the political and class conditions of that period, as well as the new context of workers' and drivers' struggles. The syndicate was re-established under specific conditions of class struggle, and it is precisely for this reason that an examination of that period is important. A brief explanation of these conditions follows.

To understand the circumstances in which the Bus Company Syndicate was re-established, we must first consider the balance of class forces and, more importantly, the needs of the Islamic bourgeoisie at that time. From this perspective, the victory of Mohammad Khatami in the 1997 presidential election cannot be explained solely in terms of the propaganda and demagoguery of the various factions of the right and left of

capital. Khatami's election must be examined within the context of Iran's particular political and economic circumstances and the bourgeoisie's need to find a more suitable means of managing the political and social crises of that period.

Khatami, by promoting the slogan of "reform" domestically and "Dialogue Among Civilisations" internationally, represented an attempt by a section of the bourgeoisie to alter the political and ideological form of the state in order to respond to the needs of capital accumulation. From this perspective, "reformism"¹¹⁰ should not be regarded as an alternative to the capitalist system, but rather as one of the political forms through which the same relations can be managed and reproduced under specific conditions. Just as democratic and social-democratic currents in Western countries can play a role in absorbing, organising and containing social discontent, reformism could, under the conditions prevailing in Iran, perform a similar function through forms and means appropriate to those conditions.

In this context, during the period of "reform", we witnessed the growth of "reformist" tendencies within the workers' movement, aligned with the objectives of the International Labour Organization and aimed at strengthening the reformist wing of the bourgeoisie. At that time, circles and organisations also emerged that pursued workers' struggles within the framework of legal reforms and official and semi-official institutions. From a proletarian perspective, the fundamental issue was to ensure that workers' protests did not depart from the path of independent class struggle and become channelled into legal, controllable and sterile avenues. Nor should workers' struggles become a platform for strengthening one of the factions of the bourgeoisie, namely its reformist wing.

¹¹⁰ Here, the term "reformist" is used solely because it was the term employed by this bourgeois faction itself. This is despite the fact that, with capitalism entering its period of decadence and the beginning of the era of imperialist wars and revolutions, it is no longer possible to impose lasting reforms upon the bourgeoisie. Within this framework, defending workers' living standards, opposing redundancies and pursuing similar demands does not mean advocating reformism.

The reformist movement, due to its historical limitations, internal contradictions and the specific political and class conditions of the period, was unable to fully achieve its objectives, and some of its forces were subsequently redefined in various forms as part of the reformist opposition. Nevertheless, during that period, under the political climate created by the reformist movement, dozens of open and semi-open circles and groups emerged, while a range of workers' leaders and activists with different political tendencies also emerged and gained greater scope for activity. This political and social context cannot be ignored when seeking to understand the re-establishment of the Bus Company Syndicate.

On the other hand, during the same period, the issue of Iran's accession to the World Trade Organization was important to the Islamic bourgeoisie, and, within this framework, relations with international economic and labour institutions also assumed greater importance. The International Labour Organization held a particularly important position in this regard. The Islamic Republic sought to present the existing structure of workers' organisations in forms that could be recognised internationally as representing Iranian workers.

In this context, the Islamic Labour Councils and other official institutions within the structure of the Islamic Republic were presented internationally as organisations representing Iranian workers. This was met with opposition from some workers and activists. In protest against this situation, they called for the formation of organisations independent of the state and expressed their opposition to the exclusive representation of workers by official organisations to the International Labour Organization and government institutions. As these protests and activities continued, several workers' organisations declared their existence.¹¹¹

This context is important for understanding the re-establishment of the Bus Company Syndicate, because it did not take place in a political

¹¹¹ For a better understanding of the workers' struggles of that period and the organisations that emerged in the course of those struggles, we recommend reading the book "*Leftism in the Role Of Metamorphosed Councilism*". If you do not have time to read the book in full, at least read the chapter "Anti-Capitalist Organisation".

and social vacuum. Rather, it occurred under conditions in which, on the one hand, opportunities for open and semi-open activity had increased for some workers' activists, while, on the other hand, the state and the official institutions of capital were seeking to contain workers' protests within controllable and legal frameworks. Therefore, in assessing the character and role of the Bus Company Syndicate, it is necessary to distinguish between the actual struggles of workers, on the one hand, and the various efforts to organise and channel those struggles, on the other. In this context, the account provided by the Party of the syndicate's general assembly also requires careful and well-documented examination. The Party writes about this event:

*"On June 3, 2005, a general assembly of the Sherkat-e Vahed workers and tram-drivers was held to adopts statutes and elect a leadership. Despite road blocks and intimidation from the combined ranks of the State and company security forces and members of Khane-ye Kargar (House of Workers) 8,000 workers participated in the assembly. By the end of July the number of members of the union sacked had reached seventy."*¹¹²

To understand the events surrounding the general assembly of the Bus Company Syndicate more precisely, it is first necessary to briefly review the sequence of events that led to the holding of the assembly. Initially, the general assembly was scheduled to take place on 9 May 2005, but agents of the Workers' House and the Islamic Labour Councils attacked the premises of the Bus Company Workers' Syndicate and prevented the assembly from taking place. During the attack, a number of workers and several Syndicate activists were injured. As a result, the first attempt to hold the general assembly was unsuccessful, and the meeting could not take place because there were not enough attendees to constitute a quorum.¹¹³

¹¹² [The courageous strike of the Tehran tram-drivers.](#)

¹¹³ [History of the Workers of the Bus Company](#)

Subsequently, on 3 June 2005, the day scheduled for the general assembly elections, drivers arriving at the Bakers' Hussainiya, where the elections were to be held, found the premises surrounded by police forces. On the same day, a number of active workers were arrested. Following news of the arrests, the drivers marched through the streets surrounding the Hussainiya and gathered in Hasanabad Square. Their main demands were the release of their arrested colleagues and the holding of the elections.

Around midday, the detainees were released and joined the drivers gathered in Hasanabad Square. Then, in the presence of police forces, plain-clothes agents and a representative of the Ministry of Labour, the drivers entered the Hussainiya in groups of ten, elected their representatives and left the premises. After the votes had been counted, 19 people were elected as members of the board of directors and two as auditors.¹¹⁴

As explained above, the description of the general assembly and the claim that 8,000 people participated in it are not consistent with the available evidence. The Bakers' Hussainiya, where the general assembly elections were held, had limited capacity, and the drivers entered the Hussainiya in groups of ten, cast their votes and then left the premises. Therefore, the claim that 8,000 people were present at or participated in the general assembly is not supported by the available evidence.¹¹⁵

The significance of this issue is not limited merely to whether a particular figure is accurate or inaccurate. If the Party presents a picture

¹¹⁴ [History of the Workers of the Bus Company](#)

¹¹⁵ We had doubts about the figure of 8,000 and therefore investigated whether Persian-language sources also referred to the presence of 8,000 people at this assembly. Since the event took place in Iran and among Iranian workers, one would expect such a significant figure to have been recorded in at least some Persian-language sources contemporaneously or close to the time of the event, before being reported in sources in other languages. However, in our search of Persian-language sources, we found no instance confirming this figure. By contrast, a considerable number of English-language sources have repeated the figure of 8,000 without citing Persian-language sources. For example, the English-language Wikipedia refers to the presence of 8,000 people, whereas no such figure is given in the Persian-language version of Wikipedia.

of a general assembly attended by 8,000 people that cannot be substantiated as a matter of historical fact, and then, on the basis of this picture, presents the Bus Company Syndicate as an example of a “class union”, the credibility of its historical account—and consequently part of its theoretical argument—will also require serious scrutiny.

Of course, from the perspective of Communist Left principles, the number of members of an organisation or the number of participants in it is not, in itself, a criterion for determining its class character. The character of a workers’ organisation must be assessed on the basis of its position in the struggle between labour and capital, its demands and objectives, its form of organisation, its practical functioning, and its relationship to the independent struggle of the proletariat. Therefore, even if the figure of 8,000 were conclusively substantiated, this figure in itself would not constitute evidence that the syndicate was a “class union”; likewise, the small membership of an organisation cannot, in itself, determine its class or non-class character.

However, the question remains as to where the Party obtained the figure of 8,000 and how it attributed this figure to the syndicate’s general assembly. To answer this question, we need to examine the course of the Bus Company workers’ struggles at the time. Following the re-establishment of the syndicate, the protests by the company’s workers and drivers entered a new phase. One of their first public protests took place on 8 October 2005, when they switched on the lights of their buses. Some time later, the protests continued in the form of refusing to collect fares from passengers. These actions not only failed to bring about any significant improvement in the workers’ situation, but also resulted in a number of syndicate activists and drivers being arrested.

Subsequently, pressure from the workers to launch a strike increased, and the syndicate came under pressure to organise one. A strike was scheduled for 24 January 2006, with a range of demands, including the release of detainees, wage increases, implementation of a job-classification scheme, provision of workers’ vouchers, and the establishment of health, welfare and sports facilities.

Although the strike did not mean a complete halt to public transport across Tehran, it had a significant impact on the public transport network in some areas, particularly District 6. The importance of this district lay in the fact that it covered some of Tehran's main and busiest routes; consequently, the effects of the strike were clearly visible across the city. From this perspective, bringing the strike to an end became particularly important for government officials and the city authorities.

Within this context, the then Mayor of Tehran, Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf, arranged a meeting with the Bus Company drivers at the 12,000-capacity Azadi Stadium. A large number of Bus Company workers and drivers made their way to the stadium, and around 8,000 people gathered there. This gathering became one of the significant manifestations of the Bus Company workers' struggles during that period. During the meeting, Ghalibaf sought, through deceptive promises and numerous assurances, to persuade the workers to end the strike. Following these promises, the strike was temporarily brought to an end. However, these promises not only failed to address the workers' demands at their root, but their struggles and protests resumed shortly afterwards.

A few days later, on 28 January 2006, the drivers went on strike again. This strike also affected parts of Tehran's public transport network, but this time the security response and repression were more severe. Large numbers of drivers were arrested and imprisoned, and more than 300 drivers were dismissed. Subsequently, some of the dismissed drivers were able to return to their jobs, while others never managed to return.

In its writings, the Party repeatedly mentions Mansoor Ossanlou and, by highlighting him, effectively places the image of a "leader" or central trade union figure at the heart of its narrative. Rather than placing the class struggle itself, the social forces involved, the workers' demands, the forms of organisation and, above all, the strengths and weaknesses of these struggles at the centre of its analysis, this approach comes to resemble, more than a class analysis, a form of reporting on the protests and the syndicate.

The fundamental question is what role the Bus Company Syndicate played in the struggle between labour and capital, which political and class tendencies were present within it and, ultimately, in which direction these tendencies led the workers' struggles. The real force of the class struggle lies within the class itself, in its collective and conscious organisation. Yet in the Party's account of the Bus Company workers' struggles, rather than analysing the movement and collective consciousness of the proletariat, the syndicate and its prominent individuals are placed at the centre of the narrative.

The experience of the Bus Company workers' struggles should be examined not merely through a description of the Bus Company Syndicate and its prominent figures, but through the workers' struggle itself, their forms of organisation, their demands and practical activities, the limitations of syndicalism, and the relationship between these struggles and the question of the proletariat's class independence. Highlighting an individual as a "leader" cannot substitute for an analysis of this class process. Nevertheless, in its account of these struggles, the Party presents Mansoor Ossanlou as the "leader of the syndicate":

*"On December 22 fourteen more trade-unionists were arrested, including the union's leader, Mansoor Ossanlou."*¹¹⁶

Mansoor Ossanlou, who was at one time a prominent figure in the struggles of the Bus Company workers and one of the officials of the Bus Company Workers' Syndicate, provides a noteworthy example of the trajectory through which some workers' activists have been metamorphosed into participants in bourgeois politics. From a dialectical perspective, however, such a metamorphosis cannot be reduced merely to the individual choice or deviation of a workers' activist; these developments take shape within particular social, political and class

¹¹⁶ [The courageous strike of the Tehran tram-drivers.](#)

conditions, and the material and political circumstances underlying them must also be examined.¹¹⁷

The issue is not simply that someone who was once active in workers' struggles later sought refuge in the United States and came to align himself with currents and policies that, from the standpoint of the class interests of the proletariat, represent some of the most right-wing and reactionary bourgeois and imperialist policies. The more fundamental issue is to examine the conditions that make such metamorphosis possible, as well as to critically assess the approaches adopted by the workers' movement in response to these processes.

In the history of the workers' movement, there have been numerous cases in which former workers' activists or leaders have, at different points, moved away from their class positions and ultimately become instruments serving the ruling class and bourgeois policies. This is not an exceptional phenomenon outside the history of the workers' movement, but rather part of the ongoing struggle between the proletarian tendency and bourgeois tendencies within the workers' movement itself. For this reason, the workers' movement cannot confront this phenomenon merely by condemning individuals; rather, drawing on its own traditions of struggle, it must strengthen the class independence, collective organisation and political consciousness of the proletariat in opposition to the right and left tendencies of capital.

From this perspective, Ossanlou's experience should be examined not merely as the political history of an individual, but as an example through which to examine the limitations of syndicalism, the dangers of individualism and leader-centred politics, and the possibility of the metamorphosis of workers' activists within the framework of capitalist

¹¹⁷ In an article entitled "[*The Developments of the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-Industry Company and Labour Traditions*](#)", Internationalist Voice examines developments at Haft-Tappeh Company and the metamorphosis of two workers' activists who were involved in workers' struggles at one stage but later aligned themselves with the state and its institutions, effectively becoming instruments for countering workers' struggles. Studying this experience can be useful for gaining a better understanding of similar processes, including the political metamorphosis of Mansoor Ossanlou.

relations. The fundamental issue for the Communist Left is to strengthen that class tendency which frees workers' struggles from dependence on personalities, bourgeois factions and imperialist powers, and directs them towards the independent organisation and consciousness of the proletariat.

As mentioned earlier, the organisation operating under the name "Bus Company Workers' Syndicate of Tehran and Suburbs" does not correspond, in terms of its functioning, structure and methods of activity, to an established and officially recognised syndicate and has, in practice, more closely resembled a workers' committee. This organisation has also sought official registration and recognition, but has faced opposition and obstruction from the state.

This dual situation cannot continue indefinitely in its present form. As the class struggle changes, this organisation may move towards obtaining official recognition and becoming a legally recognised syndicate, or it may continue as a workers' committee along the path of the independent organisation of workers. Another possibility cannot be ruled out either: as the class struggle intensifies, part of this organisation may move towards formal syndicalism, while another part, together with the movement of the workers themselves, may be drawn towards higher forms of class organisation.

This issue is particularly important because, compared with its position around two decades ago, the Bus Company Syndicate has been weakened. Historical experience shows that during periods of intensified and deepened class struggle, workers do not necessarily move towards rebuilding traditional trade union forms; rather, they may seek higher and more effective forms of organisation. For example, during the developments of 1979, sections of the Iranian working class moved towards new and higher forms of organisation, and the issue was not simply the revival of syndicalism. Likewise, during the workers' protests in the autumn of 2018, at points when the struggles assumed a more confrontational character, tendencies towards more collective and direct forms of organisation could be observed.

Communists must firmly defend the independence of the class struggle against any tendency that seeks to contain, control or integrate workers' struggles within the framework of capitalist institutions and relations. At the same time, no form of organisation should be assessed merely on the basis of its name or title; the criterion must be its actual role in the struggle between labour and capital and its relationship to the class independence of the proletariat.

The task of communists is not to create confusion about the actual course of the struggle or to turn a particular organisational form into a predetermined model for the workers' movement as a whole. In particular, it must be borne in mind that, during periods of rising and deepening class struggle, the struggle itself can give rise to new and higher forms of proletarian organisation—forms that do not necessarily fit within the traditional and existing forms of workers' organisation.

From this perspective, the task of communists is not to create confusion regarding the organisational forms of workers, but to defend those tendencies that move towards class independence, unity in struggle, and the development of the proletariat's consciousness and organisation. Higher forms of organisation acquire a proletarian significance when they serve the class identity, independence of the struggle and historical objectives of the working class, and when they enable the struggle to be controlled directly and collectively by the workers themselves. Therefore, strengthening and developing the tendency towards higher forms of proletarian organisation is part of the task of communists—a task that requires political and theoretical clarification regarding the course of the class struggle, rather than creating confusion about the forms of organisation within the workers' movement.

A Compass or a Source of Confusion in the Turkish Workers' Movement?

We have previously examined the claim of a “class union” made by the International Communist Party (il Partito) in Iran, specifically in relation to the Bus Company Syndicate. At first sight, one might assume that the Party’s ambiguous position stems from an insufficient familiarity with the conditions and political climate in Iran. In our view, however, such an interpretation places the issue at the wrong level. The ambiguity here is not merely the result of a lack of information about a particular social phenomenon; rather, it is rooted in the ambiguity within the Party’s own fundamental positions concerning the relationship between the workers’ everyday struggles, workers’ organisations and the class struggle.

For this reason, in order to clarify the issue further, we should examine another example—one in which the Party has a presence and an organisational unit and directly intervenes in workers’ struggles. The importance of examining this case lies in the fact that the examples to which the Party refers as “class unions” are predominantly found in the peripheral countries of capitalism—countries where the crisis of capitalism generally takes a harsher and more overt form because of their position within the international division of labour and the global capitalist structure. In these countries, bourgeois political despotism also frequently overshadows the social consequences of the crisis of capitalism and influences the forms taken by the class struggle.

Turkey is a suitable example for examining this issue. Although the form and intensity of repression and despotism in Turkey cannot be equated with the bourgeois dictatorship of the disgraceful Islamic Republic, this difference should not blind us to the reality of bourgeois dictatorship in Turkey and its role in the class struggle. Therefore, political differences between these countries should not be turned into a fundamental difference in the analysis of the relationship between the state, capital and the working class.

From this perspective, the central question for us cannot simply be the existence or non-existence of a “class union”. Before that, we must ask how workers’ struggles are organised, to what extent control over the struggle remains in the hands of the workers themselves, what relationship the organisation establishes with the state and the employer, and whether the existing organisation contributes to the expansion and deepening of the independent class struggle or, on the contrary, becomes an instrument for containing and channelling it. We must also examine the extent to which these struggles move towards enabling workers to go beyond their limited and immediate economic interests and towards the development of an independent class consciousness and identity.

Class identity, of course, does not simply mean workers’ subjective awareness of belonging to the working class. This identity is formed and deepened in the course of struggle and through practical confrontation with capitalist relations. For this reason, every form of workers’ organisation should be assessed on the basis of the role it plays in expanding the self-activity, independence and collective power of the proletariat, rather than merely on the basis of its name, formal structure or claim to be “class-based”.

This brings us to a more fundamental question: what is the task of the revolutionary organisation and communists in the class struggle?

The task of communists is not to provide a substitute for the self-activity of the proletariat, and the class struggle cannot be reduced to the organisational activity of a particular organisation or party. The revolutionary organisation must be present in the actual struggles of the class, but the presence of communists should not lead to following existing forms of struggle or to the unquestioning acceptance of existing organisations. The task of communists is, in the course of the struggle, to strengthen the independent and revolutionary tendencies within the class, to expose the limitations of immediate struggles, to clarify the connection between particular struggles and the totality of capitalist relations, and to adopt a clear and independent position against any tendency that confines workers’ struggles to compromise with the state or capital.

The revolutionary organisation should act as a compass—not by following workers’ struggles or accepting the tendencies that exist within them, but by consistently defending the communist programme. This defence must remain independent of the extent to which it is immediately accepted among workers, and at times it may even lead the revolutionary organisation into temporary isolation, including isolation from sections of the working class. Such isolation, insofar as it results from a principled insistence on communist positions, cannot be used as a pretext for abandoning the programme or following the immediate consciousness and tendencies of the class. In this sense, the comrades make an important point regarding the task of communists:

“Our task is steadfastness in this work, participating in every genuine working-class struggle, clarifying revolutionary implications, and building organizational frameworks that will prove necessary when conditions sharpen toward revolutionary confrontation.”¹¹⁸

But it is precisely here that the central issue arises: if “participation in every real workers’ struggle” is the point of departure, it must be made clear according to what political and class criteria this participation takes place and what position the communist organisation adopts towards existing forms of organisation. The task of communists is not to sanctify existing forms of organisation, but to help develop the independent struggle of the proletariat towards a break with capitalist relations and the fulfilment of its historical task, namely, the world communist revolution.

The Turkish working class, as part of the global proletariat, has recorded a series of important and remarkable struggles in its historical memory. Despite their differences in terms of time and political circumstances, these struggles share one fundamental feature: at those moments when workers have gone beyond the frameworks imposed by trade unions and the formal mechanisms of capitalism and have taken the

¹¹⁸[The Party’s Task.](#)

initiative in the struggle directly into their own hands, they have been able to demonstrate their collective strength effectively.

Among these struggles, we can cite the June 1970 uprising, which brought tens of thousands of workers onto the streets in Istanbul and other industrial centres; the heroic struggles of the Tekel workers in 2010; and the wildcat, spontaneous strike at the Çimsataş factory in Mersin in January 2022, which took place outside the control of the trade unions. In the latter case, the intervention of the trade unions ultimately led to the containment and defeat of the struggle. The Çimsataş workers' struggle could have provided a model for extending the struggle to other sections of the working class, but in the absence of an independent workers' organisation capable of keeping the initiative in the hands of the workers themselves, union officials, including Mehmet Kurt, were able to wrest the initiative from the workers and place it within the framework of the trade union organisation. The consequence of this intervention was that, following the defeat of the protests, the workers themselves emphasised that, before confronting the employer, they had to "settle accounts with the union".

These experiences demonstrate that the question of organisation cannot simply be reduced to the existence or non-existence of a workers' organisation. The fundamental question is who controls the struggle and where decisions concerning its direction are made: in the workers' own assemblies and directly elected bodies, or within permanent and bureaucratic trade union structures that can contain the struggle within the legal and institutional framework of capitalist relations. From the perspective of the Communist Left, it is precisely at this level that class independence becomes significant.

The textile workers' strike in 2023 was another example of this tendency: a struggle that developed outside the control of the trade unions and ultimately ended only through police intervention and repression. Subsequently, there were further examples of workers' protests and strikes outside the control of the official trade unions in municipalities administered by the Republican People's Party (CHP), including a strike

by workers at the Şişli district municipality in Istanbul that took place outside the control of the municipal workers' union, as well as protests by workers at the municipalities of Beşiktaş, Seyhan and Efeler, all of which are administered by the same Republican People's Party. The significance of these cases lies in the fact that they demonstrate that the contradiction between workers and capitalists is not confined to the private sector and can manifest itself directly even within state structures and municipalities that present themselves as "popular" or "left-wing". Ultimately, it is the class relationship existing within production and labour that is decisive, not the political label attached to the administration.

Nevertheless, one of the most prominent examples of independent workers' struggle in Turkey dates back to 2015: a wave of spontaneous strikes outside the control of the trade unions in the automotive and metal industries, which developed simultaneously against both the employers and the trade union bureaucracy and even affected the production of some European car manufacturers.

This wave began in the industrial city of Bursa, at the Renault factory. On 14 May 2015, following a vote held during an entire shift, the workers decided to strike and formed a committee to organise the strike. The workers put up tents on the factory premises, while food and water were brought in from outside the factory. The struggle then spread to the Ford factory in Eskişehir and to a number of automotive parts manufacturers. Thus, what initially began as a struggle at a single factory quickly developed into a broader struggle across the automotive sector, demonstrating how an independent struggle can, under the right conditions, move beyond the boundaries of a single production unit and draw other sections of the class into the struggle.

The significance of these struggles lay not merely in the scale of the strikes or the amount of economic damage inflicted on capital. What makes this experience important for communists is the form of organisation and its direct relationship to the self-activity of the workers. The workers rebelled not only against their employers, but also against

the trade union machinery, which they saw as part of the existing relations and as an obstacle to the direct expression of their own will. The formation of strike committees, collective decision-making and the spread of the struggle to other factories were signs of the proletariat's attempt to take direct control of its own struggle.

For this reason, these struggles subsequently became the subject of academic research. The introduction to one such study of the 2015 strikes states:

*“With the increasing poverty and rising social injustice in Turkey, the working class’ grievances have recently become more visible in the public. In this sense, Turkish society witnessed one of the most disruptive and crowded labor strikes during the neoliberal capitalist era in 2015. During these strikes, metal workers mainly targeted the hegemonic partnership of employers and pro-employer trade union, Turkish Metal Union (TM). Both the rising poverty in the social and economic conditions of workers and the untenable forms of practices by the hegemonic partners led workers to rely on their own power and go on a wildcat strike.”*¹¹⁹

From a Marxist perspective, the value of such experiences should not be sought in romanticising the “wildcat strike”. The decisive issue is the class content of the struggle and its tendency towards self-organisation, independence from bourgeois institutions, and the extension of the struggle towards the historical aims of the working class. The mere fact that a struggle takes place outside the control of the trade unions does not, in itself, give it a revolutionary character; what matters is its class orientation and its capacity to extend the independence and political power of the proletariat.

It is precisely here that the difference between the Communist Left and syndicalism also becomes apparent. The Communist left defends the

¹¹⁹BEYOND LIMITS: THE MOBILIZATION OF A WILDCAT STRIKE IN TURKEY-ALĞCAN ÇAĞRI GÖKÇEK- BOĞAZİÇİĞİ UNIVERSITY-2019

self-activity and independent organisation of workers, but they do not confuse these forms of organisation with the ultimate aim of the struggle. A strike committee, a workers' general assembly or any other form of independent organisation is a means of advancing the class struggle, not a substitute for the revolutionary organisation and the communist programme.

The task of communists is to consistently defend the political independence of the proletariat, clarify the direction and class implications of struggles, and link everyday struggles to the revolutionary perspective, that is, to the historical aims of the proletariat. From this perspective, communists should neither turn workers' self-organisation into an end in itself nor fall into tailing the immediate forms of struggle; their task is to help ensure that every day struggles move towards independent consciousness and organisation and, ultimately, towards revolutionary confrontation with capitalist relations.

From this perspective, the experience of Turkey is of particular importance: wherever workers have been able to wrest the initiative back from the trade union apparatuses and mechanisms of capitalist control, the possibility of extending the struggle and deepening class independence has increased. But these experiences also demonstrate that spontaneity alone is not enough. The fundamental question for communists is how these scattered elements of resistance and self-activity can, in the course of an intensifying class struggle, be transformed into a force that goes beyond the framework of immediate demands and brings the necessity of confronting the totality of capitalist relations before the proletariat.

In recent years, not only have workers' protests and strikes in Turkey outside the control of the official trade unions not declined, but the available evidence points to the continuation and even expansion of this type of struggle. From the perspective of the Communist Left, the significance of this phenomenon lies in the fact that it demonstrates that the relationship between workers and trade union organisations cannot be explained simply by workers' formal membership of trade unions. A

worker may be a member of a trade union but, at a given moment, find themselves in opposition to the decisions and control of the trade union apparatus and take the initiative in the struggle directly into their own hands. To clarify this issue, workers’ protests and strikes in Turkey can be divided, in terms of their relationship with the trade union apparatus, into three main categories:

1. **Struggles by workers whose workplaces have no formal trade union organisation.**

An important example of this category can be found in sections of the wave of textile strikes in Başpınar, where workers launched struggles without relying on a formal trade union structure.

2. **Struggles by workers who are members of a trade union but strike outside the decisions and control of the union.**

Examples of this include Buca, Erciyes Çelik, HES Kablo and Migros. In these cases, trade union membership did not prevent workers, at a particular stage of the struggle, from sidelining the trade union apparatus and taking direct action themselves.

3. **Struggles called by the trade union apparatus itself.**

An example is the one-day strike by public-sector employees across Turkey on 14 January 2026, which was called by the Confederation of Public Employees’ Trade Unions (KESK).¹²⁰

For the purposes of our further analysis, the table below brings together only a selection of examples of strikes outside the control of the trade unions in March 2025 and January 2026. This list is not exhaustive; it is provided solely to demonstrate the scale and diversity of these struggles.

Start date	Workplace	Demand / reason	Sector
4 March 2025	Maltepe Municipality	Municipal workers in Maltepe, Istanbul, staged a one-day wildcat strike in protest at the non-payment of their outstanding claims.	Urban services

¹²⁰ [Confederation of Public Employees’ Trade Unions](#)

5 March 2025	Eviza Carpet Factory	Workers in the yarn section of the Eviza Carpet Factory in the Başpınar Organised Industrial Zone in Gaziantep went on wildcat strike in protest at the employer's proposed 34% wage increase, which they considered inadequate.	Textiles, clothing and leather
7 March 2025	Alka Polyester Factory	Workers at the Alka Polyester Factory in Gaziantep went on wildcat strike in protest at two months of unpaid wages and the wage increase for the previous month.	Textiles, clothing and leather
8 March 2025	TOKİ earthquake survivors' housing project	Construction workers employed on the second phase of the TOKİ earthquake survivors' housing project in Gölbaşı, Adıyaman, working under the main contractor Turgut Contracting and the subcontractor Dilkar Construction and Electrical, went on wildcat strike in protest at two months of unpaid wages.	Construction
13 March 2025	High-speed railway project	Around 1,750 workers employed on the Yerköy–Kayseri high-speed railway project in Yozgat went on wildcat strike in protest at cuts to their wages.	Construction
14 March 2025	At least 27 public healthcare centres	Staff at public healthcare centres across Turkey staged a wildcat strike on Doctors' Day. They demanded a system that provides equal, accessible and high-quality healthcare for all.	Healthcare and social services (public)
19 March 2025	Erciyes Çelik	Workers at Erciyes Çelik in Kayseri staged a short wildcat strike after negotiations between the trade union	Metal

		and the employer over a collective agreement reached a deadlock.	
1 January 2026	TOKİ construction site	Workers employed on a TOKİ construction project in Kayseri staged a wildcat strike in protest at unpaid wages.	Construction
18 January 2026	13 cities	Yemeksepeti couriers across Turkey staged a wildcat strike in protest at a 30% wage increase for 2026.	Transport and logistics
20 January 2026	Tüpraş refinery	Maintenance workers at the Tüpraş refinery in İzmit, Kocaeli, staged a wildcat strike following the dismissal of a former workers' representative.	Oil, chemicals, rubber and plastics
23 January 2026	Migros warehouses	Contract workers employed at 12 Migros warehouses staged a wildcat strike in protest at working conditions and their outstanding demands. The warehouses are located in Adana, Antalya, Bursa, Diyarbakır, Erzurum, Istanbul, İzmir, Kocaeli and Mersin.	Shipbuilding, maritime transport and warehousing
27 January 2026	Algida cold-storage facilities	Workers at Algida cold-storage facilities in Istanbul and İzmir staged a wildcat strike in protest at the 27% wage increase imposed by the employer. The workers demanded a net wage equivalent to twice the minimum wage throughout the year, as well as a change to the tax bracket.	Warehousing and logistics
29 January 2026	Diyarbakır and Van warehouses, Istanbul, Erzurum and Iğdır	Workers at BİM warehouses in several Turkish cities staged a wildcat strike, demanding a 50% wage increase, that the employer pay the taxes, and full payment of bonuses and incentive payments.	Shipbuilding, maritime transport and warehousing

One of the key points in examining workers' struggles in Turkey is that a "wildcat strike" by no means implies that the workers are not members of a trade union. On the contrary, in many cases, workers are trade union members but, at a certain stage of the struggle, come to the conclusion that the trade union apparatus is either unable or unwilling to advance their demands. Under such circumstances, workers may, while retaining their formal membership, act outside the union's decisions and control and take the struggle directly into their own hands.

It is therefore necessary to distinguish between formal trade union membership and actual control of the struggle. The former is a legal and organisational relationship; the latter is a real class relationship that is determined in the course of the struggle.

From the perspective of the Communist Left, the significance of these struggles lies precisely in this practical break between the workers themselves and the trade union apparatus. This break demonstrates that, at certain moments, the contradiction between labour and capital can drive workers, even within trade union organisations, towards direct and independent action. The task of communists is therefore to defend this tendency towards self-activity and class independence, rather than attempting to return the struggle to trade union channels.

However, it should not be concluded from this that every strike outside the control of the trade unions necessarily contributes to the formation and deepening of workers' class identity or to the realisation of the historical aims of the proletariat. The political significance of these struggles lies, first and foremost, in the fact that, through their practical experience of struggle, workers can come to realise that they are not necessarily dependent on trade union apparatuses to advance their interests and that they can take the initiative and control of the struggle directly into their own hands.

For communists, therefore, the issue is not to glorify the "wildcat strike", but to strengthen the tendency whereby workers distance themselves from the control of the trade union bureaucracy, make decisions themselves and take direct control of organising the struggle. It

is precisely at this point that the day-to-day struggle can become a school for class independence.

The significance of this analysis can be seen clearly in the wave of struggles in January 2026. During this period, at least 67 workplaces in 21 cities were recorded as having experienced strikes outside the control of the trade unions. These struggles involved various sectors of the economy, ranging from metal and chemicals to warehousing, transport and construction.¹²¹

The significance of these figures lies not merely in the number of strikes. The spread of these struggles across different sectors and cities shows that the issue cannot be reduced to the discontent of workers in a particular industry or a particular trade union. Here, we are confronted with a broader tendency that, under conditions of increasing pressure from capital on workers' living standards, finds expression in actions outside the control of formal trade union structures.

This tendency, of course, remains a long way from being a unified class movement conscious of its historical aims. Scattered strikes, even when carried out independently of the trade unions, remain within the framework of capitalism and are largely centred on immediate, day-to-day demands. But from the perspective of the Communist Left, the important point is precisely that, within these scattered struggles, tendencies towards self-organisation and class independence emerge.

It is here that the point of departure for the Communist Left also becomes clear: defending workers' self-activity and class independence without turning the organisational form of these struggles into a fetish; and linking immediate struggles to the historical necessity of abolishing capitalist relations and achieving the emancipation of the proletariat.

With these points in mind, we can return to the wave of workers' struggles in Başpınar and other cities in Turkey. The wave of struggles in Başpınar began in February 2025 with spontaneous actions by workers at several factories and quickly spread to other production units. We were therefore not dealing with a series of completely isolated and scattered

¹²¹[January 2026 strikes.](#)

strikes; in the course of these struggles, workers at several factories moved towards joint action and coordination between different production units. In response to the spread of the struggle, the Gaziantep provincial government banned gatherings on 13 February.

From a Marxist perspective, it is precisely this movement from struggle within a single production unit towards coordination among workers at several factories that is of fundamental importance. The issue is not simply the number of strikes, but the tendency that can emerge in the course of the struggle to move beyond the boundaries of an individual workplace and towards the extension and unification of the struggle across different sections of the class.

In these struggles, the formal trade unions played no role in the strikes; nevertheless, BİRTEK-SEN intervened at various levels, from organising and directing the struggles to disseminating information and building solidarity with the workers. This distinction is of fundamental importance to our discussion, since it is necessary to distinguish between the spontaneity and initiative of the workers at the outset of the struggle and the intervention of an unofficial trade union in the continuation, organisation and direction of the struggle. BİRTEK-SEN itself also explicitly distinguishes between these two levels in its statement on the Başpınar experience:

“The tradition of struggle among the workers of Başpınar, which has continued for many years, manifests itself in workers’ spontaneous actions whenever wages are increased. The workers who played a role in establishing our syndicate have also played an important role in bringing these struggles into being and getting them underway. Since the establishment of our syndicate, we have actively supported all these acts of resistance and, wherever possible, worked alongside the workers to advance the struggle and played an important role in securing gains.”¹²²

¹²² Union statement.

This statement by the syndicate itself is highly significant. BİRTEK-SEN distinguishes between two elements: on the one hand, the “spontaneous actions of the workers”, which existed prior to the organised intervention of the syndicate; and, on the other, the role of the syndicate itself in supporting these struggles and, in some cases, advancing them alongside the workers. Therefore, the struggles themselves cannot simply be regarded as a product of the syndicate merely because BİRTEK-SEN intervened in them. On the contrary, the available evidence indicates that the point of departure was the workers’ self-activity and initiative, while BİRTEK-SEN intervened in these struggles to varying degrees.

But it is precisely at this point that our main question arises: what is BİRTEK-SEN’s relationship to these struggles, and is the mere support for and active intervention of a syndicate in the spontaneous struggles of workers sufficient to describe it as a “class union”?

This question is important because the International Communist Party regards BİRTEK-SEN as a “class union” and writes about it:

“BİRTEK-SEN has not yet achieved the full program of class unionism, but its emergence marks the maturation of genuine working-class defense organizations born of the increasingly worse material conditions of capitalist exploitation.”¹²³

To assess the International Communist Party’s claim that BİRTEK-SEN is a “class union”, it is necessary to examine both the structure and position of the syndicate and its role in the course of workers’ struggles and protests. Such an examination will enable us to gain a clearer understanding of what the Party means by the concept of a “class union” and, on that basis, to develop our critique in a more precise and coherent manner.

The “United Textile, Weaving and Leather Workers’ Syndicate”, abbreviated as BİRTEK-SEN, is based in Gaziantep and operates in the textile, clothing and leather sectors. The syndicate itself states that it was established in 2022 and is an independent syndicate. Legally, BİRTEK-

¹²³ [BİRTEK-SEN: A Class Union in Formation.](#)

SEN is a registered syndicate operating within the framework of Turkish trade union law, and its code in the membership system is 585.¹²⁴

The legal independence of a union does not necessarily imply political independence from the state and capital; similarly, the fact that a union engages in struggles does not, in itself, distinguish it from other forms of trade unionism. To determine BİRTEK-SEN's actual position, it is necessary to examine its relationship with the legal and institutional framework governing trade unions in Turkey, as well as the manner in which it intervenes in workers' struggles.

Under Turkey's trade union system, workers' membership of a union alone is not sufficient for that union to have the right to conclude collective agreements. In order to exercise important rights relating to collective bargaining and the conclusion of collective agreements, a union must not only meet the required threshold at the workplace level, but must also have at least one per cent of all workers in the relevant branch of activity among its members. This requirement is known as the "one per cent threshold".

Therefore, a union in Turkey is not simply a voluntary organisation operating outside the legal relations of capitalism; in order to exercise its formal and legal rights, it operates within a specific legal framework established and guaranteed by the state. This is important from a communist perspective, since it is necessary to distinguish between the independent struggle of workers and the institutional integration of trade union organisation into the legal structure of the capitalist state.

Another element of this framework is the **check-off system**, whose origins date back to the 1963 Trade Union Act and which continues to exist under Turkey's current legal system. Under this arrangement, union membership dues are deducted from workers' wages and paid to the union at the union's written request to the employer. However, access to this mechanism depends on the union's status under the statutory thresholds, including the one per cent threshold.

¹²⁴[How to become a member.](#)

The significance of this issue for our discussion does not lie in the membership dues deduction mechanism itself. The fundamental question is that, even when a union describes itself as “independent”, if it has formal legal status, part of its activity takes place within relations regulated and recognised by the capitalist state. Therefore, in assessing the claim that BİRTEK-SEN is a “class union”, we must go beyond its stated positions or its role in certain struggles and ask: does this union work towards expanding the political independence of the proletariat from the state and capital, or does it organise and direct workers’ struggles within the framework of the formal institutions and legal relations of capitalism?

For Communist Lefts, the issue is not simply whether a union is active in workers’ struggles, or even whether it supports workers’ spontaneous struggles at certain points; the question is whether such intervention ultimately strengthens the self-activity and political independence of the proletariat, or instead leads to the incorporation and consolidation of the struggle within existing trade union forms.

Before continuing the discussion, it is necessary to make an important point concerning the statutory one per cent threshold in Turkey’s trade union system. Failing to meet this threshold does not mean that a syndicate is illegal or unregistered; rather, it means that, because the syndicate has not reached the statutory threshold, it does not have certain formal rights within the collective bargaining system, including the right to conclude collective agreements under the conditions prescribed by law, and cannot make use of the statutory mechanism for deducting union membership dues from workers’ wages through the employer.

According to official statistics published by Turkey’s Ministry of Labour and Social Security in January 2026, the “Textiles, Ready-made Clothing and Leather” branch had a total of 1,013,153 workers, of whom 82,828 were members of trade unions in this sector. BİRTEK-SEN was reported to have 1,114 members. BİRTEK-SEN therefore accounted for approximately **0.11 per cent** of all workers in this branch. Consequently,

at that point, BİRTEK-SEN had not reached the statutory one per cent threshold.¹²⁵

In its statutes, BİRTEK-SEN describes itself as a “class-based, democratic and independent organisation”. However, its stated aims and principles are formulated largely within the framework of the rights and institutions existing in capitalist society, including:

- fundamental rights;
- collective agreements;
- the right to strike;
- labour laws;
- International Labour Organization conventions;
- democracy;
- human rights; and
- the creation of a “democratic and pluralistic” society.

Like any other formally recognised syndicate, BİRTEK-SEN also has a defined legal and organisational structure, statutes, a president, governing bodies and a formal membership mechanism. Therefore, its “independence” cannot be assessed simply on the basis of the label it has chosen for itself; the question must instead be asked: **independence from what, and to what extent?**

This question assumes even greater significance in Article 4 of BİRTEK-SEN’s statutes. In the section concerning the “aims and principles of the syndicate”, emphasis is placed on the full implementation of trade union rights and freedoms on the basis of international treaties and conventions and the decisions of the International Labour Organization (ILO)¹²⁶. In the Turkish text, the word *dayalı* means “based on” or “grounded in”. The phrase in question can therefore be translated as follows:

¹²⁵ Sector Statistics e-Bulletin

¹²⁶ Syndicate statutes.

“The full implementation and development of trade union rights and freedoms based on all international treaties and conventions and the decisions of the International Labour Organization.”¹²⁷

This statement should be taken seriously, because it is not merely an interpretative reading of BİRTEK-SEN’s positions; it is explicitly set out in the syndicate’s own official statutes. The fundamental political question, therefore, is this: what is the relationship between the “class organisation” that the International Communist Party considers BİRTEK-SEN to be and the syndicate’s acceptance of legal and institutional frameworks—frameworks that, at both the national and international levels, regulate and consolidate the relations of wage labour?

From the perspective of the Communist Left, the answer to this question cannot be dismissed on the grounds that International Labour Organization conventions or labour laws may, at certain points, guarantee some workers’ rights. The fundamental issue is the social relations within which these rights are defined. Trade union rights, the right to collective bargaining and collective agreements, insofar as they are defined within the framework of the relations of wage labour, do not signify the abolition of the relationship between labour and capital; rather, they are mechanisms for regulating that relationship.

Even the language used by BİRTEK-SEN when discussing workers’ struggles is largely that of traditional trade unionism: workers must unite, organise, fight for their rights, and improve their wages and living conditions. In the Başpınar struggles, too, the syndicate emphasised demands concerning workers’ wages and living conditions, as well as supporting their organisation across different factories. A “Başpınar Workers’ Congress” was also established, bringing together workers from 36 factories.¹²⁸

These actions may be significant in terms of workers’ day-to-day struggles and may, under certain conditions, even help to strengthen their

¹²⁷ Syndicate statutes.

¹²⁸ Statement of the Başpınar Workers’ Resistance Committees.

solidarity and self-activity. However, from the perspective of the Communist Left, this is still not sufficient to determine the class character of an organisation. The fundamental question is: in what direction are these struggles moving?

Is the aim merely to increase the bargaining power of labour vis-à-vis capital and improve the conditions under which labour-power is sold, or is the struggle moving towards expanding the political independence of the proletariat and challenging the very relations of wage labour? These two levels should not be conflated. The struggle for wages and working conditions is an integral part of the class struggle; but so long as it remains within the framework of the wage-labour relationship, it is not, in itself, a struggle for the abolition of that relationship.

From this point, the question of the union becomes clearer. From a proletarian perspective, the issue is not simply whether a union is legal or illegal, or whether it acts militantly or even radically at certain points. The fundamental issue is the social position and function of the union within capitalist relations. When a union functions as a permanent institution for negotiating and representing labour, it inevitably becomes involved in the mechanisms that regulate the relationship between labour and capital. Even the most militant unions, once this role becomes established, face the danger of becoming an intermediary between workers and capital—an intermediary that can channel workers' struggles into the confines of demands acceptable to the capitalist system.

Therefore, in assessing the International Communist Party's claim that BİRTEK-SEN is a "class union", we should not rely solely on the struggles in which the syndicate has participated or which it has supported. We must examine what kind of organisation and what kind of relationship between workers, the syndicate, the state and capital this involvement ultimately produces. Only through such an examination can we determine whether BİRTEK-SEN is genuinely moving towards the political independence of the proletariat or merely represents a more militant form of the same traditional trade union function.

Mehmet Türkmen, secretary of BİRTEK-SEN, was arrested on 16 March 2026 in connection with a speech he had given in support of the workers at the Sırma carpet factory. The charge brought against him was “public dissemination of misleading information”. On 12 May 2026, the court acquitted him of the charge and released him.¹²⁹

This incident should be distinguished on two levels: first, the reality of state repression and the intervention of the state apparatus in workers’ struggles; and second, the political significance of this intervention from the perspective of the class struggle. Conflating these two levels can lead the analysis in two different directions: on the one hand, reducing the issue to a purely human-rights-based defence of a trade union activist; and, on the other, drawing the simplistic conclusion that the mere conflict between a union and the state automatically makes that union an independent of capitalist relations.

From the perspective of the Communist Left, the fundamental issue is not whether a court has issued an acquittal in a particular case, but rather why the state apparatus intervened in the course of a workers’ struggle in the first place, and what relationship exists between this intervention and the material conditions of the struggle.

Defending the freedom of imprisoned workers and workers’ activists can form part of the class struggle; however, when the perspective of the struggle is limited to legal proceedings, seeking legal redress and gaining the support of legal institutions, there is a danger that the centre of gravity of the struggle will shift from its real locus—the factory, the workplace and the self-activity of the workers—to within the legal structures of the state. From the perspective of the Communist Left, a bourgeois court cannot be the ultimate arbiter of the contradiction between the proletariat and capital, because it is itself part of the state structure that guarantees the general conditions for the reproduction of capitalist relations.

Therefore, Türkmen’s arrest should be examined within the broader context of the class struggle in Başpınar and other workers’

¹²⁹ [Karar – Turkish daily newspaper and news website.](#)

struggles in Turkey. The central issue is not that Mehmet Türkmen was a trade union leader and that the state violated his individual rights. What is decisive is that the state apparatus intervened against him at a time when the workers' struggle had moved beyond the confines of the individual relationship between worker and employer and was moving towards collective organisation and the extension of the struggle across several factories.

If the state intervened in the course of the Başpınar struggles by banning gatherings and arresting activists, the significance of this intervention lies in what it reveals about how the state defends the existing order in the face of the expansion and deepening of workers' struggles. From this perspective, the state should not be conceived merely as an "external repressive apparatus" that occasionally violates workers' rights. The state is one of the fundamental pillars of the reproduction of capitalist social relations and, when the contradiction between labour and capital intensifies, it can intervene to restrict the spread of the struggle and preserve the conditions for the reproduction of these relations.

But this point also clarifies another issue: a union's opposition to state repression does not, in itself, signify a break with capitalist relations. A union can resist the arrest of its members or activists, defend workers' legal rights and even come into conflict with the state, while continuing to fulfil its role as an intermediary in regulating the relationship between labour and capital. Therefore, the criterion by which the Communist Left should assess BİRTEK-SEN should not simply be the extent of its confrontation with the state; rather, we must examine what this struggle ultimately leads to: the strengthening of the self-activity and political independence of the proletariat, or the return of the struggle to the legal and institutional framework that the capitalist state provides for regulating the contradiction between labour and capital.

One of the most important ambiguities in the International Communist Party's (il Partito) discussion of BİRTEK-SEN concerns the concept of "independence". The Party emphasises BİRTEK-SEN's independence, but its analysis does not draw a clear distinction between

organisational independence and the class independence of the proletariat. To clarify the issue, we should first consider the Party's own description:

*“Rejecting state mediation and corporatist unionism, the workers organized from below through collective assemblies, walkouts, and pickets, maintaining direct control over their struggle and coordinating with independent class-struggle unions such as BİRTEK-SEN.”*¹³⁰

The issue begins precisely here. On the one hand, the Party emphasises the direct control of the struggle by workers and the rejection of mediation by the state and conciliatory trade unions; on the other hand, it presents BİRTEK-SEN as an “independent trade union of class struggle”. But the independence of an organisation, in itself, does not indicate its class character or its historical significance. A fundamental distinction must be made between two concepts: the organisational independence of a workers' organisation and the political and historical independence of the proletariat.

A syndicate can be independent of the state, employers, bourgeois political parties, official and conciliatory trade unions, and even other trade union apparatuses. Such independence can be of considerable importance in the course of day-to-day struggles, as it enables workers to exercise greater initiative and pursue their struggle without the direct intervention of these institutions. However, this organisational independence does not, in itself, signify class independence from capital and the capitalist state.

To clarify the issue, let us suppose that workers establish a completely independent, democratic and militant syndicate. This syndicate might succeed in increasing wages, securing a collective agreement, preventing workers from being dismissed, improving working conditions and recruiting more members. All of these could constitute

¹³⁰ [The Şık Makas Struggle and Class Unions in Turkey](#)

real and important victories in workers' day-to-day struggles. But none of them, in themselves, signify the abolition of the wage-labour relation. Indeed, under certain conditions, these very gains can contribute to stabilising labour power in the market and to regulating and reproducing the relationship between labour and capital in a more orderly manner.

Therefore, independence from the state or the employer cannot be equated with independence from capital; nor can organisational independence be equated with the historical and political independence of the proletariat.

BİRTEK-SEN describes itself as “independent” and positions itself in opposition to bureaucratic and conciliatory trade unions. At the level of the immediate struggle, this independence can be a strength. But from a Marxist perspective, this is precisely where a more fundamental question must be posed: independent of what, and towards what perspective?

If by independence we mean freedom from the control of the state, employers and bureaucratic trade union apparatuses, then such independence is important for the development of workers' self-activity and the expansion of the class struggle. But if it is inferred from this that simply creating an independent syndicate resolves the historical problem of trade unionism, then the distinction between workers' trade union struggle within the framework of capitalism and the communist struggle for the abolition of capitalist relations has been blurred.

This distinction is of fundamental importance, because capitalism is not reproduced solely through the direct repression of workers' struggles. Part of the reproduction of these relations takes place through mechanisms that regulate the contradiction between labour and capital within the framework considered acceptable by the system. Trade unions, even when they are independent, militant and democratic, can form part of this process of regulating the relationship between labour and capital.

From this perspective, an independent syndicate, even if it represents the most militant and democratic form of trade unionism, is still a syndicate. Its principal sphere of activity is the struggle over wages, working hours, working conditions, job security and, more generally, the

conditions under which labour power is sold. These struggles are essential for the working class, and communists cannot deny their importance; but the immediate aim of these struggles must not be conflated with the historical aim of the proletariat.

In its day-to-day struggle, the proletariat is necessarily compelled to fight for wages and living conditions; but its historical aim is not merely to achieve better conditions for the sale of labour power. The historical aim of the communist movement is the abolition of wage labour, the abolition of capital, and the elimination of the social relations that produce and reproduce the proletariat and the bourgeoisie as two antagonistic classes.

Therefore, the issue is not whether BİRTEK-SEN is “independent” or not. The issue is what class content and historical orientation this independence has. If BİRTEK-SEN’s independence enables workers to take direct control of the struggle, free themselves from the control of the state and employers, and extend their struggle, this aspect of its activity should be taken into account. Does workers’ organisation lead to the consolidation and more effective regulation of the relationship between labour and capital, or to the expansion of self-activity, independent class unity and, ultimately, movement towards the abolition of the wage-labour relation itself?

The abolition of the wage-labour relation is precisely the point at which a clear distinction must be drawn between an independent trade union and the revolutionary organisation of the proletariat. The former can play an effective role in workers’ economic struggles; the latter only acquires its full meaning when it takes the struggle beyond the perspective of defending labour power within capitalism and places it within the perspective of abolishing capitalist relations.

BİRTEK-SEN itself states that, because it has not reached the legal threshold required to have the right to conclude collective agreements, it does not receive a regular income from membership dues and conducts its activities largely through the voluntary participation of its members and officials, as well as through various forms of financial support and

assistance.¹³¹ On the one hand, this may indicate that it is removed from funding provided by employers and large trade union apparatuses; on the other hand, it also creates an important material and organisational problem: an organisation without a regular income from membership dues inevitably faces the question of how to secure the resources necessary to maintain and expand its activities.

An organisation that requires external resources to continue its activities inevitably enters into a network of financial and institutional relationships. Even if these relationships do not, in themselves, signify political dependence, they must nevertheless be examined when assessing its independence.

In this context, attention should also be paid to BİRTEK-SEN's relationship with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. BİRTEK-SEN's own website explicitly states that the syndicate's website was produced with the participation of the Turkish office of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.¹³² Therefore, the existence of this cooperation is documented and cannot simply be ignored. But the more important political question is what framework this cooperation operates within and what kinds of relationships and models of workers' organisation it helps to strengthen.

The Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) is a German political foundation with historical roots in the tradition of social democracy. The Foundation itself emphasises values such as freedom, justice and solidarity, and in Turkey it works with trade unions, civil society organisations, universities, and governmental and political institutions.¹³³ It therefore cannot simply be regarded as a neutral academic or charitable institution. The Foundation itself defines its activities in Turkey within the framework of specific political and social programmes and operates through a network of institutional partnerships, including in the field of trade union organisation.

¹³¹ [First anniversary of the Özak textile resistance.](#)

¹³² According to information published on the BİRTEK-SEN website, the syndicate's website was produced with the participation of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation; see Appendix D.

¹³³ [Foundation for Social Democracy!](#)

Another important point is the financial and institutional position of the Foundation's office in Turkey. The Foundation's Turkey office states that its activities are financed by resources from its headquarters in Berlin and that its work falls within the framework of cooperation with Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).¹³⁴ From the perspective of the Communist Left, therefore, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation cannot be regarded as an institution that is "outside politics" or merely a technical or academic body. Rather, we are dealing with an organisation operating within a transnational political and institutional network, part of whose activities concern trade unions and forms of social organisation.

However, this fact should not be taken as direct evidence that the Friedrich Ebert Foundation intervenes in determining BİRTEK-SEN's policies or that BİRTEK-SEN is subordinate to its policies. Such a claim would require specific evidence concerning sources of funding, cooperation agreements, projects, the conditions attached to receiving support, and the extent of the Foundation's influence over the syndicate's decisions. A communist critique is only valid if it distinguishes between documented facts and political conclusions. But even without establishing such direct intervention, a structural question remains: why does a workers' organisation that considers itself independent and class-based cooperate, in relation to part of its organisational resources, with a transnational social-democratic political foundation?

Any workers' organisation that is unable to cover the costs of its activities through the direct contributions and self-activity of its members is liable to develop financial and institutional relationships with external organisations. Therefore, for the Communist Left, the question of financial resources is not a secondary or merely accounting matter; it is part of the question of class independence.

Cooperation with an external institution does not necessarily mean a loss of political independence. The determining criteria are who has real control over the organisation and the struggle, where its resources come

¹³⁴ FES Turkey

from, how decisions are made, and what kind of organisation and perspective those resources serve.

The more a workers' organisation relies on the direct power of the workers themselves, their membership dues, general assemblies, strikes, struggle committees and solidarity between different struggles, the greater the possibility of its genuine independence from external institutions. Conversely, the more its activities depend on institutional resources, external projects and formal civil society networks, the greater the risk that the struggle will become entrenched within the institutional and reformist frameworks of capitalism.

Of course, this does not mean that any form of external assistance or international cooperation automatically compromises an organisation's class independence. Such a conclusion would be simplistic. The question is what kind of activity these resources strengthen, what kind of relationship they establish between the organisation and its members, and whether, ultimately, decision-making power and initiative remain in the hands of the workers themselves.

Why does a social-democratic foundation cooperate with trade unions? This question becomes more significant when we consider that the Friedrich Ebert Foundation has been active in the field of trade unions in Turkey for decades. The Foundation has published numerous studies on Turkish trade unions and has also been involved in trade union education and in strengthening the organisational capacity of workers' organisations.

From the perspective of the Communist Left, these activities should not be assessed solely on the basis of the Foundation's stated intentions. The question must be what kind of trade unionism, and what kind of relationship between workers, trade unions, the state and capital, are strengthened through this institutional network. Here, the distinction between two political perspectives becomes important. In its historical development as a whole, the social-democratic tradition has pursued the organisation of workers within the framework of regulating and democratising capitalist society, whereas the Communist Left regards the

historical aim of the proletariat as the abolition of wage labour, capital and capitalist social relations.

A historical point should also be taken into consideration here. The Friedrich Ebert Foundation takes its name from Friedrich Ebert, leader of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). Following the November Revolution of 1918, Ebert became head of government and, in the process of consolidating the parliamentary republic, participated in the suppression of the German Revolution, the revolutionary workers' movement and the councils. In January 1919, the government under his leadership deployed military forces and Freikorps units to suppress the Spartacist uprising and the revolutionary movement. This repression resulted in the deaths of thousands of people. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were also murdered by members of the Freikorps on 15 January 1919.

Militancy, organisational independence or even confrontation with the state, taken on their own, are not sufficient criteria for establishing the "class" character of a syndicate.

The criterion for the Communist Left should be the direction in which the struggle is moving: does workers' organisation merely increase their bargaining power in the sale of their labour power, or does it contribute to the expansion of self-activity, the political independence of the proletariat, the unity of struggles on a broader scale and, ultimately, movement towards the abolition of wage-labour relations themselves?

It is precisely at this point that the International Communist Party's claim that BİRTEK-SEN is a "class union" must be examined. The issue is not merely whom BİRTEK-SEN works with, but what picture these relationships, taken together with the syndicate's legal structure, financial resources, forms of organisation and practical activities, provide of its actual position within the class struggle.

BİRTEK-SEN is also in contact with the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in Britain. The TUC is the principal federation and confederation of British trade unions; therefore, we are not dealing with an individual trade union, but with an organisation that represents and coordinates

different trade unions in Britain. In February 2025, the TUC issued a statement in support of Mehmet Türkmen, the president of BİRTEKSEN, and the workers of the Başpınar industrial area in Gaziantep. The TUC described his arrest as an attack on an independent trade union and called for his immediate release and an end to state harassment of the union. The TUC's argument rested primarily on three points: workers' right to organise, freedom of assembly and freedom of association, and opposition to state repression of trade unions. The TUC specifically referred to Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights and International Labour Organization Convention No. 87 on freedom of association, noting that Turkey has ratified both. This point is important for our discussion because the framework of the TUC's argument is that of trade union rights and human rights.¹³⁵

From the perspective of the Communist Left, the question is how far this solidarity extends. Is the issue merely that the Turkish state should not obstruct trade union activity, or should the relationship between capital and wage labour itself be challenged? In this statement, the TUC remains at the first level: workers should enjoy the right to organise, the right to strike, freedom of assembly and other trade union rights. But from a proletarian perspective, we must ask: if all these rights were fully established, would capitalist exploitation disappear? The answer is clear: no. As long as workers sell their labour power as a commodity and capital continues to reproduce itself as capital, the relationship between capital and wage labour remains.

Therefore, the issue is not merely that "the Turkish state should respect trade union rights". The more fundamental question is why the state, even in its most democratic form, ultimately preserves the legal framework for reproducing the relationship between capital and wage labour. This is precisely where a communist critique differs from a merely human-rights-based or trade union critique.

¹³⁵ [Trades Union Congress \(TUC\) statement.](#)

BİRTEK-SEN has also welcomed international support and republished the TUC statement on its website.¹³⁶ It has also called on international trade unions and workers' organisations to take action in support of the Başpınar workers.¹³⁷ This evidence shows that BİRTEK-SEN is, in practice, part of a network of international solidarity and trade union relations. But from a communist perspective, the mere existence of such a network is not sufficient; the question is whether this network is merely a mechanism for trade union solidarity or whether it can contribute to the organisation of an international class power against capital. In the cases examined here, the available evidence points more towards the former.

From this perspective, BİRTEK-SEN can be regarded as an experience of workers' struggle which, in certain instances, has managed to move beyond the limitations of official trade unionism and support struggles outside the control of official trade unions. Nevertheless, its links with international trade union networks, including its relationship with and support from the TUC, indicate that this experience remains fundamentally within the framework of trade union organisation and the defence of labour power.

The deeper question is this: when the working class itself, in conditions of crisis, repeatedly takes direct action outside official trade union processes, is it not the task of communists to strengthen the independence of these struggles from representative organisations? And does transforming these struggles into a permanent trade union organisation, even if that organisation is militant and independent of the state and employers, not risk once again confining part of the class's self-active and self-organised strength within an institution capable of negotiating with capital?

Even in the case that the Party itself presents as an example of "class unions", the decisive issue is not the label "union", but the actual relationship between the organisation, the struggle and class

¹³⁶ [Trade union confederation.](#)

¹³⁷ [International solidarity with the Başpınar workers.](#)

independence. If we accept this criterion, we must examine what forms of organisation emerge from the workers' actual struggles and to what extent these forms are capable of preserving and strengthening the proletariat's class independence in relation to capital, the state and the various political tendencies within capitalist society.

The fundamental weakness of the International Communist Party's analysis is that it draws a conclusion from the observation of some genuinely militant struggles involving BİRTEK-SEN that goes beyond the available evidence. The Party infers from BİRTEK-SEN's independence from official trade unions, its organisation of strikes, its involvement in struggles across several factories and its defence of migrant workers that the syndicate is evidence of the "maturity of genuine organisations for the defence of the working class" and an expression of a form of class trade unionism in the process of emerging. But from a Marxist perspective, this is precisely the point at issue: the militancy of a trade union does not, in itself, mean that it has moved beyond the trade union form.

BİRTEK-SEN may be far more militant than the conciliatory and bureaucratic trade unions in Turkey; but the fundamental question is not whether this syndicate is more independent and militant than the existing unions. The more fundamental question is this: are the workers' own struggles moving beyond trade union representation and creating independent forms of class power, or is a new trade union establishing itself as the representative of these very struggles? These two processes cannot be equated.

Therefore, our criticism of the International Communist Party is not that it rejects BİRTEK-SEN simply because it is a "syndicate". On the contrary, its genuine militancy and the role it has played in certain struggles should be acknowledged; but at the same time, we must examine whether this militancy leads to the expansion of workers' independent power or ultimately to the creation of a stronger syndicate to represent workers in relation to capital. This distinction is fundamental for the Communist Left: the issue is not simply the struggle against the

employer; the issue is the extent to which the workers themselves take control of the struggle in the course of the struggle.

Here, the question of workers' self-activity becomes decisive. Workers may be members of a trade union, but when an immediate and vital issue arises, they may act directly and move beyond the decisions and control of the official trade union apparatus. From the perspective of the Communist Left, such a practical break may be more significant than the emergence of a new militant syndicate, because it demonstrates that workers are capable, under certain conditions, of taking the initiative and control of the struggle directly into their own hands.

If this aspect is not given sufficient prominence in the Party's analysis, the analysis effectively remains trapped within the simple dichotomy of "a bad trade union or a good and militant trade union". Yet the question for the Communist Left goes beyond this dichotomy: trade unionism or the independent self-organisation of the class struggle.

Of course, this does not mean that every form of workers' self-organisation is, in itself, revolutionary or communist. A general assembly, strike committee, factory committee or any other form of independent organisation only acquires historical significance from the perspective of the Communist Left when it contributes to expanding the proletariat's political independence and intensifying the class struggle. The organisational form itself is not the decisive issue; what matters is its class content, the direction in which the struggle is moving, and its relationship to representative organisations and to the historical aim of the proletariat.

The Party itself also emphasises an important point:

"BİRTEK-SEN's emergence represents an objective process driven by material conditions. When exploitation intensifies beyond tolerable limits and existing organizations prove collaborationist, workers create new structures. Communists do not "create" these

developments, but must recognize their significance and work within them."¹³⁸

This principle is, from a Marxist perspective, fundamentally defensible: communists do not "create" workers' struggles from outside; rather, they must identify the objective tendencies within the class struggle, participate in them and work to give the struggle a revolutionary direction.

But this very principle reveals a contradiction in the Party's analysis. If communists are to identify the objective tendencies within the struggle, we must ask: why, in the Party's analysis, is the workers' independent struggle itself understood not as a tendency that should be analysed separately and placed at the centre of the analysis, but primarily through BİRTEK-SEN?

In the wave of struggles in Başpınar, for example, the historical significance of the struggle cannot be sought solely in BİRTEK-SEN's role. The more fundamental significance lay in the fact that workers from several factories were able to move beyond the framework of the individual factory and towards joint action and coordination. The same tendency can also be observed in strikes outside trade union control: under certain conditions, workers take direct action themselves, without waiting for decisions from the official representative apparatus.

From this perspective, the task of communists should not be to replace conciliatory trade unions with a militant syndicate; rather, it should be to strengthen those tendencies within the struggle that transfer control of the struggle from representative apparatuses to the workers themselves. The issue is not to ignore BİRTEK-SEN, but to establish its real place within the broader class struggle: is BİRTEK-SEN a temporary instrument subordinate to workers' self-activity, or is it gradually becoming a permanent centre for the representation and organisation of these struggles?

¹³⁸ [The Party's Task.](#)

It is precisely in answering this question that the Party's claim about "class union" can be assessed. The ultimate criterion is not the degree of militancy of a trade union, but the direction in which the workers' struggle is moving and the extent to which their political and organisational independence from capital, the state and representative apparatuses is expanding.

The fundamental question, then, is this: is BİRTEK-SEN the organised expression of this objective tendency, or does it absorb, organise and represent this tendency in the form of a trade union organisation? Even if BİRTEK-SEN is independent of the state, does not cooperate with employers, supports militant strikes, organises migrant workers and advocates extending the struggle across several factories, we still cannot conclude from these characteristics alone that we are dealing with a form of organisation that has moved beyond the historical limitations of trade unionism. The decisive issue is the political horizon and practical function of this organisation in the course of the class struggle.

If the course of the struggle ultimately becomes stabilised within the following cycle: Wage payment, cancellation of redundancies, improvement of the contract, negotiation with the employer, official recognition of the trade union, then, despite all its militancy and genuine achievements, we are still within the sphere of trade union struggle. These struggles are essential for defending workers' living and working conditions, and communists should participate in them; but the struggle to improve the conditions under which workers sell their labour-power should not be equated with a struggle in which the social relation between capital and wage labour itself becomes the object of proletarian attack.

If workers, even when they are trade union members, repeatedly move beyond the decisions and control of the trade union apparatus at decisive moments and take direct action, then perhaps the most important emerging tendency should not be sought in the "emergence of class trade unions", but rather in the tendency of the workers themselves to take

direct control of the struggle and organise it independently of representative apparatuses.

From this perspective, the strength of the Communist Left's criticism lies neither in rejecting BİRTEK-SEN nor in denying the achievements of its struggles, but in recognising the boundary between trade union militancy and the independent self-organisation of the proletariat. This distinction also allows us, in each particular struggle, to ask not merely "Which organisation is more militant?", but rather: does the struggle transfer decision-making power and initiative to the workers themselves, or does this power ultimately become consolidated within a new representative apparatus?

In the preceding section, we examined the historical position of trade unions and showed that, on the eve of and during the First World War, trade unions betrayed the working class by supporting the war and bourgeois politics, becoming integrated into capitalist relations and the capitalist state. This historic betrayal was a specific event in the course of the First World War, and with the consolidation of trade unions' integration into capitalist relations, that historical period came to an end. Therefore, the present condition of trade unions should not be explained simply by repeating the concept of "betrayal".

The issue concerning trade unions today is less a matter of "betrayal" than of their social position and function within capitalist relations. A trade union that has become integrated into the capitalist structure does not necessarily "betray" workers in every period or in every struggle. Just as no state institution consistently and at every moment pursues policies that serve capital in a completely coherent and "ideal" manner, trade unions may, in certain circumstances, organise militant struggles or defend workers' demands. However, this does not, in itself, alter their social and historical position.

Therefore, communist criticism is directed at the integration of trade unions into capitalist relations themselves and at their role as intermediaries between labour and capital, rather than merely at those instances in which trade unions retreat from workers' struggles or

compromise with them. The fundamental issue is not whether a trade union “betrays” workers at a particular moment, but rather what role trade unions play, following their historical integration into capitalist relations, in regulating the relationship between labour and capital, and whether their organisation contributes to the expansion of the proletariat’s class independence or instead regulates and confines workers’ struggles within the framework of the wage-labour relationship.

The International Communist Party writes:

“The Şık Makas workers’ struggle encapsulates the broader crisis facing the working class globally with the intensification of exploitation within global supply chains, collaborationist unions betraying workers at every turn, and the necessity of organizing outside official structures to wage genuine struggle.”¹³⁹

Here too, a distinction must be made between two issues. The “collaborationist unions betraying” is only part of the problem; the deeper issue is the structure and function of the trade union itself. For this reason, simply “organizing outside the official structures” is not, in itself, a sufficient criterion for class independence. Workers may leave an official trade union, but the new organisation may itself become a permanent trade union, a negotiating body or another representative structure. In such a case, the organisational form has changed, but the fundamental issue remains unresolved.

The criterion for the Communist Left should be whether the organisation of the struggle transfers decision-making power and initiative directly to the workers themselves and their assemblies, and whether the struggle can move beyond the framework of merely reproducing the relationship between labour and capital.

From this perspective, we can return to the experience of Şık Makas and the role of BİRTEK-SEN. BİRTEK-SEN’s letter shows that the syndicate directly sought to put pressure on the brand’s management

¹³⁹ [The Şık Makas Struggle](#).

to use its influence to reinstate the dismissed workers and respect freedom of association. What is noteworthy about this letter is that BİRTEK-SEN even proposes reducing its demands to a minimum and refraining from requesting a protocol or direct agreement between BİRTEK-SEN and management. Instead, Levi's is asked to make its orders conditional upon requirements including the reinstatement of dismissed workers, respect for freedom of association, and an agreement on compensation.¹⁴⁰

This tactic should not be rejected simply because it makes use of international pressure. In a specific struggle, putting pressure on a multinational company through its position within the supply chain may help secure the reinstatement of workers or achieve some of their demands. However, from the perspective of the Communist Left, a more important political question arises: does this tactic increase the direct and independent power of the workers, or does it make the struggle increasingly dependent on the decision-making mechanisms of companies, corporate social responsibility, and relations between different institutions of capital?

The Party explains this tactic as follows:

“Because the conflict was embedded in global garment supply chains, workers abroad responded by organizing coordinated informational pickets outside distributors connected to the Sik Makas textile factory beyond Turkey’s borders in an effort to demonstrate solidarity with the struggle of Turkish workers as a show of proletarian internationalism, even if such tactics in of themselves can not directly mass greater leverage against the employer, they can raise workers spirits and will to struggle.”¹⁴¹

However, from a Marxist perspective, the international character of the production chain does not in itself mean that the class struggle has

¹⁴⁰ To Levi's leadership.

¹⁴¹ The Şik Makas Struggle and Class Unions in Turkey.

become international. Capital organises production on a global scale, but this fact alone does not mean that a united and international struggle of the proletariat has emerged.

If workers in different countries merely ask a brand to uphold its “social responsibility”, or demand that a company comply with legal working conditions and meet workers’ demands, the struggle may still remain within the framework of regulating the relationship between labour and capital. From a communist perspective, the issue takes on a different significance when workers at different points in the production chain recognise their common interests as a class, establish direct links in struggle, and deploy their collective power within the very process of production and the circulation of capital. We should therefore distinguish between two levels: international pressure on a brand within the framework of existing capitalist relations, on the one hand, and the international organisation of the proletariat against capitalist relations and towards class independence, on the other.

The former can be an effective tool in a particular struggle; the latter is the historical horizon of the communist struggle.

Therefore, in assessing BİRTEK-SEN and the Şık Makas experience, the issue is neither to deny the importance of workers’ struggles nor to reject the possibility of using tactics such as putting pressure on multinational companies. The issue is that we should not equate the effective tools used in a particular struggle with the historical direction of that struggle. The significance of Şık Makas can be seen precisely in the possibility of the struggle moving beyond the individual workplace and becoming connected to the wider network of capitalist production; but this possibility becomes a genuinely proletarian tendency only when this connection, rather than strengthening trade union representative networks and putting pressure on companies, leads to the expansion of workers’ self-organisation and direct unity beyond the boundaries of the factory, sector and country.

In this sense, the main issue for communists is not whether BİRTEK-SEN has employed the correct tactic in a particular struggle;

rather, it is whether such struggles ultimately lead to an increase in the independent power of the proletariat, or remain within a framework that capital and its institutions can absorb, regulate and manage. This is precisely the boundary that must be made clear between a militant trade union struggle and a struggle that tends towards the historical independence of the proletariat.

We have examined the circumstances surrounding the emergence of BİRTEK-SEN earlier and therefore there is no need to repeat them here. Instead, we want to examine the ambiguity in the International Communist Party's analysis from another angle: through the relationship between workers' spontaneous struggles, the formation of new organisations, and the question of the proletariat's class independence. Let us first see what the Party says:

“In 2020 textile worker uprisings spread across 35 factories in southeastern Turkey. Workers organized strikes, workplace occupations, and confrontations with police outside official union structures. Workers won concrete victories at facilities including Artemis, Şireci, and Marbit despite, or rather, because of, their willingness to break through legal constraints. BİRTEK-SEN emerged in 2022 from these struggles, formed by union militants who recognized that genuine working-class defense requires organization independent from both state control and employer collaboration. The union's formation is precisely the process true communists have long identified that when material conditions deteriorate sufficiently and existing organizations prove themselves enemies of workers interests, workers will create new structures capable of actual struggle.”¹⁴²

Here, the Party argues that when material conditions intensify and existing organisations are no longer able to defend workers' interests, workers turn towards creating new structures. This proposition, at the

¹⁴² [BİRTEK-SEN: A Class Union in Formation.](#)

level of describing an objective process, is largely defensible; however, the conclusion the Party draws from it requires closer examination.

The intensification of capitalist contradictions can lead workers to break out of official frameworks, establish committees and assemblies, organise strikes and develop new forms of organisation. But the history of the workers' movement shows that not every new organisation that emerges from struggle necessarily embodies a revolutionary tendency or expresses the historical independence of the proletariat. Even a "militant" syndicate can emerge from genuine workers' struggles, confront the state and employers, organise widespread strikes and distance itself from the old bureaucracies; yet subsequently become a new intermediary between labour and capital. We therefore cannot assume a linear process of development: the intensification of the capitalist crisis, the intensification of the struggle, the creation of a new organization, the formation of a class union and the emergence of the conditions for communist revolution.

Such an interpretation, even if it is not expressed in the language of historical determinism, can in practice lead to a passive approach, as though material conditions automatically produce the appropriate organisational forms, and these forms will likewise naturally move towards revolution. The Party is right to emphasise that we are not in a revolutionary situation and is also right to stress the need for communists to participate in ongoing struggles:

*"We are not in a revolutionary situation. The working class remains largely atomized. Yet capitalism's contradictions continue producing explosions of struggle. Communist militants must participate in these struggles and work toward their maximum development."*¹⁴³

This is a realistic point of departure. But it is precisely here that the fundamental question arises: The greatest possible development of the

¹⁴³ [The Party's Task](#).

struggle in which direction? If by development we mean merely an increase in the number of strikes, an increase in trade union membership, the expansion of the syndicate's influence, or the strengthening of organisations such as BİRTEK-SEN, then the development of the struggle may ultimately lead to the development of the trade union organisation itself. But if we mean the expansion of the self-activity and self-organisation of the proletariat, then other criteria come into play: workers' general assemblies, recallable committees, direct decision-making on strikes and negotiations, the extension of the struggle from one factory to others, the creation of links between different sections of the class and, where conditions permit, the transformation of everyday struggles into a political struggle against the state and capitalist relations.

Therefore, the issue is not merely the quantitative expansion of the struggle, but the political and class direction of this expansion. This issue also becomes apparent in the Party's analysis of BİRTEK-SEN's role. The Party writes:

*"Since its formation, BİRTEK-SEN led the Özak Textile struggle in Urfa in November 2024 and the strike wave at the Başpınar Organized Industrial Zone in Antep in February 2025. In these struggles the union sharpened the piercing strength of the workers by generalizing the strikes across factories rather than leaving workers isolated or relying on pressuring the companies with lawsuits."*¹⁴⁴

The Party's description of BİRTEK-SEN's practical role in these struggles may be accurate. But politically, we need to take a step back and ask: who is actually leading the struggle? The mere fact that a syndicate extends a strike from one factory to another does not, in itself, mean an increase in the workers' independent power. We need to see who makes the decisions about initiating, extending, continuing, negotiating and ending the struggle.

¹⁴⁴ [BİRTEK-SEN: A Class Union in Formation.](#)

If the syndicate calls the strike, manages the negotiations, represents the workers, and the main decisions concerning the struggle are taken by its apparatus, then even if the syndicate is militant and independent of the state and the employer, we are still dealing with a representative relationship. In this case, the scope of the struggle may have expanded, but control over the struggle has not necessarily been transferred to the workers themselves.

By contrast, if workers' general assemblies decide on the course of the struggle, appoint elected and recallable committees, representatives merely implement the decisions of the assemblies, and they can be removed and replaced at any time, then the relationship between the organisation and the struggle takes on a different character. In this case, the organisation moves away from being an apparatus of representation independent of the mass of workers and becomes a direct instrument of the struggle's self-organisation. Therefore, the question for the Communist Left should not simply be:

“Does the trade union mobilise and organise workers?” Rather, we should ask: “Do the workers themselves control the struggle, or is the struggle directed and managed through a representative organisation?” This distinction should not be confused with the degree of militancy of trade union leaders. An organisation can be highly militant, courageous and even self-sacrificing in certain circumstances, while at the same time, as a permanent organisation, taking on the role of representation and mediation between labour and capital.

If the Party really emphasises the principle that communists must identify the objective tendencies within the struggle and work within them, it should also pay the same degree of attention to the direct self-activity and self-organisation of workers as it does to the emergence of BİRTEK-SEN. The decisive question is not “what new organisation has emerged from the struggle?”, but **what tendencies has the struggle itself generated, and which of these tendencies can strengthen the historical independence of the proletariat against capital, the state and its representative institutions?**

The Party regards BİRTEK-SEN's break from the official trade unions and its formation outside the legal structures not as the product of issuing declarations, but as a necessity arising from the material conditions of the struggle. This emphasis is defensible from a Marxist perspective. Workers' struggles are not necessarily free from contradictions, limitations or mistakes from the outset; this is a natural part of the process through which class struggle develops and matures. But precisely for this reason, the task of communists is not simply to praise the struggle or support every form of organisation that emerges from it. Their task is to be present within the struggle, strengthen its radical and self-active tendencies, expose its limitations, and work towards expanding the political independence of the proletariat. In other words, communists should play a critical and guiding role within the struggle, rather than regarding every organisation that emerges from it as a step towards proletarian objectives simply because of its militancy. The Party writes the following about BİRTEK-SEN:

“What makes BİRTEK-SEN significant is its break from collaborationist unionism. Its formation outside legal structures, organization of exploited immigrant workers, and rejection of collaboration emerge not from revolutionary ideology but from practical necessities workers face under intensified exploitation. This is how class unions emerge, not from declarations but from material conditions making collaboration impossible and independent struggle necessary. Textile workers facing wage theft and mass firings have no recourse within official structures. They must organize outside the legal apparatus or accept absolute exploitation.”¹⁴⁵

The Party's emphasis on organising migrant workers is also significant from the perspective of proletarian internationalism. But here too, a distinction must be made between two levels. The issue is not

¹⁴⁵[The Party's Task.](#)

simply for migrant workers to become members of a trade union; the deeper issue is the struggle against all the national, legal and citizenship-based divisions that capital and the state use to divide the workforce. If the Syrian worker is merely regarded as another group to be organised and added to the trade union's membership, we remain at the trade-union level. But if the struggle demonstrates in practice that Turkish and Syrian workers share common class interests, regardless of nationality or immigration status, and that national and legal divisions cannot prevent them from uniting in struggle, then we are confronted with a tendency with a much deeper internationalist potential.

The workers at Şık Makas are fighting to receive their unpaid wages, and at the level of defending their living and working conditions, this struggle is entirely legitimate and necessary. But from a communist perspective, this is precisely where we must take the question a step further: why is the worker compelled to sell their labour-power in the first place? If the answer to the struggle is reduced merely to "the worker must receive their wages" and "the trade union must become stronger", then the struggle remains within the sphere of defending the conditions under which labour-power is sold. The communist horizon posits a different point of conclusion here: the historical task of the proletariat is not merely to increase its share of wages, but to abolish the social conditions in which labour-power becomes a commodity and social production is subordinated to capital. The difference between trade-union politics and communist politics lies precisely in this horizon.

On the other hand, being "outside the legal framework" cannot, in itself, serve as a criterion for an organisation's revolutionary character. Capitalism, particularly under authoritarian conditions or in peripheral countries, can declare an organisation that essentially operates within capitalist relations illegal for political reasons. Therefore, the proletarian criterion cannot simply be: "Does the state recognise this organisation as legal or not?" The fundamental criterion must be its social content and the direction of its struggle. Even if BİRTEK-SEN were to become fully legal and officially recognised in the future, the fundamental question

would remain unchanged: does this organisation merely organise workers to improve the conditions under which labour-power is sold within the framework of the wage-labour relation, or is the struggle moving towards the rejection and abolition of that very relation? The Party writes about the solidarity campaign with the workers of Şık Makas:

“The Şık Makas solidarity campaign demonstrated that international working-class coordination remains possible even in difficult periods. Workers across multiple countries organized coordinated actions to support Turkish textile workers’ struggle against multinational corporations. They raised money, built practical connections between workers in different countries, and applied pressure on the corporations profiting from exploitation. This work represents a small but significant step toward the international working-class organization that the struggle against capitalism requires.”¹⁴⁶

The principle of international workers’ solidarity should be assessed positively. We must ask: coordination for what purpose and through what means? If workers in different countries send letters of support, raise financial aid, hold demonstrations outside shops, or put pressure on associated brands, these actions can constitute genuine forms of class solidarity. But we are still dealing with something different from the organisation of the proletariat’s direct power. If workers in different countries, at different points in the chain of production and circulation of capital, are able to coordinate in disrupting production, transport, warehousing, logistics, distribution and sales, then solidarity moves from the level of supporting a particular struggle to the level of exercising the working class’s direct power across national borders.

Pressure on brands or the exercise of class power? In some of its struggles, BİRTEK-SEN has used international pressure and engaged with global brands. This tactic can produce practical results in a particular

¹⁴⁶ [The Party’s Task.](#)

struggle. But from the perspective of the Communist Left, we must examine the relationship between this tactic and the class independence of workers.

Here, we can distinguish between two different paths. On the first, the initiative in the struggle is gradually transferred from the workers to the syndicate; the syndicate enters into negotiations by putting pressure on the brand, and the outcome of the struggle is framed in terms of improving working conditions and securing commitments from the company. On the second, the initiative remains in the hands of the workers themselves, who rely on their collective power to directly affect the production and circulation of capital and coordinate the struggle on a broader, international scale.

The difference between these two paths lies not simply in the methods of struggle or the tools employed; it lies in the **location of power within the struggle**. On the first path, the power of the struggle is exercised primarily through a representative body and mechanisms for negotiating with capital; on the second, power remains concentrated in the workers' own organisation and direct action. From the perspective of the Communist Left, this is the decisive distinction.

The Party is right to emphasise the global character of capital and the need for the workers' struggle to transcend national borders. Zara and H&M, as global brands, are part of a network of capital that profits from cheap labour and transnational supply chains; this is an undeniable reality. But the class struggle cannot be reduced simply to a confrontation between workers and "multinational corporations". The enemy of workers is not a particular brand, company or employer; the fundamental enemy is the social relation between capital and wage labour. Therefore, the aim of international solidarity cannot simply be to compel a company to comply with better standards, accept the demands of a particular factory, or improve working conditions. It is precisely in clarifying these distinctions that the task of communists becomes important. The Party writes:

“The working class confronts the same enemies across borders. When Zara and H&M exploit Turkish textile workers through their supply chains, they implement the same profit-maximization strategies driving exploitation throughout their global operations. Workers in different countries fighting the same corporations must coordinate their struggles.”¹⁴⁷

Linking workers across different sectors, from production and logistics to retail, can increase the capacity for class struggle and is therefore of considerable importance. But the proletarian criterion is not simply to bring together all the sectors of a production chain around a single campaign. The fundamental question is how these links are formed, by whom, and what kind of power they create.

If these links are formed from below and on the initiative of the workers themselves, strengthen workers’ assemblies and committees, keep control of the struggle in the hands of the workers themselves, and enable direct joint action between workers in different countries, then we are confronted with a tendency that can move towards the class independence of the proletariat. But if this coordination takes place primarily through trade unions, organisational campaigns, project-based institutions or mechanisms for negotiating with companies, there is a danger that the class struggle will once again be organised through relations of representation and bargaining with capital.

From this perspective, the Şık Makas experience should be assessed not merely on the basis of having created an “international campaign”, but according to the kind of relationships that this campaign establishes among the workers themselves. The significance of this experience becomes greater when it strengthens the workers’ direct struggle, their assemblies, strikes, solidarity between workplaces, and direct links between workers in different countries. Otherwise, “international solidarity” can be reduced to a campaign to put pressure on brands, garner the support of non-governmental organisations, and

¹⁴⁷ [International Coordination.](#)

negotiate with multinational corporations. The Party writes about this experience:

“Cross-sector coordination strengthens working-class power. The campaign called on workers throughout the supply chain production, logistics, retail to recognize their common interest in supporting the Şık Makas workers’ struggle in Turkey. While practical limitations prevented full realization of this coordination, it is an important step in the direction that workers must take if their organization is to take on the attributes of a struggle capable of defending itself against the interconnected global capitalist agenda.”¹⁴⁸

The Party’s emphasis on the global production chain is correct and important from the standpoint of analysing the structure of contemporary capitalism. However, if this analysis remains at the level of the production chain, there is a danger that we come to see capital merely as a collection of interconnected companies: a factory in Turkey, a brand in Europe and a shop in the United States. Yet the more fundamental issue is the **social relation of capital and wage labour**.

Capital is not simply a multinational corporation. Capital is reproduced through private ownership, money, the market, banks, the state, law and, above all, through the social relation of wage labour. Therefore, if the struggle is defined merely as being against an “exploitative multinational corporation”, it may inadvertently create the impression that the problem lies in the behaviour of a particular company and that the issue can be resolved by replacing it with a more “responsible” form of capital or by forcing it to comply with better standards. From the perspective of the Communist Left, the issue goes beyond this: **the worker’s enemy is not merely a bad employer, a multinational brand or a particular company; it is the social relation of capital and wage labour itself.**

¹⁴⁸ [International Coordination](#).

For this reason, another quotation from the Party is of particular importance:

“Supporting such developments means participating in struggles, clarifying their broader significance, and building international connections. We prefigure necessary organizational frameworks anticipating sharper confrontations to come. As crisis deepens and inter-imperialist tensions escalate, ruling-class assaults on working-class standards will intensify, producing explosive responses. The existence of embryonic class unions and practical international coordination experience will prove invaluable.”¹⁴⁹

This is where the main theoretical issue becomes apparent. On the one hand, the Party emphasises the need for communists to participate in existing struggles and to establish international links, which is defensible; on the other hand, it presents this experience as a basis for the formation of “class unions” in the future. Our question is: why should the outcome of this process necessarily be sought in the form of class unions?

If future struggles are genuinely able to transcend national borders, the decisive question is not whether trade unions in different countries form a broader network with one another; rather, it is whether workers themselves, independently of representative structures, will be able to create direct and international forms of class power.

In summing up the criticisms raised against the International Communist Party in relation to the workers’ struggles in Turkey, the main issue should not be reduced to a choice between a “collaborationist trade union” and a “militant trade union”, or even to replacing the former with the supposedly more radical concept of a “class union”. The militancy of a syndicate, its independence from the state and employers, and even its ability to organise strikes and extend the struggle do not, in themselves, mean that it has overcome the limitations of syndicalism. What should remain at the centre of attention is the self-activity of the

¹⁴⁹ [The Party’s Task.](#)

workers and the genuine independence of their struggle from any representative apparatus. This criticism, while recognising the importance of BİRTEK-SEN's struggles, is directed at the Party's conclusions drawn from these struggles, rather than at denying their militancy.

From this perspective, the communist response under present conditions is not to build a better syndicate, even one called a "class union", but to strengthen independent forms of workers' struggle appropriate to the actual level of the struggle: workers' committees, general assemblies, elected representatives who can be recalled at any time, independent strikes, links and coordination between different factories and sectors, and any form of organisation that places control of the struggle directly in the hands of the workers themselves. In a revolutionary upsurge, this process can, at a higher level, lead to workers' councils and the general and political organisation of the proletariat.

Therefore, the task of communists is not to set the "good trade union" against the "bad trade union", but to strengthen, in every struggle, the tendency towards self-organisation, the extension and generalisation of the struggle, and its independence from the representative apparatuses of capital, while at the same time making the limitations of syndicalism clear to workers. The ultimate aim is not to secure better conditions for the sale of labour-power, but to abolish the wage-labour relation itself and capitalist social relations.

Unfortunately, through the ambiguities it introduces into its analysis, the Party not only fails to fulfil the role of a **compass** in workers' struggles and to clarify the direction in which these struggles should move, but in some cases also contributes to reproducing these ambiguities within the workers' movement. The fundamental contradiction lies here: at the theoretical level, the Party emphasises the necessity of a **revolutionary organisation** and its role in the class struggle, but in its practical analysis and conclusions, rather than outlining the political direction and perspective of the struggles, it effectively slips into a form of **determinism and, ultimately, political passivity**. In other words, if we regard material conditions and the

spontaneous struggles of workers as decisive, while disregarding the role of the revolutionary organisation in clarifying the direction of these struggles and raising the level of class consciousness and organisation, then the emphasis on the necessity of a revolutionary organisation at the theoretical level will, in practice, be reduced to a passive position.

The Kurdish Question: Class Analysis or Obfuscation?

At a time when capitalism still played a historically progressive role in the transformation of society, and the bourgeoisie, as a revolutionary class, was struggling against the remnants of feudal relations, the formation of nations and new nation-states could form part of the development of the productive forces. During this period, the dismantling of feudal barriers and the establishment of national markets created the conditions for the expansion of capitalist relations and the ever-greater integration of societies into the world market. For this reason, at certain points in history, communists and proletarian internationalists supported bourgeois national movements against the remnants of feudalism and pre-capitalist political domination.

However, this question cannot be separated from the historical development of capitalism itself. Capitalism is a single, global system, not a collection of historically separate systems, with one part being “old and senile” and another “young and dynamic”. Once capitalism had entered its imperialist stage, it could no longer fulfil the same historical role that it had played during its period of ascent. The First World War was one of the clearest expressions of this historical transformation: the contradictions of global capitalism no longer manifested themselves merely as competition between national markets and struggles against the remnants of feudalism, but developed into competition between major capitals, states and imperialist blocs for the division and redivision of the world. The national question must therefore be understood within the context of this historical transformation.

In the age of imperialism, the formation of a new nation-state does not mean escaping the framework of global capitalist relations. However small or weak it may be, a new state is compelled, in order to survive, to integrate itself into the international division of labour, the world market and international capitalist relations. Consequently, a new nation-state, like any other capitalist state, becomes the political organisation through

which bourgeois class rule is exercised and capitalist relations are reproduced.

From this perspective, in the era of imperialism, a “national liberation war” cannot acquire a revolutionary character merely by invoking “independence”, or by being directed against a central authority or a foreign power. In the era of imperialism, national movements become the infantry of the imperialist policies pursued by gangsters, large and small, in their conflicts with one another. They are transformed into instruments for advancing imperialist policies and exerting pressure in conflicts between great and lesser powers. In this sense, national movements can become the infantry of one side in an imperialist conflict.

For this reason, support for national liberation movements, when it abandons the class independence of the proletariat, can in practice amount to support for one imperialist power against another, under the cover of “national” or even “socialist” slogans. The task of communists, therefore, is not to take the side of one of the parties to an imperialist conflict, but to maintain the political and class independence of the proletariat from all factions of the bourgeoisie and from all imperialist states.

Real liberation cannot be achieved through the establishment of new nation-states, but only through the abolition of capitalist relations and the class power of the bourgeoisie. Only in a communist society—that is, a classless society—can the exploitation of human beings by human beings be abolished, while national and ethnic oppression would likewise lose its material basis. In such a society, the freedom of each individual and of every human group would not stand in opposition to the freedom of others, but would instead be the condition for the realisation of freedom for all.

Before turning to the Kurdish question, it is necessary to consider one of the political consequences of ambiguity in approaching the national question. In its analysis of the developments following the First World War, the International Communist Party (il Partito) writes:

“Following World War I, various parts of Anatolia were occupied by the Entente and the Ottoman Empire was reduced to a puppet government in Istanbul headed by the liberal Freedom and Accord Party, opposed by Mustafa Kemal’s national revolutionary government in Ankara.”¹⁵⁰

The issue is not simply a matter of using an incorrect or inappropriate term. The fundamental question is: what is the criterion for determining whether a state is revolutionary? If we take “struggle against foreign occupation” as the criterion for a state’s revolutionary character, the class nature of the movement and of the state that emerges from it is relegated to the background. But for a communist, opposition to foreign domination cannot, in itself, make a movement revolutionary, or even progressive. We must ask: which class does this struggle serve, what social relations does it reproduce, and what kind of political and economic power does it establish after victory?

The Kemalist state in Ankara cannot be called a “revolutionary state” simply because it opposed the occupying forces. The Kemalist movement was fundamentally a nationalist and bourgeois movement, which proceeded towards the establishment and consolidation of the Turkish nation-state and the organisation of a new political order. A national state, even when resisting a foreign power, remains a state; that is, the political organisation of class rule and an instrument for preserving existing social relations. From a communist standpoint, the central issue is not whether this state came into conflict with foreign forces or under what historical circumstances it emerged; the issue is its relationship with the working class and the communist movement.

The Kemalist state, the very same state that stood up to foreign powers, also stood against the communist movement and played a role in the repression of communists. The repression and killing of members and leaders of the Communist Party of Turkey in the early years of the Turkish Republic, including the murder of the party’s leaders during the

¹⁵⁰ [Kurdish Rebellions from Sheikh Ubeydullah \(1879\) to Sheikh Said \(1925\).](#)

events of January 1921, provide a clear example of this reality. For communists, therefore, placing the adjective “revolutionary” alongside the state of Mustafa Kemal, the killer of communists, is unacceptable.

The fundamental questions, therefore, are these: following its victory, which class did the Kemalist state bring to power? What social relations did it consolidate? And what position did it take towards the working class and communists?

With these points clarified, we can return to the specific examination of the Kurdish question in the article by the International Communist Party. It is important to stress that examining the Kurdish nationalist movement means examining a specific case. The arguments put forward concerning the nature of nationalist movements can equally be applied to the Baloch, Turkish, Azeri, Tatar, Basque, Catalan and other national movements.

Communists do not deny the existence of the Kurdish people, the Kurdish language, or Kurdish history and culture. What communists reject is the transformation of these historical and cultural realities into a political community that transcends class divisions. It is precisely here that the concept of “national interests” becomes dangerous for the proletariat, because the concept of the nation can conceal the fundamental antagonism between the exploited and the exploiter behind a shared national identity, thereby placing workers alongside their “own” bourgeoisie.

The Party has, on the whole, sought to examine the history of the Kurdish national movement from a class perspective and, in opposition to Kurdish nationalism, to emphasise the political independence of the proletariat. From the standpoint of the communist left tradition, this point of departure is defensible. The text rightly emphasises that Kurdish nationalist parties and organisations cannot represent the historical interests of the working class and that, at various points, they have also become instruments of states and great powers within the imperialist relations of the region.

Nevertheless, there are ambiguities in the Party's positions that cannot simply be overlooked. The issue is not merely a disagreement over the interpretation of a few historical events; rather, it concerns the method of analysis, the concept of the nation and the national question, the relationship between capital and the state, and, ultimately, our understanding of the communist revolution.

As noted earlier, capitalism has entered the era of imperialism on a global scale, and the bourgeoisie can no longer fulfil, anywhere in the world, the same historical and progressive role that it played during the ascendant phase of capitalism. Consequently, in the course of the global communist revolution, the proletariat is inevitably confronted with questions that the bourgeoisie was historically unable to resolve. The resolution of the national question and the abolition of national oppression, like the liberation of women from social relations based on oppression, cannot be achieved definitively within the framework of capitalism; genuine liberation is possible only through the abolition of capitalist social relations and the global communist revolution. The Party is also, to some extent, in agreement with this argument, and writes:

*"In the early 1930s Kurdish nationalism suffered a historic defeat from which there would be no coming back. The Kurdish bourgeoisie soon opted towards reformist and reactionary dead end solutions, leaving the duty to end the national oppression of Kurds on the shoulders of the proletariat."*¹⁵¹

Before continuing the discussion, one point needs to be clarified. The Kurdish bourgeoisie did not "betray" either the proletariat or the Kurdish people; it acted in accordance with its class character. The fundamental issue is not the betrayal of a particular bourgeoisie, but the fact that, in the era of imperialism, the bourgeoisie is no longer capable of fulfilling the historical and progressive role that it played during the ascendant phase of capitalism. This distinction is of great importance

¹⁵¹ [The Kurdish Question in the Light of Marxism.](#)

from a communist standpoint. If we explain the issue in terms of the betrayal of the bourgeoisie, the illusion remains that, under different circumstances, a national bourgeoisie might perhaps be “genuinely revolutionary” and remain alongside the proletariat to the end.

Another point of ambiguity in the Party’s position concerns the argument that independence should be regarded as more radical and progressive than autonomy. Such a distinction can be understood in a particular period of capitalist history—namely, when the formation of new nation-states could form part of the historical development of capitalism and the dismantling of the remnants of pre-capitalist relations. However, extending this criterion to the era of imperialism, without taking into account the historical transformation in the role of the bourgeoisie, leads to theoretical ambiguity. In its examination of the uprisings led by Simko Shikak and Mahmud Barzanji, the Party writes:

“Shikak would later support Mahmud Barzanji who had first rebelled against the British who ruled Southern Kurdistan in 1919, was exiled, and upon his return declared himself King of Kurdistan in 1922. Barzanji’s kingdom lasted until 1924, when it was finally defeated by the British. Soon afterward, Simko Shikak attempted another rebellion in Eastern Kurdistan and failed once again. Shikak would flee to Southern Kurdistan, was offered a pardon by the Persian government and was murdered soon after he returned to Iran. Despite their ideological backwardness, rebellions in Eastern and Southern Kurdistan from this period can be tentatively considered national revolutionary for pursuing independence rather than autonomy and for positioning themselves against the major imperialist powers rather than on their side.”¹⁵²

The Party categorises Kurdish movements to some extent according to whether they have sought independence or autonomy. For example, the uprisings led by Simko Shikak and Mahmud Barzanji are

¹⁵² [Kurdish Rebellions from Sheikh Ubeydullah \(1879\) to Sheikh Said \(1925\).](#)

cautiously described as “revolutionary-national” because they demanded independence, whereas the Mahabad Republic, because it sought autonomy within Iran, is regarded as bourgeois and reformist in character.

From a proletarian standpoint, however, this criterion alone cannot establish a fundamental distinction. A new independent state can be just as exploitative, militaristic and anti-working-class as the state that preceded it, or even more so. The replacement of one national state by another does not, in itself, bring any liberation to the working class.

Why should independence be regarded as a sign of greater radicalism than “autonomy”? For a worker who sells their labour power, a change in the borders of a state does not necessarily mean a change in social relations. Let us suppose that an independent Kurdish state were established. If private property remained intact, wage labour continued, commodity production persisted, the Kurdish capitalist still owned the factory, the Kurdish worker continued to sell their labour power, and the Kurdish state likewise maintained its own army, police and administrative apparatus to preserve the existing order, what fundamental change would have taken place from a proletarian standpoint? The state would have changed, but class relations would remain intact.

Therefore, the communist criterion cannot be whether a movement demands “independence” or “autonomy”. These two political forms, within the framework of capitalism, cannot in themselves serve as criteria for determining the revolutionary character of a movement. The criterion must instead be the class position and social content of the struggle: does the movement advance the political and social power of the proletariat independently of all factions of the bourgeoisie and challenge capitalist relations, or does it place the proletariat at the service of the political project of a national bourgeoisie?

In the section concerning developments in Turkey during the 1970s, the Party makes a claim whose formulation is ambiguous. The Party writes:

“This swarming of opportunist and Kurdish nationalist groups did not benefit the development of the working-class struggles of Turkey’s proletariat, which were very lively in the 1970s. Beyond any consideration of the good or bad loyalty of the leaders, the Kurdish nationalist movement was than a hindrance to the development of working class struggles in Turkey.”¹⁵³

The final part of this quotation is correct: the Kurdish nationalist movement, like any other nationalist movement, can become an obstacle to the development of an independent class struggle. This argument can equally be extended to other nationalist movements. The problem, however, lies in the first part of the Party’s statement. If these groups were fundamentally bourgeois and nationalist organisations and political currents, then expecting them to contribute to the development of the independent struggle of the working class would have been unfounded from the outset. The issue is not whether they “succeeded” or “failed” in carrying out such a task; the issue is that such a task was incompatible with their class character and political objectives.

By placing national identity at the centre of the struggle, nationalist movements set Kurdish workers and Turkish workers against one another as members of two different nations, rather than bringing them together first as workers belonging to the same class. Under such conditions, a Kurdish worker may see a Turkish worker first and foremost as “Turkish”, while a Turkish worker may likewise see a Kurdish worker as “Kurdish”, rather than as a fellow member of the same class. Capitalists and the state can also exploit these national and ethnic divisions to undermine class unity.

Therefore, opposing nationalism is not merely a moral question. For the proletariat, overcoming national and ethnic divisions within the class struggle is a material necessity. Workers who speak Turkish, Kurdish or any other language are, above all, situated within a common social relationship: in order to survive, they are compelled to sell their

¹⁵³ [The PKK: From its Foundation \(1978\) to its Capitulation \(1999\).](#)

labour power and confront capital. Their class identity is not a false ethnic identity, but an expression of a common material position within the relations of capitalist production.

One of the strengths of the Party's argument is that it regards the PKK as an anti-proletarian current from the very outset of its formation. The Party writes:

*"The Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) was formed in a village near Diyarbakır in late 1978. Its program claiming that "Turkish capitalism" rather than "Kurdish capitalism" existed in Kurdistan, the PKK to a large extent denied the existence of a Kurdish bourgeoisie while encouraging its development. Thus, they envisaged what can be described as a "bloc of three classes", the urban petty-bourgeoisie, the peasantry and the proletariat would conduct the national revolution against Turkish, Arab or Persian colonial occupiers and their "feudal" collaborators...Since then, they started participating in armed clashes against other Kurdish and Turkish leftists. Judging by its program as well as its actions, we can describe the PKK of this period as a typical Stalinist national movement, already anti-proletarian."*¹⁵⁴

The fundamental point in the critique of the PKK is not that it "misunderstood" Marxism. The more fundamental issue is that the PKK, within the framework of a project for national revolution, had made the "Kurdish nation" the political subject of the revolution. The concept of a three-class bloc illustrates this logic precisely: the urban petty bourgeoisie, the peasantry and the proletariat were supposed to unite in a common project for the realisation of a national revolution.

But such an alliance means that the proletariat subordinates its independent and historical interests to a cross-class project. Within this framework, the contradiction between labour and capital is replaced by the contradiction between the "Kurdish nation" and its national or

¹⁵⁴ [The PKK: From its Foundation \(1978\) to its Capitulation \(1999\).](#)

colonial enemy. The proletariat no longer enters the struggle as an independent class, but becomes one of the components of the “nation”.

The Party then examines the PKK’s transformation from Stalinism to the project of “Democratic Confederalism”. However, a change in political and ideological language does not, in itself, constitute a break with nationalism. If the political organisation continues to define itself around Kurdish society, Kurdish identity, Kurdish territory, Kurdish political institutions and the interests of the Kurdish “people”, abandoning the demand for an independent state does not necessarily signify a break with the national logic.

Therefore, the transformation of the PKK from Stalinism to “Democratic Confederalism” cannot be assessed solely on the basis of changes in its slogans and political structures. This transformation should be considered within the broader context of the evolution of many Stalinist parties following the crisis and collapse of the Eastern Bloc, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and their subsequent turn towards various forms of democratic leftism, social democracy and so forth. The project of “Democratic Confederalism” must likewise be assessed on the basis of the relations of production and wage labour, rather than merely on the basis of propaganda, ideology and political structures.

The same issue arises in the case of the Democratic Union Party (PYD) in Syria, which is in fact the Syrian branch of the PKK. On the one hand, the International Communist Party has acknowledged that the PKK has been an anti-proletarian and nationalist current from the outset; on the other hand, it has expected the Democratic Union Party to abandon nationalism—an expectation that has not been fulfilled. The Party writes:

“The PYD has never abandoned nationalism.”¹⁵⁵

However, if nationalism forms part of an organisation’s very basis of existence and political function, the central question is not why that organisation has failed to abandon nationalism. The fundamental question

¹⁵⁵ [KRG \(2005\)](#), [AANES \(2013\)](#) and [The Kurdish Question Today](#).

is whether one can reasonably expect an organisation that has based its political project on a national society and national identity to become an organisation for the independent class struggle of the proletariat. Even if we assume that nationalism were abandoned, could this anti-proletarian movement have served the class movement of the working class?

Recent developments in Syria further demonstrate the importance of this issue. Following the agreement reached on 29 January 2026 between the Syrian government and the Syrian Democratic Forces, with US and French mediation and Turkish support, the process of integrating the SDF's military forces and the institutions of the Autonomous Administration into the structures of the Syrian state entered a new phase.¹⁵⁶ Under the agreement, several military brigades were to be formed from the former SDF forces, with command entrusted to their former commanders. Damascus also appointed a former SDF commander as deputy defence minister responsible for the eastern region. Mazloun Abdi, commander-in-chief of the Syrian Democratic Forces, described the development as the beginning of "a new phase" for the SDF. The agreement also provided for the integration of Kurdish military and civilian institutions into the Syrian state.

Abdi further stated that thousands of non-Syrian Kurdish fighters who had previously entered Syria from Kurdish regions of Iraq, Iran and Turkey to defend north-eastern Syria, including against ISIS, had left the country. He said:

*"At our request, our brothers from other parts of Kurdistan came to help us... The forces that came to our assistance have now, at our request and in accordance with our plan, left the region."*¹⁵⁷

In its article "The Kurdish Question in the Light of Marxism", the International Communist Party repeatedly addresses the role of the United States, the Soviet Union, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Israel, and

¹⁵⁶ [The Arab Weekly](#).

¹⁵⁷ [Radio Zamaneh](#).

demonstrates how Kurdish organisations have, at various points, received support from these states. For example, in its examination of the Barzani movement, it considers the role of Iran and Israel, followed by the 1975 agreement between Iran and Iraq. This historical examination is valuable, but a critique of national movements cannot be limited to pointing out that a particular Kurdish party or leader received assistance at a given point from the United States, Iran, Turkey, Iraq or another state. The more fundamental issue is the position of national movements within capitalism in the era of imperialism.

National movements, and consequently national liberation struggles, when they set themselves the goal of establishing or consolidating a bourgeois political power—that is, a state—inevitably enter the world of states and imperialist rivalries and become the infantry of these rivalries. Within the framework of imperialist capitalism, it is difficult to identify a national movement or national liberation struggle that, at some point, has not become part of the imperialist policy of one of the imperialist powers.

In Marxist analysis, imperialism is not merely the foreign policy of a particular state; rather, it expresses global capitalist relations in their historically declining phase, in which states and capitals compete with one another for markets, resources, labour power, spheres of influence and the conditions of accumulation. For this reason, even the establishment of an independent Kurdish state would not, in itself, overcome this logic.

Returning to the Party's argument, the problem with nationalism is not simply that its leaders have been bourgeois, corrupt, or allied with the United States, Iran, Turkey, Iraq or Syria. Even if the leaders of a national movement were “honest”, “anti-foreign” or “self-sacrificing”, the fundamental issue would remain: nationalism defines the working class, within a class society, as part of the “nation” and thereby subordinates class struggle to the national contradiction.

Communist criticism must go beyond the observation that this party became dependent on imperialism and ask: what social relations

make every national project, even when it begins in opposition to a repressive state, ultimately confront the questions of the state, property, wage labour, capital accumulation and class division? From this perspective, the International Communist Party's claim that the Kurdish bourgeoisie would "soon" turn towards reformist and reactionary solutions remains overly focused on the political and moral characteristics of bourgeois behaviour. The issue is not that the Kurdish bourgeoisie "betrayed" the cause at a certain point; the issue is that the bourgeoisie, as a class, cannot transcend the logic of capital accumulation and the political power of the state.

Unfortunately, the comrades also become unclear in their treatment of the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat and "workers' states". The dictatorship of the proletariat cannot simply be reduced to a temporary federation of workers' states. The Party writes:

*"The communist solution, that is the establishment of a communist dictatorship with the temporary formation of a proletarian federation of States, can only be achieved by the united struggle of proletarians of all national backgrounds not only of Kurdistan but the whole Middle East."*¹⁵⁸

If the revolution in Kurdistan were to culminate merely in the establishment of a Kurdish "workers' state", or even in the formation of a federation of workers' states in the Middle East, we would still not have fully moved beyond the horizon of national states and national divisions. Therefore, the ultimate aim of the proletariat cannot be a "federation of workers' states". The fundamental question here is: what exactly is the relationship between the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and "workers' states"? If a "workers' state" is merely another name for a state that preserves capitalist property relations in a state-owned form, or places the management of production in the hands of workers, then the communist revolution would be reduced to a change in the form of property

¹⁵⁸ [The Kurdish Question in the Light of Marxism.](#)

ownership and state management. Yet the essential task of the communist revolution is the abolition of capitalist social relations.

The dictatorship of the proletariat should be understood as the organised political power of the working class during the revolutionary period of transition: a power necessary to break the resistance of the counter-revolution and abolish capitalist relations, while at the same time, unlike the state in the conventional sense, containing within itself a tendency towards its own withering away. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between the political power of the proletariat during the revolutionary period, the particular state form that emerges during this period, and the permanent state apparatus as a power separate from society.

The communist revolution does not simply mean taking control of the existing state or creating a new state; rather, it is a process through which the working class creates its own organs of power while simultaneously creating the material conditions for the dissolution of that political power. In this sense, the dictatorship of the proletariat is not the endpoint of the revolution, but the political instrument and form of transition to a society in which the very conditions underlying the existence of classes, the state and wage labour are abolished. From this perspective, the concept of a “federation of workers’ states”, even if these states call themselves “workers’ states”, nevertheless reproduces the existence of separate states and, consequently, political and national divisions. The horizon of the dictatorship of the proletariat, by contrast, must be the abolition of the state as a power separate from society, the abolition of wage labour and commodity production, and ultimately the end of humanity’s division into competing nations.

In capitalist society, both in the metropolitan capitalist countries and in the peripheral countries, different social movements emerge that express the interests and demands of different social classes, and even of different tendencies within a single class. The right and left wings of capital seek to draw workers, as atomised individuals, into bourgeois or

cross-class movements and turn them into foot soldiers for the political projects of other classes. The task of communists, by contrast, is to clarify the class character of these movements, expose the bourgeoisie's attempts to integrate workers into cross-class movements, and defend the independent struggle and organisation of the working class. Unfortunately, in this area too, the Party's formulation contributes to ambiguity. In relation to the March 1991 uprisings in Iraq, the Party writes:

“Many of the slogans of the proletarian uprising in the South as well as the workers’ struggles in the North were class based but they still also included national slogans, calling for Kurdish self-determination.”¹⁵⁹

To clarify the issue, let us briefly examine the “proletarian uprising” referred to by the Party. After US-led coalition forces drove the Iraqi army out of Kuwait in February 1991, the Iraqi army suffered a heavy defeat. Protests in Basra began with a revolt by soldiers returning from the Kuwaiti front. On 1 March 1991, one of the soldiers fired a shot from a tank returning from the front at a large portrait of Saddam Hussein in the city's central square. This act became the spark that caused the protests to spread, and people angered by the repression and crimes of the Ba'athist regime attacked government buildings and military barracks.

In Sulaymaniyah, the uprising began on 5 March, and Ba'athist government forces were driven out of the city. In the resulting power vacuum, some local “councils” and mass organisations emerged, and for a brief period a form of social self-organisation developed in the city. Saddam Hussein's government eventually used overwhelming military force to suppress the uprising. In the south, the repression was carried out with extreme brutality and violence. In the north, the advance of the Iraqi army prompted a mass flight of people towards the borders with Iran and

¹⁵⁹ [The Kurdish Question in the Light of Marxism.](#)

Turkey, creating a major humanitarian crisis and widespread displacement among the Kurdish population.¹⁶⁰

With these points in mind, we can return to the ambiguity in the Party's formulation. Here, the Party effectively presents a mass movement comprising interconnected forces and different social classes as a "proletarian uprising". The presence of workers, class demands, or even forms of mass self-organisation within a movement does not, in itself, make the movement as a whole proletarian. To determine the class character of a movement, it is necessary to examine which class plays the decisive role within it, which demands predominate, which organisations lead it, and in what direction it is driving existing class relations.

The internal contradiction in the Party's formulation becomes apparent precisely here: on the one hand, it speaks of the "class character" of this uprising, while on the other, it explicitly states that the same uprising raised national slogans and demanded the "right of self-determination for the Kurds". The fundamental question, therefore, is this: if this was a "proletarian uprising", why did the right of self-determination for the Kurds become one of its demands? Are the "Kurds" a class? If the answer is no, how can a movement organised around the common demands of a "nation" be described as a "proletarian uprising" without further explanation?

For this reason, the presence of class slogans within a national movement does not turn that movement into a proletarian movement, just as the participation of workers in a bourgeois movement does not alter its class character. The criterion is not simply the social composition of its participants, but the class orientation, programme, organisation and social relations that the movement reproduces or challenges in practice.

¹⁶⁰ The fact that George Bush, the then President of the United States, encouraged the Iraqi people and army to rise up against Saddam Hussein's government and overthrow it in pursuit of US imperialist interests must be taken into account in this context. However, when the repression of the uprising began, not only the United States but also all the 'civilised barbarians' who had previously armed Saddam Hussein remained silent, watching as the people were massacred by Saddam Hussein's henchmen.

From this perspective, the task of communists is clear: not to attach the label “proletarian” to every mass uprising, but to defend unconditionally the political and organisational independence of the working class and to link workers’ struggles across different regions, beyond national borders, in the direction of the world communist revolution.

Before continuing the discussion, an important point needs to be clarified. The task of communists, and particularly that of the revolutionary organisation, is not to follow the workers and, worse still, to follow “the people”. The task of the revolutionary organisation is to act as a political compass within the class struggle: it must expose the limitations, contradictions and ambiguities of protest movements, defend the political and organisational independence of the proletariat, and work to strengthen independent class tendencies while pushing aside bourgeois, petty-bourgeois and reactionary tendencies.

This in no way means downplaying the struggles of workers during the March 1991 uprising in Iraq. The efforts, sacrifices and struggles of the workers, as well as their attempts to establish independent forms of organisation, deserve respect and a place in the historical memory of the workers’ movement. However, precise concepts must be used when describing these forms of organisation. At most, we can speak of workers’ committees or forms of workers’ organisation, rather than necessarily of workers’ councils as the initial nuclei of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The task of the revolutionary organisation is to analyse social events from a Marxist perspective, identify their class limitations and potential, and indicate the political direction of the proletarian struggle.

With these points in mind, let us examine more closely the concept of a “proletarian uprising” used by the Party in relation to the events in Iraq in March 1991, in order to clarify the ambiguities in the Party’s analysis. The Party writes:

“When the new spontaneous wave of uprisings begun in Southern Kurdistan in early 1991...The uprising quickly acquired a class

content. In Silêmanî and Hewlêr alone, almost a hundred spontaneous, self-organized workers' shuras were formed in popular quarters, squares, small factories to discuss practical issues. This experienced mirrored that of Iran 1979, where workers' and peasants' shuras were formed throughout the country, including Eastern Kurdistan. The movement was decidedly against Kurdish nationalist parties, Barzani and Talabani were not allowed near Silêmanî, and internationalist slogans such as 'We will celebrate our new year with the Arabs in Baghdad' were chanted. The shuras organized a militia throughout Southern Kurdistan which was not recognized by the Kurdistan Front. Silêmanî was the first city to be taken by the rebels and the last city to be retaken by the Iraqi army. After the uprising was defeated, KDP and PUK mobilized their forces and took Silêmanî and other Southern Kurdish cities back from the Iraqi army, and finally signed a deal with Saddam Hussein that recognized their existence as an autonomous Kurdish region within Iraqi borders.'"¹⁶¹

The Party's claim that, in Iran in 1979, workers' and peasants' councils were formed throughout the country is not supported by the historical evidence. As we have noted previously, during the events of 1978–79, various forms of organisation emerged in factories, government offices, neighbourhoods and some villages. In some cases, these organisations were referred to as “councils”, and at best they can be understood as forms of workers' control or workers' committees. The mere use of the term “council” cannot be equated with the formation of organs of proletarian power. However, generalising from these experiences to the formation of workers' and peasants' councils throughout the country, without distinguishing between the different types of organisations and without examining their class content, gives an inaccurate picture of the period.

¹⁶¹ [Al Anfal Campaign \(1988\) and Proletarian Revolt in Southern Kurdistan \(1991\).](#)

Before continuing the discussion, it is necessary to consider the differences in the historical and material conditions of Iran in 1979 and Iraqi Kurdistan in 1991. In Iran, the class struggle gradually intensified from 1978 onwards and, through widespread workers' strikes—particularly the oil strikes—played a decisive role in the revolutionary crisis. This intensification of the class struggle created more favourable conditions for the independent organisation of workers and the emergence of various forms of workers' organisation.

In Iraq in 1991, the immediate context of the uprising was different. The uprising emerged amid the temporary collapse of state authority following the Gulf War and the defeat of the Iraqi army in Kuwait. The military assault by the US-led coalition and the defeat of the Iraqi army created a rupture within the state and military apparatus, and this power vacuum contributed to the spread of uprisings in southern and northern Iraq.

The Party merely claims that in Sulaymaniyah and Erbil¹⁶² alone, nearly one hundred spontaneous and self-organised workers' councils were formed, without providing sufficient evidence to substantiate this claim or explaining precisely what their social composition, organisational structure, and political and economic functions were.

Historical Kurdistan, which is divided between four countries—Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria—has been less developed in terms of capitalism and industrialisation than the principal economic centres of these countries. Based on our assessment, if we take into account indicators such as the level of industrialisation, the size and diversity of production, infrastructure, urbanisation, the size of the wage-earning workforce, and the degree of development of capitalist relations, these regions can broadly be ranked as follows:

1. Turkish Kurdistan
2. Iranian Kurdistan
3. Iraqi Kurdistan
4. Syrian Kurdistan

¹⁶² In the ICP's text, **Silêmani** and **Hewlêr** are used, which are the Kurdish (Sorani) forms commonly used in Kurdish-language contexts. We have used **Sulaymaniyah** and **Erbil**, which are the standard English names and are more appropriate for English readers.

This difference in the level of development is important when assessing the Party's claim that nearly one hundred "workers' councils" existed in the two cities of Sulaymaniyah and Erbil in 1991. If such a claim is made, it is necessary to demonstrate whether these were genuinely organs of class struggle and class power, or forms of mass organisation that emerged under conditions of a power vacuum.

For comparison, Russia in 1917 was one of the major industrial countries in the world, and its working-class population was estimated at around 25 million. During the October Revolution, an extensive network of workers' councils had emerged in the industrial and urban centres. At the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets, 649 delegates from 318 workers' councils debated and took decisions on the question of the seizure of political power by the soviets. These councils became the central organs through which the question of political power was posed and ultimately resolved in favour of the revolutionary forces. Thus, the question of political power was placed directly before the workers' councils.¹⁶³

By contrast, Iraqi Kurdistan in 1991 had a population of around three million, and its economy was still largely dependent on agriculture. Statistics from the late 1980s also indicate that industry accounted for only a very small proportion of employment in the region. In 1987, only around 3.9 per cent of the region's workforce was employed in industry, while in 1990 the number of large factories in the region remained very limited. One academic study also reports that, in 1987, only 4.9 per cent of Iraq's heavy industry was located in Kurdistan, and that in 1990 there were only nine large factories in the region, mainly operating in sectors such as food processing, cement and cigarette production. During the same period, agriculture remained the mainstay of the regional economy. The study states:

"Official figures in 1987 stated that only 4.9 per cent of Iraq's heavy industry was in Kurdistan. In 1990 the region only contained

¹⁶³ [Marxists Internet Archive](#).

nine 'major factories' with these concentrating on the production of cement and cigarettes. The most productive sector of the economy in Kurdistan had been agriculture."¹⁶⁴

It should be noted, of course, that the Iraqi economy at the time tended towards state capitalism, and the state sector therefore carried considerable weight. The state apparatus and public services employed a substantial number of salaried workers, ranging from teachers and healthcare workers to employees of state-owned enterprises and other wage and salary earners. Even if we include all these groups alongside industrial workers, private-sector workers and part of the rural proletariat, our optimistic estimate of the total proletarian and wage-earning workforce in Iraqi Kurdistan would be around half a million in March 1991.

The issue, therefore, is not simply a numerical comparison between the number of workers in Russia and Iraqi Kurdistan. What matters is the relationship between the size and concentration of the proletariat, the level of capitalist development, the experience of class struggle, and the emergence of organs of class power. In 1917, Russia ranked approximately fifth in the world in terms of total industrial output, after the United States, Germany, Britain and France, and its working-class population was estimated at around 25 million. During the October Revolution, an extensive network of workers' councils had also emerged; at the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets, 649 delegates from **318 councils** participated in decisions concerning the seizure of political power.

How, then, can we accept the claim that in Iraqi Kurdistan, with an economy that was predominantly agricultural and in a region with a low level of industrial development, nearly one hundred "workers' councils" could have emerged among at most around half a million workers, and that these were concentrated in just two cities, Sulaymaniyah and Erbil? Without providing evidence or explaining the nature and composition of

¹⁶⁴ [Reading Polanyi in Erbil](#).

these organisations, the Party's claim does not appear to be consistent with the material and historical realities of the period.

The Party's further claim that the councils organised an armed force throughout Southern Kurdistan is equally in need of supporting evidence. The word "throughout" is important here, because the claim that an armed force was organised across the whole of Southern Kurdistan goes far beyond the existence of armed groups in particular cities or neighbourhoods.

The central issue, therefore, is neither to deny the workers' struggles in 1991 nor to disregard the forms of self-organisation that emerged during the uprising. The issue is to distinguish between a mass uprising, forms of social self-organisation, workers' organisations and organs of proletarian power. This distinction is not merely terminological. Attributing a proletarian character to an inter-class or mass movement can produce precisely the kind of ambiguity that a revolutionary organisation should seek to overcome.

Komala was based in Iraqi Kurdistan and, during the 1991 uprising, issued an organisational directive instructing its members and activists not to participate in the uprising. The reason for this decision was fear of reprisals by the Iraqi state, which had repeatedly bombed Komala's bases in an attempt to punish the organisation, killing a number of its Peshmerga fighters on each occasion. In one such attack, the chemical bombing of Komala's central camp resulted in the deaths of 23 of its most prominent and longest-serving activists.

However, one member of Komala did participate in the protests and later published his account under the title *A Council Movement Activist from Iraqi Kurdistan Speaks: Notes on an Uprising, a Victory and a Defeat*, in booklet form and under the pseudonym "Shirko".¹⁶⁵ Although the author, as an activist of a tendency within the left of capital, did not have a clear understanding of the Marxist concept of workers' councils and presented his account from a leftist perspective, largely in

¹⁶⁵ Muzaffar Mohammadi later published the booklet under his real name in Persian and Kurdish. He is now a member of the Hekmatist Party (Official Line).

chronological form, his report is nevertheless significant because he was personally present during the events. We therefore draw on his account, while taking into consideration his leftist perspective, which may have influenced both his understanding of the concept of councils and the way in which he recounted the events, in order to examine the course and nature of the uprising more objectively.

The uprising in Iraqi Kurdistan took place under conditions of a power vacuum. Following the defeat of the Iraqi army in the Gulf War and the weakening of the state apparatus, the wave of protests spread from southern Iraq to Kurdistan. People took to the streets, and a spontaneous mass uprising developed. During the armed uprising, former Peshmerga fighters from bourgeois parties played an important role, as they were familiar with various types of weapons, particularly heavier weapons. The narrator himself writes:

“The streets are in the hands of the people who have risen up... The armed uprising is spontaneous and unorganised. Here and there, communists, militants and supporters of the opposition’s armed forces are present and play an important role. Most of them are former Peshmerga fighters and know how to use various types of weapons, particularly RPGs. But it is the people themselves, especially the young people, who are at the forefront.”¹⁶⁶

This description shows, above all, that we were dealing with a mass armed uprising, rather than a movement that had emerged from the outset on the basis of the independent political organisation of the proletariat. The presence of workers or communists in such an uprising does not, in itself, make it proletarian in character. The fundamental question is which class and which programme determined the political direction of the movement.

¹⁶⁶ [A Council Movement Activist from Iraqi Kurdistan Speaks: Notes on an Uprising, a Victory and a Defeat.](#)

Following the uprising and the expulsion of government forces from the cities, the idea of councils was raised among workers, the population and leftist activists. However, the content attributed to a “workers’ council” at the time often went no further than occupying a factory, removing the manager and running the factory’s affairs; in other words, something closer to a factory committee, and not necessarily even reaching the level of workers’ control. Regarding one such case, we read:

“The idea of councils has spread widely throughout the city... Councils are being set up. A council has been formed in several neighbourhoods, and the comrades are pleased today... We have a long discussion about councils with a small group of workers—several workers and their wives, all of whom are tobacco workers. One of the workers is an old communist, a broken-down man who believes that workers do not understand anything unless intellectuals do something... We agree that they should go ahead with establishing a council, removing the factory manager and doing many other things... and that they should occupy the factory and, if possible, get it running. In any case, the factory should serve as the council’s stronghold. This is the first germ of the establishment of a workers’ council.”¹⁶⁷

This account itself demonstrates that there was a considerable gap between the “council” as a name and the council as an organ of proletarian class power. The occupation of a factory, the removal of a manager, or the temporary running of production may form part of a workers’ struggle, but none of these, in itself, means that a council has emerged as an organ of the proletariat’s political power. More importantly, only a few days after the events began, even activists involved in the movement—let alone the mass of workers—acknowledged that they had no clear understanding of what a council was:

¹⁶⁷ [A Council Movement Activist from Iraqi Kurdistan Speaks: Notes on an Uprising, a Victory and a Defeat.](#)

*“There is no clear conception of the council. This is the case even among the activists of the council movement, let alone among the masses of workers and working people. Our first task is to bring the activists of the council movement together in one centre. We are gathering the uprising groups at the leadership level and establishing the first central organisation of the council movement. The uprising groups have now been renamed and reorganised as ‘groups for advancing the council movement’, and the platform of ‘council power’ is the common platform of the central leadership. Today, the first meeting of the tobacco workers’ council is being held.”*¹⁶⁸

This admission is highly significant. If even the activists of the council movement had no clear conception of what a council was, how can these organisations, without examining their actual content, be described as “workers’ councils”, let alone as “embryonic organs of the dictatorship of the proletariat”? From a communist perspective, a council is not merely a forum for putting forward social demands or managing day-to-day affairs; in its revolutionary sense, it is an organ of the working class’s struggle and political power. Demands for bread, employment, healthcare and public health have material and social importance, but the existence of such demands, in itself, does not transform an organisation into an organ of proletarian power.

Unfortunately, during the uprising, the workers had not yet developed an independent class consciousness and were still looking to intellectuals to act on their behalf. In this regard, the report in question states:

“In almost all neighbourhoods, headquarters for the activities of the council movement have been established, consisting mainly of workers and armed young people. They are, in fact, the defenders and protectors of the councils. But we are still some way from

¹⁶⁸ See source 167.

having real, mass councils, and it will take time... Council activists in workshops, factories and neighbourhoods are trying to bring ever larger numbers of people into the councils and to tell them that participation means councils, and councils mean popular rule. That means freedom, bread, work, healthcare and public health, and so on. Overall, the workers did not have confidence in their own strength and once again spoke of the role of intellectuals. Nevertheless, they agreed with the council, with the new labour law, with the removal of the manager and with intervening in the affairs of the factory; in this way, the first germ of the council was formed.”¹⁶⁹

Contrary to the picture presented of a “proletarian uprising”, this account shows that, at that point, there was still a considerable gap between the existing organisations and independent organs of proletarian power. Even in the account of an activist of the council movement, the “council” is defined in terms of “popular rule”, rather than the class rule of the proletariat. This distinction is decisive for a Marxist analysis.

During these events, workers’ committees, neighbourhood committees and other forms of mass organisation emerged in some factories, workplaces and neighbourhoods. These experiences, as forms of self-organisation arising under conditions of an uprising, are significant and valuable and should be preserved in the historical memory of the workers’ struggle. However, a Marxist organisation has a responsibility to distinguish between the historical significance of a particular experience of struggle and its class character.

Not every organisation that calls itself a “council” is necessarily a workers’ council in the Marxist sense, even if workers are involved in it. For example, regarding one of these councils, we read:

“At the meeting, four programmes and resolutions were proposed and, following discussion and consideration, were approved by the

¹⁶⁹ See [source 167](#).

committee. The committee also issued a statement addressed to the people and the Peshmerga forces, stating that the council was affiliated to no party or group; that the council demanded unconditional freedom; and that the council was not hostile to the parties of the front or to the Peshmerga forces, and called for their support for the councils...’’¹⁷⁰

This raises the question: if a “workers’ council” declares itself independent of political parties, but at the same time asks bourgeois parties and Peshmerga forces to support it, what exactly is its relationship to proletarian class power? Organisational independence, without political and class independence, cannot, in itself, be a sufficient criterion for identifying a proletarian organ.

For this reason, contrary to the Party’s characterisation of it as a “proletarian uprising”, the available evidence points more towards a mass, cross-class uprising that emerged under conditions of a power vacuum and in the course of which various forms of local and workers’ organisation developed. This in no way diminishes the significance of the workers’ struggles; on the contrary, it is the responsibility of communists to analyse these experiences from a class perspective and to clarify the distinction between the achievements of the workers’ struggle and its limitations.

One of the consequences of the uprising’s heterogeneous and cross-class character was the possibility of irresponsible actions and behaviour, as well as the emergence of reactionary tendencies. In a proletarian struggle, the central concern is to defend the means and material conditions necessary for the reproduction of social life and to extend the class power of the workers, rather than to loot or destroy public property, means of production, or social services. The narrator himself refers to such instances:

“Here and there, there was also criticism of excesses in the confiscations, such as breaking into and taking equipment from

¹⁷⁰ See source 167.

schools and government offices, smashing machinery in workshops and factories, and taking medicines from pharmacies and hospital stores.”¹⁷¹

Therefore, the mere presence of workers, the formation of committees, or even the use of the term “council” cannot, in itself, be regarded as sufficient grounds for describing an uprising as proletarian. From a communist standpoint, the decisive criterion is the class content and political direction of the movement: did the working class enter the arena as an independent force, establish its own independent organs of power, and set itself against all other classes in the struggle for political power? Or did it operate within a mass, cross-class movement alongside bourgeois, petty-bourgeois and nationalist forces?

If the answer is the latter, the task of communists is not to glorify the movement or attach the label “proletarian” to it, but to explain its class limitations, defend the political independence of the proletariat, and show the path from a mass uprising towards an independent and conscious class struggle.

Ultimately, Saddam Hussein’s repressive army drowned the uprising in blood, both in southern Iraq and in Iraqi Kurdistan. The scale of the repression and the resulting humanitarian catastrophe are described in the account of the activist who was present during the events as follows:

“Terrible reports of massacres: women, men and children with their limbs severed in Kirkuk, and hospitals overflowing with the wounded. The city of Sulaymaniyah is full of displaced people along the streets and beside the main roads, with hungry children crying for a morsel of bread. One million displaced people and thousands of wounded, without medicine, bread or shelter—these are people who tasted freedom for only a few days and are now paying the price for it. They had only a week or ten days in which

¹⁷¹ See source 167.

to think about councils and meet freely in their council headquarters. The US government and Bush, shamelessly claiming to support democracy and justice, are watching these massacres... Has this mass displacement brought the council movement to an end? It may be so...

There is a long line of refugees and people fleeing from the outskirts of Sulaymaniyah to the Iranian border—60 to 70 kilometres in length! And this is only one line, one column of displaced people fleeing towards the borders. Dozens of such lines, stretching from the southernmost part of Kurdistan to its northernmost reaches, are now carrying more than two million displaced people from within Kurdistan to the Iranian border. The weather has grown colder, and it rains from time to time. How many people will die from the cold and hunger today and tonight? How many children will perish?”¹⁷²

Alongside the military repression, another decisive factor in the course of events was the influence and activity of Kurdish nationalism. Nationalists had fostered the idea within society that victory was impossible without foreign support, particularly American support. This was reflected not only in political conduct and positions, but also in the symbols displayed throughout the city; photographs of Bush, Talabani and Barzani were widely distributed, and some armed individuals and members of the public even wore photographs of Bush on their chests:

“The nationalists have instilled this lack of perspective—or, in reality, the idea that victory is possible only with foreign assistance and American approval—into society. For this reason, photographs of Bush are in demand these days and are being widely distributed. Photographs of Bush alongside Jalal Talabani and Mulla Mustafa Barzani. Some armed individuals and members of the public are also wearing photographs of Bush on their chests.”¹⁷³

¹⁷² See source 167.

¹⁷³ See source 167.

This demonstrates that the political vacuum created by the withdrawal of Iraqi government forces did not, in itself, mean that independent proletarian power had emerged. In the absence of a clear class orientation and a communist political organisation, various social and political forces could move to fill this vacuum. Kurdish nationalism likewise took advantage of this vacuum and presented itself as one of the principal forces organising society.

However, even the account of an activist in the “council movement” shows that the movement never succeeded in reaching the stage that its activists had envisaged. The plan to turn the councils into mass organisations, establish an independent armed force of the councils, organise workers, and form a workers’ party was never realised. In his concluding assessment, the activist writes:

“Thus, the plan for the council movement activists to continue their work remained unfinished. A plan that was never completed because there was not enough time. The plan was to turn the councils into mass organisations, establish a mass armed force of the councils and, finally, form a workers’ organisation from among the leaders and activists of the council movement, particularly among the workers, and lay the groundwork for the formation of a workers’ party. Was it a fantasy? No. The incompetence, deadlock and betrayal of the bourgeois united front was the fundamental cause of the defeat of an uprising that could have brought a mass revolution to fruition.”¹⁷⁴

However, from the perspective of the communist left, this assessment itself requires criticism. The defeat of the uprising cannot be attributed solely to the “incompetence”, “deadlock” or “betrayal” of the bourgeois forces; nor can the absence of a communist party be regarded as the sole cause of its defeat. These factors may have influenced the course of events, but to understand the defeat, we must also consider the material conditions, the level of class struggle, the degree of proletarian

¹⁷⁴ See source 167.

organisation, and the actual content of the organs referred to as “councils”.

The International Communist Party, despite all these issues, identifies the “only” principal weakness of this uprising as the absence of a genuine communist party and describes it as the brave revolt of the young proletariat of Southern Kurdistan:

“The weakness of the brave revolt of the young Southern Kurdish proletariat was only that, although numerous radical groups claiming to be communists were present, there was no true world communist party to lead it and tie it to proletarian struggles in the rest of the planet.”¹⁷⁵

The absence of a revolutionary communist party is undoubtedly a very important issue. However, the question is on what class basis and according to what programme such a party should intervene, and what relationship it should establish with the struggles and self-organised organs of the proletariat. Thus, the issue is not simply that there was no genuine communist party. More fundamental questions also arise: Why were the organisations that called themselves “councils” unable to move beyond the management of certain workplaces and neighbourhoods and the resolution of immediate problems? Why were they unable to develop into independent organs of the proletariat’s political power? Why did capitalist relations of production remain intact? Why was the proletariat unable to transform its scattered organs into a unified, society-wide class power? And finally, how were the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) able to fill the political vacuum?

Answering these questions takes us beyond a merely political or moral explanation of the defeat and brings us back to the more fundamental issue: the relationship between material conditions, the level of class struggle, proletarian organisation, nationalism, and the question of the communist party.

¹⁷⁵ Al Anfal Campaign (1988) and Proletarian Revolt in Southern Kurdistan (1991).

The Left of Capital

Following the First World War, the overwhelming majority of social-democratic parties betrayed the interests of the working class, turned workers into cannon fodder for the imperialist war, and thereby joined the camp of capital once and for all. Only the Bolsheviks and very small minorities of revolutionaries in various countries remained faithful to their proletarian and internationalist positions throughout the First World War.

The defeat of the wave of world revolution, which began with the defeat of the German Revolution and the systematic repression and massacre of the most advanced elements of the German working class, led to the isolation of the October Revolution. The final embers of this revolutionary wave were extinguished in 1926 with the suppression of the general strike in Britain, and then in 1927, when the Shanghai uprising of the proletariat was drowned in blood. The isolation of the October Revolution created the conditions for an intensification of the process of degeneration and corruption in the sphere of proletarian internationalism and the decline of workers' council power in Russia. With the onset of the counter-revolution, the parties calling themselves "communist" were transformed into national parties subordinate to the interests of capital in their respective countries and gradually moved into the camp of the bourgeoisie. In their new form, these parties became one of the components of the left wing of capital's political apparatus.

From this perspective, genuine communism cannot be sought in the historical continuity of Stalinist, Trotskyist or other left-wing currents subordinate to capital. The historical continuity of revolutionary communism must instead be sought in communist left tendencies and in their consistent defence of internationalist and proletarian positions.

The political world cannot be explained simply through a crude and mechanical division into "black and white". In the political arena, there are tendencies and currents that, at different points, oscillate between proletarian and bourgeois positions, or occupy a position

somewhere between the two. However, this should not lead to ambiguity when identifying the class character of the “left of capital”. The left of capital is not an intermediate or “grey” current merely because it may employ radical, anti-capitalist or even ostensibly communist rhetoric. In terms of its class character, the left of capital is part of the bourgeois camp and one of the political forms through which capitalist social relations are defended. Its difference from the bourgeois right lies primarily in its mode of expression, political tactics, the nature of its demands, and the way it organises and controls protest movements, rather than in its class allegiance.

With these points in mind, we can turn to the position of the International Communist Party (il Partito) towards the left of capital. Unfortunately, not all of the currents operating under the name International Communist Party have a clear position on the left of capital. This ambiguity is partly due to the theoretical uncertainty and weakness of these currents in identifying and precisely defining the class character of the left of capital.

Ambiguity in drawing a clear boundary with the left of capital can, on the one hand, damage the credibility and clarity of the positions of the communist left and, on the other, inadvertently confer political legitimacy on bourgeois and counter-revolutionary currents. This issue becomes particularly important when we are dealing with currents that employ radical rhetoric. The left of capital, particularly in forms that use radical language and Marxist terminology, is capable of presenting itself as revolutionary. Such an image can make it difficult for some people opposed to the capitalist system to recognise its class character, thereby creating an obstacle to a radical critique of capital and to the independent class struggle of the proletariat.

Previously, in the course of our polemic with comrades of the International Communist Party (Proletarian), we demonstrated that, in assessing a bourgeois and counter-revolutionary current, these comrades had mistakenly characterised it as petty-bourgeois. In part of that discussion, we wrote:

“The comrades along with the petty bourgeoisie, when evaluating the bourgeois and counterrevolutionary current, have only shown their weaknesses in relation to the left of capital. Instead of defending proletarian positions as on communist left, they have reduced the class nature of the bourgeois current to a petty-bourgeois one, and thus created ambiguity about the left of capital.

It seems that comrades, even grab to the Bolsheviks to give a ‘pseudo-revolutionary’ identity to a bourgeois current, consider worker-communism to be on the left wing of reformism, but not reformist in itself! The degradation of the bourgeois nature of worker-communism into the petty bourgeoisie and the centre, and the use of the left wing of reformism for worker-communism is due to the own ambiguity of the comrades in relation to the essence of the left of capital.

The comrades have pointed to a fundamental issue: how do you detach the proletariat from the influence of these agents of the bourgeois? The fact is that the radical phrase part of capital is a serious obstacle to the advancement of internationalist positions. The radical phrase part of the capital can take the form of the “ideology of worker-communism” or any other name; but the functions and duties of all of them (the left of capital), regardless of their name or language, are the same, providing a radical image of themselves, creating a barrier to any radical critique of capital and providing a capital-friendly description of the class struggle and Marxism, albeit with radical language. The result is that a large body of the critics of the capitalist system are involved in the ideologies of the radical phrase part of the left of capital, such as worker-communism.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ Polemic with the International Communist Party (Proletarian): Worker-Communism Belongs to the Left of Capital, Not Petty-bourgeois Democratism

The fundamental issue for communists is to draw a clear class boundary between the proletariat and all factions of the bourgeoisie. No matter how much revolutionary, anti-capitalist or communist rhetoric the left of capital employs, as long as it operates within the framework of bourgeois politics and contributes to the reproduction of capitalist social relations, it belongs to the bourgeois camp. Its critique should therefore be based not on the radicalism of its language and rhetoric, but on its class character, political programme, practical activity, and relationship to the independent class struggle of the proletariat.

For internationalists, therefore, confronting the left of capital is an integral part of the struggle for the political and organisational independence of the proletariat. Without drawing this class boundary, radical rhetoric can replace revolutionary politics and lead forces opposed to capitalism towards forms of bourgeois politics that are merely presented under a left-wing and radical guise. From this perspective, the class independence of the proletariat requires a clear break with all factions of the bourgeoisie, including its left wing, and the revival of an internationalist politics based on class struggle.

Previously, in a polemic with comrades of the International Communist Party (*il Programma Comunista*)¹⁷⁷, we examined the ambiguity in their positions towards the left of capital and showed that, in some respects, this ambiguity does not differ fundamentally from that of the comrades of the International Communist Party (Proletarian). Continuing this discussion, we now turn to the positions of the International Communist Party (*il Partito*) and examine whether this party, despite defending communist left positions, also displays ambiguity in identifying and defining the class character of the left of capital.

In the party's literature, terms such as "reformist workers' parties", "opportunist parties" and, in some cases, "false workers' parties" are used to describe the political currents under criticism. By contrast, the terms

¹⁷⁷ Polemic with the International Communist Party (*il Programma Comunista*): Marxism or Schapperism?

“bourgeois left” or “left of capital” are used much less frequently. There are, however, instances in which the party explicitly refers to the “radical bourgeois left”. For example, in one of the party’s articles, we read:

“It was World War II – with 60 million dead – that brought capitalism out of the previous cycle of economic crisis and allowed it the post-war growth cycle, not the policies of State intervention and support for the economy, invoked today by the radical-bourgeois left, the opportunism of the false workers’ parties and the bourgeois so-called social right, and then applied by both democratic bourgeois regimes and totalitarian Nazi-fascist regimes.”¹⁷⁸

This example shows that the party recognises the concept of the “bourgeois left” in exceptional cases. The question, however, is to what extent this concept is employed in the party’s concrete analyses, and whether a clear theoretical and class distinction is made between terms such as “opportunist”, “reformist”, “false workers” and “bourgeois left”. In our previous examination of the Kurdish question, particularly in relation to Turkey and Iraq, we observed that the party uses terms such as “opportunist parties”, “reformist parties” and similar concepts to describe certain currents. These terms have specific meanings within the Marxist tradition, and their use is not in itself incorrect. The problem arises when these concepts substitute for a clear identification of the class character of the current in question.

In the case of Iran, too, parts of the party’s analysis contain correct and important points. Among these is the fact that a century of counter-revolution has produced widespread ideological confusion within the workers’ movement, and that many currents presenting themselves as “communist” have in fact represented counter-revolutionary politics. It is also correct to point out that the Iranian working class, like the proletariat

¹⁷⁸ [For a united trade union class front!](#)

in other countries, needs an internationalist and international communist party in order to free itself from the domination of capital.

However, the party does not draw clear and correct conclusions from these valid arguments. The problem is that when the class character of the currents in question is not precisely and explicitly identified, concepts such as “Stalinism”, “opportunism” and “false workers’ parties” can substitute for a concrete class analysis and lead to ambiguity in determining the actual class position of these currents. In the case of Iran, the party writes:

*“As in the rest of the world, the Iranian working class needs to reconnect with the party of the international communist revolution, sweeping away the ideological confusion of a century of counter-revolution, with its falsifications of communism; it must start with the Stalinist one, which in Iran, in the name of a false anti-imperialism, led the Tudeh in 1979 to the suicidal tactic of a united front with Khomeini!”*¹⁷⁹

Here, the criticism of Stalinism and the reference to the Tudeh Party’s support for Khomeini in 1979 are entirely understandable. However, if we are to go beyond the level of short-term political tactics and examine the character of the Tudeh Party from the standpoint of the class struggle, the issue is more complex than “opportunism” or the adoption of an incorrect tactic in 1979. The party goes on to write:

*“Iranian workers should not be deceived by the bourgeois regime’s changes of appearance, as unfortunately happened in 1979 with the fall of the Shah and the rise to power of the Ayatollahs, mainly due to the responsibility of the false workers’ parties, first and foremost the Tudeh, the party of Stalinist opportunism in Iran.”*¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ In Iran too the working-class uprising—led by its party—will be anti-capitalist, not anti-imperialist or democratic.

¹⁸⁰ Against the War Between Nations! For the Struggle Between Classes!

If this analysis is to explain the role of the Tudeh Party, it needs to distinguish between two issues: first, the Tudeh Party's historical and class position; and second, the specific policies pursued by the party during the events of 1979.

We have previously shown that an important part of the history of Iran's workers' and communist movement has either been omitted or marginalised in the ICP's analyses. This includes the Constitutional Revolution and its bourgeois-democratic character; the formation of the first Communist Party of Iran; the struggle of the left wing of that party within the international communist movement and its emphasis on world communist revolution; as well as the repression and massacre of a generation of "Iranian" communists.

In this context, the Tudeh Party cannot be regarded merely as the product of a "tactical error" in 1979 or as the result of adopting a united-front tactic with Khomeini. The Tudeh Party was formed in 1941, and its formation must be examined in the context of the defeat of the revolutionary wave, the victory of the counter-revolution, and the dominance of Stalinism over a large part of the international communist movement. Therefore, the fundamental issue concerning the Tudeh Party is not that, after some four decades, it made a mistake in 1979 and joined a united front with Khomeini. The more fundamental issue is the party's own historical and class character. From this perspective, the Tudeh Party was part of the left of capital and a bourgeois party that operated in accordance with the interests of the Soviet state and its policies.

It may be possible to describe the Tudeh Party as "opportunistic"; however, opportunism alone does not explain its class character. The fundamental question is which camp the Tudeh Party belonged to and which social and class relations it served. From a communist left perspective, the answer is clear: the Tudeh Party was part of the left of capital and operated within the framework of bourgeois politics, albeit using communist rhetoric and symbols.

This distinction is particularly important when examining the events of 1979. Contrary to the analysis of the International Communist

Party (il Partito), which overstates the role of the Tudeh Party, the Tudeh Party, because of its evident links with Soviet foreign policy and its well-known political character, was unable to play a decisive role in creating political confusion within the movement. The more significant part of the issue should be sought in a section of the left of capital that employed radical, “revolutionary” and, above all, “anti-imperialist” rhetoric. It was this section of the left of capital that was able to gain a much broader influence in the political climate of the time and, by advancing the struggle against “imperialism”, overshadow the independent class struggle of the proletariat with the national and democratic struggle.

Here, the role of the left of capital cannot be explained simply in terms of “opportunism” or “reformism”. The fundamental issue is the class position of these currents and the role they played in shifting the struggle from the terrain of the independent class struggle to that of bourgeois politics. The radical wing of the left of capital, by using anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist language, was able to present itself as revolutionary and influence sections of the protesting forces. As a result, a struggle that could have developed towards the political and class independence of the proletariat was diverted towards bourgeois objectives and horizons. From this perspective, the role of the left of capital in consolidating the leadership of the clergy and bringing the independent workers’ and anti-capitalist struggles to an impasse is not a secondary issue; rather, it is one of the fundamental questions in analysing the defeat of the class struggle in 1979.

We have previously examined the various currents within the radical wing of the left of capital and shown how, despite their theoretical and organisational differences, these currents ultimately operated within the framework of bourgeois politics and played a role in undermining the class independence of the proletariat.¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ For further information on the role of the left wing of capital in consolidating the leadership of the anti-imperialist clergy, see the article [“February 1979: when internationalists announced that Khomeini was no more progressive than the Queen of England or Emperor Bokassa I”](#).

Therefore, our concern is not simply why the International Communist Party uses terms such as “opportunist”, “reformist parties” or “false workers’ parties” to describe the left of capital. The more fundamental question is whether these terms, on their own, are sufficient to determine the class character of the left of capital, the Tudeh Party and the other currents under discussion.

The same issue applies to other currents of the left of capital. The use of radical rhetoric, claims to being communist, opposition to imperialism, or even criticism of capitalism does not, in itself, remove a current from the bourgeois camp. What matters in determining the class character of a current is its class position, political programme, practical activity, and relationship to the independent class struggle of the proletariat.

From this perspective, ambiguity in defining and identifying the left of capital is not merely a terminological problem; it can have serious political consequences. If a current that belongs to the bourgeois camp is described merely as “opportunist”, “reformist” or a “false workers’ party”, without its class character being clearly identified, the boundary between the proletariat and the bourgeois left remains blurred.

Therefore, our question to the comrades of the International Communist Party (il Partito) is this: are they prepared to critically examine the ambiguity in their positions towards the left of capital and draw a clear distinction between “opportunism” as a political tendency and the “left of capital” as part of the bourgeois camp?

If the aim is to lead the proletariat of Iran towards communist revolution, as part of the world communist revolution, do the comrades not risk creating confusion within the ranks of the working class through their ambiguous positions? The political independence of the proletariat requires a break with all factions of the bourgeoisie, including the bourgeois left, and an uncompromising critique of all currents that, by using radical language, divert the proletariat from its independent class struggle.

The final question to the comrades is precisely this: can ambiguous positions towards the left of capital lead to the political independence of the proletariat and communist revolution? Or is the precondition for such a revolution, above all, the clear drawing of a class boundary between revolutionary communism and all forms of bourgeois politics, including the left of capital?

Reducing the Revolutionary Organisation to a Passive Role

The question of the revolutionary organisation and the world party of the proletariat occupies a fundamental place in the tradition of the communist left. In order to achieve the world communist revolution, the proletariat needs a political organisation capable of expressing the historical and international interests of the working class and organising its scattered struggles in a unified and internationalist direction. From this perspective, the International Communist Party should not be understood as an organisation separate from the class, but as the political organisation of the communist and most advanced elements of the proletariat itself.

The communist revolution, by its very nature, cannot achieve victory within the framework of a single country or national interests. Capital is a global system, and the proletariat can confront it only by transforming its struggle into a conscious, united and international struggle. Therefore, the existence of an internationalist political organisation capable of linking the class struggle across national borders and transforming it into a unified political force against capital is one of the essential conditions for the victory of the world revolution.

The historical importance of the Italian communist left can be understood precisely in this context. This current, with a clear understanding of the revolutionary organisation and the tasks of revolutionaries, was not only able to develop this question, but also to pass on a body of historical lessons to subsequent generations. The survival of this tradition and the organisational continuity of the Italian communist left tradition, while other tendencies within the communist left disappeared, was to a large extent due to its clear understanding of the necessity of the revolutionary organisation. In this respect, the experience of the Italian communist left is of particular importance to communists of subsequent generations, although this does not mean

overlooking the experiences and achievements of other tendencies within the communist left.

For this reason, with regard to the necessity of the revolutionary organisation and the importance of the International Communist Party, we share the position of the comrades of the International Communist Party (il Partito) and, in opposition to anti-party councilism, emphasise the necessity of a proletarian political vanguard. The rejection of a proletarian political vanguard not only relegates the question of communist organisation to the margins, but may also, at the height of the class struggle, deprive the proletariat of the political instrument necessary to make a conscious and decisive choice concerning the course of the world revolution. The communist revolution is not simply the product of the spontaneous eruption of everyday struggles or even of the formation of councils; rather, it requires the transformation of the class struggle into a political struggle against the power of capital and, ultimately, the abolition of capitalist relations of production on a global scale.

Of course, it is necessary here to clarify what is meant by councilism. In this discussion, councilism does not refer to those tendencies that, in practice, adopt the positions of the left of capital and merely add councilism as a theoretical cover. Our discussion concerns tendencies that place themselves in opposition to capital and bourgeois relations and are not necessarily counter-revolutionary or part of the left of capital, but which, by rejecting the necessity of a communist party and political organisation, assign a decisive role to the spontaneity of the councils.

The task of the revolutionary organisation is neither to follow the working class nor, worse still, to follow social and popular movements, but to defend and insist upon the communist programme under all circumstances, even if this leads to the temporary isolation of the revolutionary organisation. The revolutionary organisation has a responsibility to make the working class aware of the dangers and, more importantly, of the traps designed by the bourgeoisie to advance its own objectives, and to act as a compass, indicating the direction of the

struggle, even if, at a particular point, these warnings find no resonance and go unheard.

This responsibility goes beyond providing temporary solutions or short-term tactics within the workers' movement. Only by emphasising the maintenance of class independence and clearly explaining the strategic communist path can the working class protect itself from the traps, deceptions and deviations of reactionary forces and enter future battles with greater strength and preparedness. To clarify this point, we can turn to historical examples that demonstrate particularly well the role of communists in warning the working class and providing it with political direction.

In July 1917, the Russian bourgeoisie attempted to provoke a premature uprising in Petrograd in order to create conditions in which it could use the pretext of an "armed revolt" to launch bloody repression against the proletariat and the Bolsheviks. In response to these provocations, the armed proletariat of Petrograd took to the streets under the slogan "All power to the Soviets". When the Bolsheviks were confronted with an armed demonstration of around half a million workers in Petrograd, they sought to prevent the working class from falling into the trap laid by the bourgeoisie. The Bolsheviks had previously warned the working class about the consequences of such a hasty action.

That same night, under the influence of the political maturity and skill of the Bolsheviks, the proletariat gradually came to recognise the rashness of its action, and the Bolsheviks, through their political judgement, succeeded in preventing the movement from turning into a bloodbath. This experience demonstrated that even when the working masses enter the field of struggle on a large scale, the task of communists is not merely to go along with the existing movement; maintaining an independent class orientation and preventing the struggle from falling into the political traps of the bourgeoisie are also essential parts of their responsibilities.

In Germany, events unfolded differently. Through its provocations, the bourgeoisie succeeded in drawing the proletariat into a premature

uprising in 1919. During the First World War, Liebknecht acted as a political compass and the moral conscience of the German proletariat, and indeed of the world proletariat. Yet this very moral conscience, despite its revolutionary courage and forthrightness, also displayed a certain political immaturity. Nevertheless, at the critical moment of the revolution, the necessary political leadership to assess the situation and make a decision appropriate to the balance of class forces was lost. At this historic turning point, sections of the revolutionary forces fell into the trap of bourgeois provocations, and the armed uprising began. When Rosa Luxemburg heard the news, she was deeply concerned about its consequences, but it was already too late to alter the course of events.

The result of this premature uprising was the bloody repression of the proletariat and the murder of communist leaders. The premature uprising of 1919 dealt one of the major blows to the development of the world revolution. The German experience demonstrated that subjective determination and revolutionary courage, on their own, are not sufficient conditions for the victory of the working class; revolutionary determination must be accompanied by an objective understanding of the circumstances, an assessment of the balance of class forces, and a clear political orientation.

Therefore, the defence of the communist programme cannot be dependent upon the temporary rise or decline of the class struggle. On the contrary, its necessity becomes more apparent than ever during turbulent periods and under conditions of ambiguity and confusion. In such circumstances, the active and unwavering defence of proletarian positions and the preservation of the political independence of the working class become all the more important. The revolutionary organisation must be able to insist upon communist principles and the communist programme even when its voice cannot be heard amid the excitement and urgency of the struggle; for its task is not to follow every movement that emerges, but to contribute to the development of a conscious and independent orientation of the proletariat towards the world communist revolution.

With these points in mind, we return to the International Communist Party (il Partito). Throughout this debate, by making specific reference to social events and struggles, we have emphasised that, rather than acting as a political compass in these events and providing political clarity, the comrades have, in some cases, contributed to creating further ambiguity. This is despite the fact that, in various texts, the party emphasises the importance of the revolutionary organisation and the necessity of the communist party. Nevertheless, throughout this polemic, we have observed concretely that the party's actual practice, rather than presenting the image of a militant communist organisation, tends towards a form of determinism and, in reality, a kind of passivity.

The fundamental issue here is the ambiguity between the theoretical understanding of the necessity of the revolutionary organisation and the way it operates in practice in the face of social events. In the real world, when confronted with struggles and social movements, the party, by reducing the role of the revolutionary organisation to that of an interpreter, commentator or analyst of struggles, relegates the conscious and organised role of communists in the class struggle to that of philosophers observing the struggle from the sidelines. In such an approach, rather than participating in the class struggle as an active political force that provides direction and organisation, the revolutionary organisation largely confines itself to explaining and interpreting what is happening in society.

From this perspective, this approach can, in practice, be seen as the other side of the same coin and an inverted form of councilism: councilism, by denying the necessity of the party, rejects the political role of communists; whereas the International Communist Party, while retaining the form of a party, reduces the practical and interventionist role of the revolutionary organisation to that of an interpreter of struggles, and does so in an ambiguous manner.

The communist revolution is a global project, and its victory cannot be achieved within the framework of a single country. Without an internationalist and international communist party, the working class will

be unable to transform its potential power into a united revolutionary political force capable of overthrowing the rule of capital. For this reason, the effort to build such a party is an essential necessity from today onwards.

Within this framework, the debate aimed at achieving political clarity among the tendencies of the communist left is not merely a theoretical discussion or an abstract disagreement; rather, it may constitute one of the initial steps towards the formation of the future internationalist and international communist party. Clarity concerning the role of the revolutionary organisation, the relationship between the party and the class, the tasks of communists in struggles, and the manner in which communists intervene in the class struggle is a prerequisite for ensuring that the future party becomes a conscious, organised and militant political force in the service of the world revolution of the proletariat.

The Communist Left

We believe that genuine communism has continued within the tradition of the communist left. This conviction is not a matter of religious faith in the communist left, but the outcome of a communist consciousness and a historical assessment of the class struggle. The communist left, despite the ambiguities, confusions and even mistakes it has made throughout its proud history, has consistently upheld proletarian principles and objectives and sought to preserve the political and historical independence of the proletariat in the face of capital. For this reason, the communist left has served as a political compass, indicating the direction of the class struggle and becoming a point of reference for proletarian militants.

The principal tendencies of the communist left, including the International Communist Party (il Partito), have major responsibilities. These responsibilities cannot be fulfilled by evading political responsibilities or by retreating into sectarianism and organisational isolation. On the contrary, these tendencies must be able to act as a political point of reference for other, less experienced tendencies within the communist left, as well as for militants who are gradually moving towards communist left positions.

In a situation where the working class is influenced by the various ideologies of the ruling class, and where the left of capital continues to act as a safety valve for the bourgeoisie, the responsibility of the principal tendencies of the communist left becomes more important than ever. In such circumstances, acting as a political compass in social events and providing political clarity to class struggles becomes more necessary than ever. The task of communists is not merely to interpret events; it is also to defend proletarian positions, clarify the direction of the struggle, and help preserve the political independence of the working class in the face of bourgeois ideologies and forces.

The communist left is neither a religion nor a set of rigid and immutable ideas; rather, it is a living and dynamic tradition that must

continually be enriched in the light of the experience of the class struggle. Defending the positions of the communist left and, more importantly, enriching these positions on the basis of the achievements and lessons of the class struggle requires the co-operation and mutual support of all those who view social events from an internationalist standpoint and consider themselves part of the tradition of the communist left.

Only through such co-operation and debate can we help bring greater clarity to the proletarian political milieu and take steps towards strengthening and intensifying the class struggle. For this reason, we hope to see greater co-operation and mutual support with the International Communist Party (il Partito) in the future. Greater clarity within the proletarian political milieu is an important step towards preparing the world proletariat for the victory of the world communist revolution.

Internationalist Voice

30 August 2026

Appendix “A”

From Internationalist Voice to:

- International Communist Party (The Communist Party)
- International Communist Party (The Internationalist)
- International Communist Party (Proletarian)
- International Communist Party (The International Communist)
- Internationalist Communist Tendency
- International Communist Current
- Istituto Onorato Damen
- Internationalist Communist Perspective

Dear comrades,

Imperialist wars have plunged large parts of the world into barbarism and devastation—a process that continues to intensify. Now, a full-scale war has erupted in the Middle East, involving or affecting around fifteen countries, with barbarity revealing itself in its most naked and blatant form. Although it is currently the working class of the Middle East that is being sacrificed as cannon fodder, the effects of this war will not remain confined to the region. The imperialist war in the Middle East will have profound consequences not only for the working class of the region but also for the global proletariat, as imperialist tensions are escalating and will not end here.

The destructive tensions and wars of imperialism can only be confronted under the banner of proletarian internationalism. Over the past hundred years, it has been the communist left alone that has consistently remained loyal to internationalist principles, upholding the banner of proletarian internationalism with unwavering commitment. They have firmly raised this banner in opposition to all those forces that have sought to divide the proletariat in the name of fighting “fascism,” “defending democracy,” “defending the motherland,” or “defending the socialist fatherland.”

You, as the main currents of communist left, continue to bear the crucial responsibility of defending proletarian positions. Contrary to the lies of the ruling class, workers have no stake in imperialist wars and must not be asked to make any sacrifices in these conflicts. Emphasising the historic slogan of the labour movement, such as “Workers have no fatherland,” and insisting on class struggle against a system that exploits workers and sends them as cannon fodder to the battlefields remain vital duties of communist left.

The Internationalist Voice believes that, as in the past, you will remain faithful to your internationalist responsibility in opposing imperialist wars. In this spirit, and based on the principled positions of the communist left, the Internationalist Voice has prepared a statement in defence of internationalism and invites you to sign and support it, so that together, with a united and collective voice, we can take a stand against imperialist war.

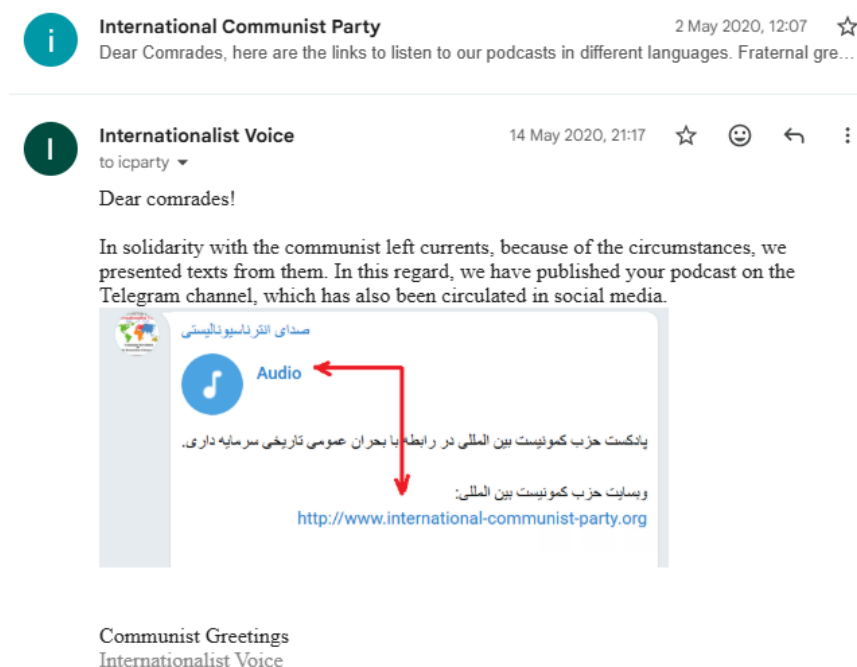
With communist and internationalist greetings.

Internationalist Voice

4 March 2026

Appendix “B”

The image below shows that *Internationalist Voice*, despite the International Communist Party (il Partito)’s refusal to engage in any form of practical cooperation, republished the party’s podcast and thereby contributed to the wider dissemination of its positions within the political milieu. Furthermore, this action and its results were communicated to the party itself in an entirely comradely manner.



Appendix “C”

A list of some articles related to imperialist wars and internationalist opposition, together with links, is provided below:

- [War Flares Up Again in the Middle East: Capitalism Offers Humanity No Future but War and Barbarism](#)
- [Beyond War and Memorandums of Understanding: Capitalism, the Source of Imperialist War](#)
- [The Middle East war and the intensification of imperialist rivalry: Europe’s efforts to maintain its position amid global chaos](#)
- [The Bloody Quagmire of the Middle East and the Escalating War: Spreading the Chaos of Global Capitalism](#)
- [War Criminals’ Temporary Ceasefire: an Interlude in the Generalised Imperialist War](#)
- [From Propaganda Wars to War Propaganda: Engineering Minds in the Service of Capitalist Wars](#)
- [Den of Thieves \(the UN\) or the Law of the Jungle: A Tool for Managing Capitalist Barbarism](#)
- [Capital’s Imperialist War: Massacre of the Working Class Across Work and Life Spaces](#)
- [Escalating Imperialist War and Capitalist Barbarism: Internationalism Is the Only Answer](#)
- [From the Statue of Liberty to the Girls’ Primary School in Minab: Capitalism Means War and Barbarism](#)
- [Response to Imperialist War: All-Class Pacifism or Class Struggle?](#)
- [Middle East in the Fire of War: Capitalism Is War, War On Capitalism!](#)
- [There Can Be No Struggle Against Imperialist War Without the Positions of the Communist Left](#)
- [Submission or War? Capitalism and the Tendency Towards Generalised Imperialist War, and the Internationalist Response](#)

A list of some articles related to social protests, together with links, is provided below:

- [Execution, an Instrument of Bourgeois Repression; Class Struggle, the Path to Emancipation!](#)
- [Death of one of the ‘death judges’ of the 1980s](#)
- [Bloody Repression and Bourgeois Alternatives as Instruments of Defeat; The Necessity of Independent and Internationalist Working-Class Struggle](#)
- [Internationalist Voice Responds! Protests in Iran: Are Socialist Ideas Truly Practical and Influential Today?](#)
- [Neither a New Guadeloupe nor Chaos and Social Collapse: Long Live the Independent Proletarian Struggle!](#)
- [For Today’s and Tomorrow’s Battles, We Must Discuss, Learn and Organise!](#)
- [From the Bazaar to the Streets: The Crisis of Capitalism and the Necessity of Independent Working-Class Struggle](#)

Appendix “D”

As can be seen in the image below, the BİRTEK-SEN website states that it was prepared with the support and contribution of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation’s Representative Office in Turkey. The Turkish text highlighted in red below reads:

“This website was prepared with the support and contribution of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation’s Representative Office in Turkey”.



Basic Positions:

- The First World War was an indication that the capitalism had been a decadent social system. It also proved that there were only two alternatives to this system: communist revolution or the destruction of humanity.
- In our epoch, the working class is the only revolutionary class. Furthermore, only this social class can deliver the communist revolution and end the barbarity of capitalism.
- Once capitalism entered its decadent period, unions all over the world were transformed into organs of the capital system. In turn, the main tasks of unions were to control the working class and mislead them about its class struggle.
- In the epoch of decadent capitalism, participating in the parliamentary circus and elections only strengthens the illusion of democracy. Capitalist democracy and capitalist dictatorship are two sides of the same coin, namely, the barbarity of capitalism.
- All national movements are counterrevolutionary, against the working class and the class struggle. Wars of national liberation are pawns in imperialist conflict.
- The reason for the failure of the October Revolution was the failure of the revolutionary wave, particularly the failure of the German Revolution, which resulted in the isolation of October Revolution and afterwards its degeneration.
- All left parties are reactionary: Stalinists, Maoists, Trotskyists and official anarchists etc. represent the political apparatus of capital.

- The regimes that arose in the USSR, Eastern Europe, China, Cuba etc., while being called “socialist” or “communist”, only offered a particularly brutal and barbaric form of capitalism: state capitalism.
- The revolutionary organization constitutes the avant-garde of the proletariat and is an active factor in the development and generalization of class consciousness. Revolutionary organizations may only take the form of revolutionary minorities, whose task neither is to organize the working class nor take power in its stead, without being a **political leadership**, or a political compass, where revolutionary organizations’ political clarity and influence on the working classes are **the fundamental elements for the implementation of a communist revolution**.

Political belongings:

The current status, positions, views and activities of the proletarian political tendencies are the product of past experiences of the working class and the effectiveness of the lessons that political organizations of the working class have learned during the history of the proletariat. Therefore, Internationalist Voice can trace its own roots and origins back to the Communist League, the First International, the left wing of both the Second International and the Third International, and the fractions that defended proletarian and communist positions against the degenerating Third International, which was represented by Dutch-German fractions, and **particularly Italian Fraction of the Communist Left** and the defence of Communist Left traditions.

Internationalist Voice Already Published!

