Beyond the Party: The Evolution of the Concept of “the Party” since Marx – Junius Collective (Pour une Intervention)
Note to the reader

The text published in this issue is the product of a collective project undertaken over a period of three years by the group “Pour une Intervention Communiste” (which published the journal, Jeune Taupe). Originally intended to comprise the first
part of a larger work on the topic of revolutionary organization, it nonetheless constitutes a Whole that may be read on its own, independently of its sequels, which, for the time being, remain unfinished.

As a result of the dissolution of Pour une Intervention Communiste in November 1981, the members who had resigned from the group six
months earlier and who had since that time been publishing the journal, *Révolution sociale*, assumed responsibility for the further political dissemination of this text and express their sincere gratitude to Cahiers Spartacus which ensured that the text would be published. In order to show our respect for the collective nature of the text’s production, however, we have decided, in
agreement with René Lefeuvre, to attribute its authorship to a pseudonymous collective.

Révolution sociale
March 1982

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No saviour from on high delivers,
No faith have we in prince or peer.
Our own right hand the chains must shiver....

“The Internationale”
(lyrics by E. Pottier, music by P. Degeyter)

Preface to the Spanish edition

Proletarian organization and the role of revolutionary minorities
With respect to this Spanish edition, which retains the title of the work originally published in 1982 by Editions Spartacus (8 impasse Crozatier, 75012, Paris, France), *Au-delà du Parti* (Beyond the Party), it is necessary to provide—twenty years after it was first published—some indispensable explanations in order to help the reader
I. History

In France, under the influence of the general strike of May-June 1968 and the proletarian movements that took place in various European countries (Italy, Poland, England, Portugal, Spain...), a group of revolutionaries formed an organization that existed
between 1974 and December of 1981. It was called “Pour une Intervention Communiste” (PIC) (For a Communist Intervention) and published a quarterly journal called *Jeune Taupe* (Young Mole) (a total of 38 issues were published). Primarily concerned with activity on the terrain of contemporary struggles, this group engaged in a process of reflection on the question of organization,
seeking to derive lessons from the experiences of the past. Considering itself to be a product of class confrontations, it sought to be an active factor in contemporary and future movements by contributing, in the class struggle, to revolutionary consciousness. It rejected both the Leninist concept of the Party, according to which the Party brought consciousness from
“outside” the proletariat, as well as the concept of the councilists, who denied the necessity of any role for revolutionary minorities.

It gradually dawned on the members of the group that this was an immense task, since they had to go all the way back to Marx in order to clarify the situation. After having established a general plan for study, divided into
four major parts, its militants set to work, without claiming, as others did, that they were “the skeleton of the future communist Party” that the other minorities only needed to join. Each member of the group shared the task of writing the text, always aware of its purposes and the discoveries of previous research. Once written, all the texts had to be read by all the members of the group
and then submitted to collective debate. One comrade wrote the first part, which bears the title, “The Evolution of the Concept of the Party since Marx”, and, after it was discussed, another comrade added a three-page note on anarchism. The other, unfinished, parts remained in the condition of rough drafts, and only the articles, “On Organization” were
published in the group’s journal as preparatory contributions to Part Three: Current Perspectives on Organization.

PIC was swept up by the storm of the social movement in Poland (August 1980-December 1981), which led to divergent interpretations, and then analytical disagreements that crystallized into tendencies
and finally resulted in a split (May 1981). After a few months and after two more issues of *Jeune Taupe* (Nos. 37 and 38), the majority fraction decided to dissolve the group. In the meantime, those who supported the split had already formed another group, “Volonté Communiste”, which published 17 issues of a monthly journal entitled, *Révolution sociale*. It was the
members of this group who asked Editions Spartacus to publish Part One under the title, “Au-delà du Parti”, with its authorship attributed to “Collectif Junius”, to show respect for the principle of the work’s collective production (see “Note to the Reader”, above).

II. The contents of the Spanish edition
After this Preface, the reader will find the translation of Part One: “The Evolution of the Concept of the Party since Marx”, which was published by Editions Spartacus under the title, *Beyond the Party*.

After the main body of the text below, the reader will discover, as added appendices that did not appear in the original French
edition, the articles collected under the title, “On Organization”, which were originally published in issues 35 and 36 of the journal, *Jeune Taupe*. These articles were originally intended to be included in Part Three: “Current Perspectives on Organization” (see the outline of the general plan for the text, above). We hope that all of this will
still be able to contribute some elements of a theoretical response to the vital problem of proletarian revolutionary organization. Unfortunately, it would be very difficult to take up the thread of this text where it left off—at least in the foreseeable future—and carry on with the task it sought to perform, in such a way as to fill in the gaps and complete the project as it was
initially conceived, due to the dissolution of the successive groups that were engaged in this project and the scattering of their members. However, because this problem of organization has not been relegated to a secondary place in our concerns, we shall attempt to clarify the points that seem most essential and that are elaborated throughout this Spanish edition translated by
comrade Emilio, to whom we express our thanks. For it is the case that, with respect to both proletarian organization as well as the role of revolutionary minorities, important critiques can be articulated concerning what should not be done, in the light of the erroneous concepts of Marxism, social democracy, Bolshevism, anarchism, and also the ultra-left (that is, the different
varieties of the communist left: Luxemburgism, Bordiguism, councilism). Beyond these critiques, it is also possible to discern certain signposts that point towards what should be done in order for proletarian organization to be independent of the ruling ideology, the vehicle of the class consciousness of the immense majority of the exploited, and therefore
effective as a means to destroy, from the bottom up, in a revolutionary way, the entire capitalist apparatus (States, borders, law of value, commodities, money…).

III. An organization produced by the revolutionary movement of the proletariat

All historical experience, and all the analyses derived from
that experience, clearly prove that the organization of the proletariat, that is, the unitary organization of the class, cannot be created prior to the revolutionary movement…. Otherwise, it becomes a “mass party” that seeks to enroll the proletarians for reformist goals (the so-called minimum program) and goals that are counterrevolutionary in the
long run (the ideology of the so-called maximum program). Especially noteworthy for their performance of this anti-proletarian role were the German Social Democratic Party and the Second International before 1914 (dragging the world proletariat into the first imperialist slaughterhouse), and then the Russian Social Democratic Workers’ Party-
Bolshevik (Majority), which later called itself the “Communist Party”, and the Third International after 1917-1919 (dragging the world proletariat into the counterrevolution of 1920-1930, and then the second imperialist slaughterhouse). We recall that the delegate of the German Communist Party-Spartacus League, Eberlein, had been mandated to vote against the founding
of the Third International if the latter were to have its headquarters in Moscow, so that the German Party would face the prospect of being under the boot of the Bolshevik-Leninists. (As it turned out, by the time Eberlein arrived in the Russian capital, the Commune of Berlin and the Spartacists had already been massacred by the Social Democrats and their
“bloodhound” Noske, and he chose to merely abstain from the vote because the leadership of his Party had been decapitated: Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, assassinated in cold blood after having been captured on January 15, 1919; and Leo Jogisches, kidnapped and held in a secret location between January and March of 1919, and then imprisoned and
liquidated in his cell.)

The unitary organization of the class is instead the product of the activity of the revolutionary movement, which assumes its structural forms in the general struggle and which can thus become an active factor for the destruction of the capitalist system and its various States. In fact, the proletarian organization “grows
everywhere spontaneously from the soil of modern society”, as Karl Marx had proposed in the middle of the 19th century and as historical practice would then demonstrate by way of the spontaneous emergence of the Workers Councils in Russia (the “Soviets” in 1905, and then again in 1917-1918), in Germany (the “Räte” of 1918-1919, and then the “Unionen”), etc.
Thus, even in 1904 when, compared to Lenin’s *What Is To Be Done*, Luxemburg was right when she wrote in her text, “Organizational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy”, published in both *Iskra* and *Neue Zeit*:

“In time we see appear on the scene and even more ‘legitimate’ child of history – the Russian
labor movement. For the first time, bases for the formation of a real ‘people’s will’ are laid in Russian soil.

“But here is the ‘ego’ of the Russian revolutionary again! Pirouetting on its head, it once more proclaims itself to be the all-powerful director of history – this time with
the title of His Excellency the Central Committee of the Social Democratic Party of Russia.

“The nimble acrobat fails to perceive that the only ‘subject’ which merits today the role of director is the collective ‘ego’ of the working class. The working class demands
the right to make its mistakes and learn the dialectic of history.

“Let us speak plainly. Historically, the errors committed by a truly revolutionary movement are infinitely more fruitful than the infallibility of the cleverest Central Committee.”
(See the anthology entitled, *Marxisme contre dictature* [Marxism versus Dictatorship] \(^1\), edited by Lucien Laurat, Editions Spartacus, Series B, No. 55 [in English, see “Organizational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy”], at:}
One year later, the first Russian Revolution fully confirmed her assertions, for whereas the Soviets represented the movement of the proletariat’s self-organization, the Bolshevik Party remained isolated, outside of these mass organizations, not understanding that it had to
act within them. Only Leon Trotsky, who only joined the Bolshevik Party in 1917, recognized the historical importance of this phenomenon and, furthermore, was elected to serve as President of the Petrograd Soviet.

Although Karl Marx referred to this proletarian organization emerging from the spontaneous mass
movement as a political Party, the further unfolding of revolutionary history has unfortunately demonstrated that the idea of the Party, with its bureaucratic and hierarchical apparatus, had a tendency to supplant that of the Workers Councils, vacating them of their unitary class content. In this respect, the revolt of the sailors at Kronstadt in 1921 against the rule of the
Bolshevik dictatorship was exemplary. Effectively responding to Trotsky—a field marshal in the “red army”—who wanted to kill them all “like partridges” (!), the rebels proclaimed a revealing and symbolic rallying cry: “All power to the Soviets, not to the Party!” They denounced the attempt to definitively transform the dictatorship of the proletariat exercised by the unitary
organization of the class into the dictatorship over the proletariat that was sought by the Party. Contrary to the proletarian expression of the Paris Commune, cited by Marx as an “example” of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks (repression of left social revolutionaries and anarchists beginning in 1918; the slogan, “One party in
power, the others in prison”) was identified with the conquest of the State rather than the imperative to “do away with all the old repressive machinery” (Marx, *The Civil War in France*). Instead of a bourgeoisie acting in its private capacity, the bureaucrats of the Bolshevik Party—since the time of Lenin—have been the managers of the State
capitalism that was installed in Russia and which Stalin subsequently designated as “socialism in one country”, thus concluding the process of counterrevolution that would deceive the proletarians of the entire world. Otto Rühle, however, who had learned a thing or two from the German Revolution, wrote a text entitled, “The Revolution is
Not a Party Affair!” (see La gauche allemande. Textes. Pour l'histoire du mouvement communiste en Allemagne de 1918 a 1921. (Textes du KAPD, de L'AAUD, de L'AAUE et de la KAI 1920 - 1922. Avec notes et présentation) [The German Left. Texts. Towards a history of the communist movement in Germany, 1918-1921. With notes and
that it was “not a traditional party” because of its links with the workers Unionen—and he called for the unitary organization of the proletariat, demanding the immediate dissolution of the Party as a separate institution distinct from the class as a whole. Later, in 1946, Anton Pannekoek attempted to carry out a comprehensive analysis of this question in his text, *Workers Councils* (see

IV. The role of revolutionary minorities

The historical movement of the proletariat in its struggle against world capitalism, and therefore of the revolutionary
proletariat itself (according to Marx’s famous formula: “The proletariat is revolutionary or it is nothing!”), also produces within its unitary organization diverse revolutionary minorities corresponding to the various degrees of its class consciousness. They can form separate, minority organizations whose task is to contribute, in the class
struggle, to this unitary consciousness before dissolving into the framework of the organization of the proletariat as a whole. None of these minorities can claim to be the vanguard Party (the "historic Party", according to Marxist tradition), the only possessor of "the" truth, "the" program, that is, "all consciousness", the consciousness that would
somehow be introduced “from outside” to a proletarian movement considered to be incapable of proceeding beyond a trade unionist consciousness, that is, a syndicalist consciousness (see Lenin’s view as expressed in *What Is To Be Done?*, which attributes to professional revolutionaries the role of being the leaders of a proletariat considered to be
“infantile”). To the contrary, these minorities must not assume any role whatsoever in the sense of acting as a "political leadership" (of the kind represented by the Bolshevik Party), or a "spiritual leadership" (of the kind represented by the KAPD), or any other kind of leadership substituting for the proletariat, but must instead seek to gradually merge into the unitary class
organization as the counterrevolutionary danger recedes and as the realization of integral communism proceeds (extension of the world revolution, destruction of States and borders, abolition of wage labor, money and social classes...).

Currently, with the dawning of the 21st century, the relation of forces is in favor of capitalism despite the
economic crisis that is undermining this system on an international scale and even though the proletarians, who are more numerous than ever (wage workers, precarious workers, unemployed...), still have the potential for offensive action despite the ideological campaigns of every kind, from the never-ending media bombardment, the terrorist threat, intensive war
propaganda, etc. For this reason, the tasks of those minority factions that still exist in the world (political groups, discussion circles and networks...) are many and various. These tasks include the exchange of information, correspondence, translations, publications (journals, newspapers...), but also the organization of meetings, debates, etc.; all of these things are
indispensable. But the most important task of all, however, remains theoretical elaboration that addresses the profound changes in the evolution of the capitalist system and a reality that has refuted most of the older perspectives. This labor will allow for a more effective intervention in the future proletarian revolutionary movement and will contribute to the clarification
of class consciousness.

As Paul Mattick said in an article entitled, “Groups of Council Communists” (The Social Frontier 5; (45): 243-53, May 1939):

“The Groups do not claim to be acting for the workers, but consider themselves as those members of the working class who
have, for one reason or another, recognised evolutionary trends towards capitalism’s downfall, and who attempt to co-ordinate the present activities of the workers to that end. They know that they are no more than propaganda groups, able only to suggest necessary courses of action, but unable to
perform them in the ‘interest of the class’. This the class has to do itself. The present functions of the Groups, though related to the perspectives of the future, attempt to base themselves entirely on the present needs of the workers. On all occasions, they try to foster self-initiative and self-
action of the workers.”

(Published in the collection entitled, *Integración capitalista y ruptura obrera*, EDI, 1972 [the text quoted above was taken from an essay entitled “Council Communism”, published as Chapter 5 of *Anti-Bolshevik Communism* (1978).]
“Council Communism”, available online as of August 2017 at https://www.marxists.org/paul/1939/council-communism.htm, appears to be a slightly revised version of the original article, “Groups of Council Communists”)

The dogmatism of the sects
is death. Only a critical method based on the inseparability of theory and practice instills life.

Guy Sabatier
October 2002

Introduction

The critique of the concept of the Party, even when it is undertaken by councilists and the supporters of various
modernist tendencies (situationists, associationists, autonomists of every stripe...), fails to clearly situate the origins of the erroneous nature of this concept in the theses of Marx himself. Worse yet, the exponents of such a critique believe that they can oppose Marx’s theory of the “proletarian Party” to all those theories that, descended from Social
Democracy and Leninism, have identified the Party with the representation of the proletariat, the embodiment of its class consciousness, the guarantee of its realization of communism understood as a “Historic Program” and therefore, when it has “conquered political power”, a “transitional” State responsible for ensuring the conditions for that realization. (Dictatorship of
the Party!

With regard to the national question and the analysis of the revolutionary process in Russia, Rosa Luxemburg did not hesitate to abandon what she called the “old ideas” of Marx and Engels. As for us, revolutionaries who have learned the lessons of the world counterrevolution that has been underway since October 1917, our task is to
do the same with regard to the concepts of the “founding fathers” concerning the Party. Our critical method has nothing in common with an alleged “anti-authoritarianism” or any kind of “apoliticism” proclaimed by the anarchists to condemn Marx, while their own theoreticians, following in the footsteps of Bakunin, articulated and practiced concepts of revolutionary
organization and relations with the proletariat as a whole that, in many respects, prefigured Leninism!

Our method is Marx’s method, historical and dialectical materialism, which we apply to Marx’s own theories, and those of Engels, formulated during a very specific period (after the Manifesto of the Communist Party of 1848, during the
second half of the 19th century), and for that very reason it has the same limitations as Marx’s method. To a certain extent, Marx must no longer be merely a “critic of Marxism”, but also a critic of … Marx!

“… The ‘conquest of political power’ is the absolute trap, the suicide of the workers
movement. As ambiguous as Marx’s legacy has been, there is nonetheless one lesson we can learn: the self-emancipation of the working class can only be social and the means to achieve it is not the conquest and transformation of the State, but the abandonment and destruction of all
political power. Only the conquest of social power, a trail blazed so far by the few experiences of the socialism of the Councils, can once again provide a meaning and a soul to the workers movement.”

(Maximilien Rubel, “De Marx au
The “Marxist” Concept of the Party

Even if his formulations concerning the problem of proletarian organization are
not numerous, Marx, after the experience of the Paris Commune, always clearly expressed a very precise concept with regard to this question. For him, the constitution of the proletariat into a revolutionary class can only take place by means of the formation of a political Party:

“This organisation of the proletarians into a
class, and, consequently into a political party, is continually being upset again by the competition between the workers themselves. But it ever rises up again, stronger, firmer, mightier.”

(Manifesto of the Communist Party, 1848)
“In its struggle against the collective power of the propertied classes, the working class cannot act as a class except by constituting itself into a political party, distinct from, and opposed to all old parties formed by the propertied classes.

“This constitution of
the working class into a political party is *indispensable* in order to insure the triumph of the social revolution, and of its ultimate end, the abolition of classes.”

(Article 7a, incorporated into the statutes of the First International by decision of the Hague
With respect to this particular concept of Marx’s, we must distinguish between what is correct and what is false in relation to the real goal of the proletarian movement he formulated above: the abolition of classes.

a) The need for a political
stage: critique of the utopians, the economists and the anarchists

In Marx, the profoundly correct aspect is the vision of a political stage through which the social movement of the working class must pass. This stage is characterized by the struggle of the proletariat against the capitalist State, and must result in the complete
destruction of the latter and the establishment of a “dictatorship of the proletariat” in order to prevent any attempt on the part of the bourgeoisie to recover its lost power. From being an economic class sociologically defined by and for capital, the proletariat thus becomes a political class capable of acting for itself. From a class that possessed nothing in capitalism and
was dispossessed of its own “being” (total alienation, because “the ruling ideology is the ideology of the ruling class”!) the proletariat is transformed into a conscious class, armed with a revolutionary project thanks to its violent confrontation with the capitalist system that takes the form of a mass movement. And this makes one of Marx’s key formulations easier to
understand: “The proletariat is revolutionary or it is nothing”! Unlike the old exploited classes (the bourgeoisie under feudalism, for example), the working class cannot found its political action on an economic power base already established in the heart of the old system, it can only affirm itself politically from the start, autonomously, in order not to improve, but to destroy
the existing social order: the abolition of wage labor and commodity production and therefore of classes.

This view implicitly contains a critique of the various currents that arose in the 19th century within the workers movement and which, in various ways, engaged in theoretical reflections on the objectives that movement should pursue and the
methods it should utilize to achieve its emancipation. Marx directed his attacks against both the utopians who perceive “no historical self-determination on the part of the proletariat, no political movement particular to it”, since “they are conscious of capturing mainly the interests of the working class as the class that suffers most. Only from this perspective of being the most suffering
class does the proletariat exist for them” (“Manifesto of the Communist Party”) as well as against the economists like Proudhon who “want the workers to remain in society as it is constituted and as it has been signed and sealed by them in their manuals” because “they see in poverty nothing but poverty, without seeing in it the revolutionary, subversive side, which will overthrow
the old society” (The Poverty of Philosophy, 1847).

Marx’s critique is also directed against the anarchists who, like the other currents, reject the political stage and reduce the proletariat to a mere class for capital, that is, a class that only seeks to improve its lot within the framework of the existing system (the theme of self-management). He called
them the “apostles of political indifferentism” because for them the working class “must not … under any pretext, engage in political action, for to combat the state is to recognize the state: and this is contrary to eternal principles” (“Political Indifferentism”, 1873).

It is essentially in his fundamental critique of Proudhon, *The Poverty of*
Philosophy, that Marx develops the dialectic of the transition, on the part of the proletariat, from being an economic class to being a political, and therefore a revolutionary class:

“Economic conditions had first transformed the mass of the people of the country into workers. The combination of capital
has created for this mass a common situation, common interests. This mass is thus already a class as against capital, but not yet for itself. In the struggle, of which we have noted only a few phases, this mass becomes united, and constitutes itself as a class for itself. The interests it defends
become class interests. But the struggle of class against class is a political struggle....

"Does this mean that after the fall of the old society there will be a new class domination culminating in a new political power? No.

"The condition for the emancipation of the
working class is the abolition of every class, just as the condition for the liberation of the third estate, of the bourgeois order, was the abolition of all estates and all orders.

"The working class, in the course of its development, will substitute for the old
civil society an association which will exclude classes and their antagonism, and there will be no more political power properly so-called, since political power is precisely the official expression of antagonism in civil society.

“Meanwhile the
antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is a struggle of class against class, a struggle which carried to its highest expression is a total revolution. Indeed, is it at all surprising that a society founded on the opposition of classes should culminate in brutal contradiction,
the shock of body against body, as its final denouement?

“Do not say that social movement excludes political movement. There is never a political movement which is not at the same time social.

“It is only in an order of things in which there
are no more classes and class antagonisms that social evolutions will cease to be political revolutions.”

Marx had previously sketched a rough outline of this dialectic of transformation of the proletariat and his view of the revolutionary process on the occasion of his critique of the Hegelian idealism of his
collaborator Arnold Ruge in the sole issue of the Deutsch–Französische Jahrbücher (February 1844):

“But whether the idea of a social revolution with a political soul is paraphrase or nonsense there is no doubt about the rationality of a political revolution with a social soul. All revolution – the
overthrow of the existing ruling power and the dissolution of the old order – is a political act. But without revolution, socialism cannot be made possible. It stands in need of this political act just as it stands in need of destruction and dissolution. But as soon as its organizing
functions begin and its goal, its soul emerges, socialism throws its political mask aside.”

(“Critical Notes on the Article: ‘The King of Prussia and Social Reform. By a Prussian’”, Vorwärts!, No. 63, August 7, 1844; “a Prussian”, was the pseudonym used by Arnold Ruge.)
b) The limitations of this political stage due to the economic-political conditions of the 19th century. The concept of the “proletarian Party” in the democratic process.

One may discern all the limitations of this political stage conceived by Marx when, for example, he defines the moment when the
workers struggle becomes political in the following manner:

“... every movement in which the working class comes out as a class against the ruling classes and attempts to force them by pressure from without is a political movement. For instance, the attempt in a particular
factory or even a particular industry to force a shorter working day out of the capitalists by strikes, etc., is a purely economic movement. On the other hand the movement to force an eight-hour day, etc., law is a political movement. And in this way, out of the separate economic movements
of the workers there grows up everywhere a political movement, that is to say a movement of the class, with the object of achieving its interests in a general form, in a form possessing a general social force of compulsion. If these movements presuppose a certain degree of previous organisation,
Thus, for Marx, the supersession of the purely economic struggle (the trade union struggle), in order to transform it into a political struggle, takes the form

they are themselves equally a means of the development of this organisation.”

(Letter to Bolte, November 23, 1871)
above all of the constitution of a proletarian Party, distinct from and independent of the other parties formed by the possessing classes. The political tasks of this Party are oriented towards the reform of the capitalist system in a sense favorable to the interests of the workers, and then, subsequently, towards the “conquest of power”. This
Party therefore corresponds to the political game of the 19th century, which is favorable to a certain extension of the democratic process characteristic of capital in its ascendant phase. For this same reason, the political stage of the proletariat’s organization into a class is situated entirely within the framework of the system. This means the total
separation of this stage from the social goal (abolition of classes) contained in the revolutionary process characteristic of the proletariat, a goal whose realization is postponed until the future!

Marx had taken the formula according to which the proletariat organizes itself into a class by constituting itself as a Party from the
utopian socialist Flora Tristan, whom Engels defended from Edgar Bauer’s attacks in *The Holy Family, or the Critique of Critical Criticism*, in 1845 (Flora Tristan’s “*Union Ouvrière*”). And in the last chapter of *The Poverty of Philosophy* (“Strikes and Combinations of Workers”) Marx points out that:

“In England, they have
not stopped at partial combinations which have no other objective than a passing strike, and which disappear with it. Permanent combinations have been formed, trades unions, which serve as ramparts for the workers in their struggles with the employers. And at the present time all these
local trades unions find a rallying point in the National Association of United Trades, the central committee of which is in London, and which already numbers 80,000 members. The organization of these strikes, combinations, and trades unions went on simultaneously with the political struggles
of the workers, who now constitute a large political party, under the name of Chartists.”

We should point out that Engels summarized this transition to a political Party in his work, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*.

What is false in Marx’s conception is revealed by his
identification of the political movement of the working class with the formation and activities of a proletarian Party.

What are the sources of his error?

Marx assessed the economic-political conditions of the 19th century as favorable for the proletarian revolution, for it was in his view upon the
basis of the completion of the bourgeois democratic process, and by making this revolution “permanent”, that it was possible to proceed to the classless society, to communism.

His concept of the “proletarian Party” is the product of his separation of the political stage from the social goal.
The economic-political conditions of the 19th century were characterized by:

- The economic development of capitalism between its cyclic crises (the ascending period) entailed the growth of the trade unions that would allow the working class to take advantage of the
benefits that the system was capable of offering (reformism);

- The development of the democratic State that responded to the necessities of free exchange and the economic “boom”, which led to the constitution of “workers Parties” in order to bring
pressure to bear on capitalist parliaments for the purpose of improving the lot of the working class (democratic demands, parliamentarism).

This Trade Unions/Parties separation made it more difficult for the proletariat to conceive of itself as anything
but a class in itself, that is, as an economic/political class within the system.

Marx’s proposal for the proletariat to proceed from being a class for capital to being a class for itself was based on the existence of a communist fraction within the workers parties: “The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to the other working-class parties”
In his view, the revolutionary process consisted primarily in an extension of economic and political democracy: “The immediate aim of the Communists is the same as that of all other proletarian parties: formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat” (ibid.). Beyond
the political role of the trade unions (transmission belts) and parliamentary practice (obtaining favorable legislation), it was therefore necessary for the proletarian Party (workers parties plus the communist fraction) to seize political power in capitalist society in its existing form in order to later transform it. The political stage was separate from the social goal, since it was
situated on a different terrain, that of the capitalists. For Marx there was no rupture between bourgeois democracy and the realization of communism, but a certain continuity: the political stage represented in a way the hinge between the two, for once power is conquered, the guarantee of the subsequent social transformation was the existence of a communist
fraction in the proletarian Party:

“The Communists, therefore, are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others…."

(Ibid.)
Thus, this Fraction held in its hands the possibility of realizing communism thanks to the establishment of the State of the Dictatorship of the proletarian Party and the implementation of its maximum program, as opposed to the minimum programs of the workers parties (the transformation of the proletarian Party into the communist Party!). Drawing
their conclusions from the lessons of the revolutionary events in France and Germany in 1848-1849, Marx and Engels formulated the theory of what they called the “permanent revolution”:

“The further particular individuals or fractions of the petty bourgeoisie advance, the more of these demands they will explicitly adopt,
and the few who recognize their own programme in what has been mentioned above might well believe they have put forward the maximum that can be demanded from the revolution. But these demands can in no way satisfy the party of the proletariat. While the democratic petty bourgeois want to bring
the revolution to an end as quickly as possible, achieving at most the aims already mentioned, it is our interest and our task to make the revolution permanent until all the more or less propertied classes have been driven from their ruling positions, until the proletariat has conquered state power
and until the association of the proletarians has progressed sufficiently far – not only in one country but in all the leading countries of the world – that competition between the proletarians of these countries ceases and at least the decisive forces of production are concentrated in the
hands of the workers. Our concern cannot simply be to modify private property, but to abolish it, not to hush up class antagonisms but to abolish classes, not to improve the existing society but to found a new one.”

(“Address of the Central Committee to the Communist
Despite the “concluding profession of faith” of this passage concerning communism and despite Marx’s insistence on the independent character of the proletarian Party, the political activity of the latter was anchored, from the very beginning, in the bourgeois democratic process. The
dynamic of the capitalist revolutions in Europe against the remnants of feudalism had to be brought to a conclusion and therefore a continuity had to be established with the Jacobin extremism embodied by Babeuf and the Equals in 1796: “The French Revolution is nothing but the precursor of another revolution, one that will be greater, more solemn, and
which will be the last.” (“Manifesto of the Equals”, Sylvain Marechal, 1796). The positions of Marx and Engels with regard to Russia (liquidation of Czarism thanks to a bourgeois revolution) and national liberation struggles (support for Polish independence, for example) are thus perfectly understandable in connection with their general view of the revolutionary process over
the course of the 19th century: the merger of the democratic and the proletarian stages!

“As in France in 1793, it is the task of the genuinely revolutionary party in Germany to carry through the strictest centralization....

“They can force the
democrats to make inroads into as many areas of the existing social order as possible, so as to disturb its regular functioning and so that the petty-bourgeois democrats compromise themselves; furthermore, the workers can force the concentration of as many productive forces
as possible – means of transport, factories, railways, etc. – in the hands of the state.”

(“Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League”)

Engels had already formulated this merger (support for the revolutionary bourgeoisie, or the
realization of democratic tasks by replacing the revolutionary bourgeoisie) in his articles on the movements of 1847:

“The democratic movement in all civilised countries is, in the last analysis, striving for the political domination of the proletariat. It therefore presupposes
that a proletariat exists, that a ruling bourgeoisie exists, that an industry exists which gives birth to the proletariat and which has brought the bourgeoisie to power.”

(“The Civil War in Switzerland”, Deutsche-Brüsseler-Zeitung, November 14, 1847)
Once again, beyond the maturation of the objective conditions (economic and social determinism), the guarantee of the transition to a social revolution after the political stage is based solely on the application of the “communist credo” that exists as radical theory in the proletarian Party.

Far from facilitating this
transition, the proletarian Party in power (social democracy, then Bolshevism) would be the main obstacle to any communist revolution. For by identifying with the State and favoring the concentration of capital, it would appear as an instrument of the rationalization of the system and therefore of the super-exploitation of the proletariat. Engels had
foreseen the threat of the eventual integration of the Party, but due to the tendency to favor wage demands rather than its tendency to pursue the tasks of democratization:

“As for the Chambres Syndicales — well, if one is going to account a member of the workers’ party every STRIKE association which, like the English
TRADES UNIONS, fights solely for high wages and short working hours but doesn’t otherwise give a damn for the movement — then the only party one will actually form is one for the *preservation* of wage labour rather than its abolition.”

(Letter to Bernstein,
November 28, 1882

On the basis of the bourgeois democratic process, contrary to the view held by Marx and Engels, the only thing that is permanent is not a proletarian revolution that will result in communism, but an adjustment to capital by means of a high degree of integration (illusions) or force (repression) applied to the proletarian movement.
The Parties/Trade Unions dualism was (and still is!) one of the essential vehicles to propagate illusions and therefore to maintain the proletariat as an economic/political class within the system (wage demands and calls for democratic reforms). The repression of June 1848 in France (the massacre of the workers by Cavaignac’s troops) was emblematic of
the fundamental antagonism between bourgeois democracy and communism. Marx and Engels did not learn any lessons from this other than the need for the existence and the political independence of the proletarian Party in order to pursue the permanent revolution and defeat the bourgeoisie by conquering power. The experience of the Paris Commune would lead
them to draw other conclusions and modify their previous positions.

After the 1851 coup d’état in France (see The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte), Marx and Engels carried out the theoretical analysis that posited the shift of the vital center of the class struggle towards Germany, along with England, which they considered to be the
epicenter of the world revolution despite the pitfall of the Irish Question (the headquarters of the IWA had been in London since 1864). Despite the danger posed by the hegemonic pretensions of the Prussian Chancellor, Bismarck, they counted on the impulse of the democratic and republican ideas that were set in motion as part of his campaign for German unity. Under the
same title that was assumed by the Russian aristocracy and the Austrian Empire, the Second Empire arose in Europe as an additional barrier against the further unfolding of the revolutionary process. Against the wars that they referred to as “dynastic” (Napoleon III’s attempt to extend the borders of the French Empire by crushing democratic movements, for
example), Marx and Engels supported, in the name of the proletariat, so-called “defensive” wars because they were situated in the perspective of national independence. This is what they said in September 1870 when Napoleon III declared war on Germany:

“The German working class have resolutely supported the war,
which it was not in their power to prevent, as a war for German independence and the liberation of France and Europe from that pestilential incubus, the Second Empire. It was the German workmen who, together with the rural laborers, furnished the sinews and muscles of heroic hosts, leaving behind
their half-starved families. Decimated by the battles abroad, they will be once more decimated by misery at home.” ("Second Address on the Franco-Prussian War", London, September 9, 1870)

Thus, from the very beginning, because this war had led to the restoration of
the Republic in France, despite the inability of the German working class to prevent the fulfillment of the annexationist goals of its bourgeoisie (Alsace-Lorraine), Marx and Engels recommended to the French proletariat that it not launch its insurrection and instead wait for the Republic to be consolidated, taking advantage of the time thus gained to build its class
organization:

“The French working class moves, therefore, under circumstances of extreme difficulty. Any attempt at upsetting the new government in the present crisis, when the enemy is almost knocking at the doors of Paris, would be a desperate folly. The French workmen must
perform their duties as citizens; but, at the same time, they must not allow themselves to be swayed by the national *souvenirs* of 1792, as the French peasant allowed themselves to be deluded by the national souvenirs of the First Empire. They have not to recapitulate the past, but to build up the
future. Let them calmly and resolutely improve the opportunities of republican liberty, for the work of their own class organization. It will gift them with fresh herculean powers for the regeneration of France, and our common task – the emancipation of labor. Upon their energies and wisdom hinges the fate
of the republic.”

(Ibid.)

After the siege and fall of Paris, and after the workers’ insurrection refused to allow its forces to be disarmed (March 18, 1871) and the Commune was proclaimed ten days later, the analyses previously made by Marx and Engels concerning the absolute priority of the
democratic process were refuted. This movement, eminently social, would sweep away all their predictions of progressive national independence on the chessboard of European States and Empires. The economic development of capital would do the rest; hence, the abandonment of their theses on Poland by Rosa Luxemburg (see *The Industrial Development of*...
Poland, 1898). In 1891, commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Commune, despite his attempts to justify the correctness of the analyses of the General Council of the IWA in its first two Addresses (July 23 and September 9, 1870), Engels nonetheless highlighted the social character of the Commune:

“Thus, from March 18
onwards the class character of the Paris movement, which had previously been pushed into the background by the fight against the foreign invaders, emerged sharply and clearly. As almost without exception, workers, or recognized representatives of the workers, sat in the Commune, its decision
bore a decidedly proletarian character.”

(Introduction to *The Civil War in France*)

On May 30, 1871, two days after the last combatants of the Commune had been massacred on the slopes of Belleville by the Versailles troops, Marx for his part announced the principal and fundamental lesson of that
social movement:

“... the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes.”

(“Third Address of the General Council to the IWA”, in *The Civil War in France*, 1871)

Marx had therefore made the
transition from a view that called for the “conquest of political power” by the proletariat to the position that “the next attempt of the French revolution will be no longer, as before, to transfer the bureaucratic-military machine from one hand to another, but to smash it.…” (Letter to Kugelmann, April 12, 1871). He thought that this modification of his earlier position was so
important that he provided further clarifications of his view in the Preface to a new edition of the *Communist Manifesto*, dated June 24, 1872:

“… That passage would, in many respects, be very differently worded today. In view of the gigantic strides of Modern Industry since
1848, and of the accompanying improved and extended organization of the working class, in view of the practical experience gained, first in the February Revolution, and then, still more, in the Paris Commune, where the proletariat for the first time held political power for two whole
months, this programme has in some details been antiquated. One thing especially was proved by the Commune, viz., that ‘the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes’.”

However, despite the experience of the Paris
Commune, he reaffirmed the necessity, for the proletariat, of constituting a Party in order to act as a class (see Article 7a, incorporated into the statutes of the First International by resolution of the Hague Congress, 1872, quoted at the beginning of this chapter). Marx and Engels persisted in holding this view because their analysis of the political transition from capitalism to
communism, and therefore, of the dictatorship of the proletariat, was still hobbled by a certain notion of the coexistence of a State and the rule of the proletarian class, or, in other cases, by the pure and simple identification of the two concepts:

“In reality, however, the state is nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class
by another, and indeed in the democratic republic no less than in the monarchy; and at best an evil inherited by the proletariat after its victorious struggle for class supremacy, whose worst sides the proletariat, just like the Commune, cannot avoid having to lop off at the earliest possible moment, until such
time as a new generation, reared in new and free social conditions, will be able to throw the entire lumber of the state on the scrap-heap.”

(Engels, Introduction to The Civil War in France, 1891)

“The question then arises: What
transformation will the state undergo in communist society? In other words, what social functions will remain in existence there that are analogous to present state functions? This question can only be answered scientifically, and one does not get a flea-hop nearer to the problem by a thousand-
fold combination of the word ‘people’ with the word ‘state’.

“Between capitalist and communist society there lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be
nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.”

(Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Program”, 1875)

Once again, the theory of the separation of the political stage and the social goal, and therefore, of the continuity of certain functions of class society and capitalism in the
political stage (= the State), even if Engels proposed “that Gemeinwesen ['commonalty'] be universally substituted for state; it is a good old German word that can very well do service for the French ‘Commune’” (Letter to Bebel, March 18-28, 1875), led Marx and Engels to deduce the need for a proletarian Party capable of assuming these functions (=
State of the Dictatorship of the Party) in order to subsequently implement its historic program (realization of communism, which entails the extinction of the State). The affirmation of the need for a political stage would lead Marx and Engels to make a total break with the anarchists, whose apoliticism would lead them, for their part, towards “revolutionary syndicalism” or
anarchosyndicalism (Hague Congress, 1872). But the limitations of their concept of this political stage would lead them, after the Hague Congress and after the dissolution of the IWA (which had transferred its headquarters to New York!), to move closer to the German social democracy and its consorts (the Second International), not only due to a compromise with
Lassalleanism (insufficiencies of the criticisms of the Gotha Program, merger of the Eisenach “Marxists” in 1869 with the Lassalleans) but also due to the inability of their immediate successors to be anything but “disciples”, and this applies first of all to Engels, who instead of exercising the critical method, transformed it into an ideology under the rubric
of “Marxism” (see “La Légende de Marx ou Engels fondateur” [The Legend of Marx, or ‘Engels the Founder’], Maximilien Rubel, Études de Marxology, Série S, No. 5. Socialisme: Science et Ethique [available in English translation online as of August 2017 at: http://marxmyths.org/maximilienrubel/article.htm]). These limitations also explain the bureaucratic procedures
(administrative measures, evidence based on hearsay, etc.) used to exclude Bakunin and the other members of the Alliance of Socialist Democracy at the Hague Congress. The absence of any real debate that the General Council might have been able to initiate concerning these divergences, especially concerning the problem of the political stage, effectively indicates the
influence of these limitations on the formation and then on the evolution between 1864 and 1872 of the IWA, which some people try to present today as different from the corresponding development of later political parties (our critiques of Marx, we repeat, are not a veiled defense of the Bakuninists, who also for their part used a whole series of “organizational procedures” in an attempt to
Defending the thesis that for Marx the principle of the Association is different from that of the constitution of the proletariat into a political Party, Claude Berger writes, criticizing Glucksmann: “Marx’s weaknesses, furthermore, do not reside where [Glucksmann] wanted to find them. He can be
reproached for having fled from the difficulties of the associationist movement—which is to say the International Workingmen’s Association—and, in compensation, for having inclined towards the ‘mass party’ form. This favored the social democracy, which he nonetheless ruthlessly criticized and which excluded the anarchists, with whom, however, he had more
in common.” (See “Autopsie de la ‘Nouvelle philosophie’” [Autopsy of the ‘New Philosophy’], *Spartacus*, No. 10, July-August 1978). In fact, despite the essential difference that the communist Party (the “Marxists” of the General Council) was not in a position of hegemony, as it had to face the opposition of the other working class Parties (Proudhonians,
Blanquists, Bakuninists....) right up until the Paris Commune, the IWA was clearly the prototype of the mass proletarian Party as conceived by Marx after the dissolution of the Communist League. In the Second International, Marx’s ideas were dominant under the social democratic form, especially the German variety:
“While the Commune was the grave of early specifically French socialism, it was, for France, also and at the same time the cradle of a new international communism.”

(Engels, October 1884)

Furthermore, the IWA was oriented towards becoming a mass organization prior to
the general struggle of the proletariat to achieve its constitution into a class; this is, by the way, what Claude Berger acknowledges in his own esoteric language:

“The Party of the ‘Communists’ was proposed to favor this movement for the association, that is, to organize the real movement against all
the parties of equal appearance and of the wage workers. These parties of equal appearance, exclusively defending the most immediate interests (global and hierarchical) of the working class in general, or rather the particular and frequently divergent interests of the
different layers of hierarchically organized workers, worked, therefore, when it came right down to it, for the order of wage labor, whether bourgeois or working class (under the term, ‘democratic’). The perspective sketched out by Marx demanded that the working class associations should
exist outside of the struggle, to unite these associations with each other, and to externalize their unconscious, but real, content of revolt against the oppression of wage labor and the recomposition of existence. And in fact, the great activity of Marx and Engels consists in creating this
‘real workers movement’ of the association.”

(Marx, l'association, l'anti-Lenine: Vers l'abolition du salariat [Marx, the Association, the Anti-Lenin: Towards the Abolition of Wage Labor], Petite bibliotheque Payot, 1974, 238 p. [the above passage was translated
Association and political Party; two formulas that in fact designate, in Marx, the same project of proletarian organization!

c) The contradiction between the concept of the Party as an organization that exists prior to the proletarian movement, and the concept of the Party
as an organization that is produced by that same movement

Beyond the need for the Party, there is in Marx a contradiction concerning the way this Party will be constituted in relation to the proletarian movement. As soon as it is claimed that the Party must be an organization constructed prior to the existence of the
movement, then the movement becomes nothing but a means to develop the Party. This is what Marx says in his letter to Bolte, for example: “If these movements presuppose a certain degree of previous organisation, they are themselves equally a means of the development of this organisation” (see citation above). And, in his practice as a militant, Marx
frequently strove to build a Party-organization rather than the movement of the working class as a whole. This was the case, as we pointed out above, in his activities in the Communist League (1847-1852) and even more so the International Workingmen’s Association (1864-1872). Thus, the political necessity for the proletariat to constitute a Party can be summarized in
the formula, “the Party is the class” since, for Marx, the previously-existing organization must represent, once it takes shape, the workers as a whole (mass Party).

But he also asserted the contrary, that is, that the Party is an organization produced by the movement:

“The ‘League’, like the
société des saisons in Paris and a hundred other societies, was simply an episode in the history of a party that is everywhere springing up naturally out of the soil of modern society.”

(Marx, letter to Freiligrath, February 29, 1860)
“[The IWA] has not been hatched by a sect or a theory. It is the spontaneous growth of the proletarian movement, which is itself the offspring of the natural and irrepressible tendencies of modern society.”

(The Fourth Annual Report of the General Council of the IWMA
The real, practical movement therefore has priority over any previously existing organization, whether the latter proves to be superseded and must be criticized, or whether it has become a real obstacle and therefore must be dissolved:

“The international
activity of the working classes does not in any way depend on the existence of the International Working Men's Association. This was only the first attempt to create a central organ for the activity; an attempt which was a lasting success on account of the impulse which it gave but which was no
longer realizable in its historical form after the fall of the Paris Commune.”

(Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Program”)

“The international movement of the European and American proletariat has become so much strengthened that not
merely its first narrow form — the secret League — but even its second, infinitely wider form — the open International Working Men’s Association — has become a fetter for it, and that the simple feeling of solidarity based on the understanding of the identity of class position suffices to
create and to hold together one and the same great party of the proletariat among the workers of all countries and tongues.”


The proletariat only creates the Party, as a political
organ, in its general struggle, and therefore it has no vocation to join any previously existing mass organization whatsoever. Here, the formula is the opposite of the preceding one: “The class is the Party!”

One component of the Leninist current, the Italian Left (Bordiguism), has attempted to construct a theory from this
contradiction in Marx in order to harmonize the "dialectic of the Party". Thus, the previously existing organization would be a species of formal Party, while the tendency of the class movement to constitute itself into a political organization over the course of the struggle would represent the historic Party. The result of this theoretical construct is that the formal
Party can be mistaken and it can be an obstacle to the development of the historic Party, which then would lead to the formation of a communist Fraction that is the sole force capable of rendering a valid interpretation of the historical tendency as opposed to the sclerosis of the formal Party. The chess piece is moved: the proletarian Party (the class
movement and the Fraction) is put back on the rails and will be able to perform its role! We shall observe that in the councilist current, in the person of Maximilien Rubel, a similar attempt has been made to resolve this contradiction in Marx: on the one hand, the previously existing organization is defined as the workers Party, that is, sociologically, and on the other, that which is
produced by the historical movement gives rise to the proletarian Party, “which in a manner of speaking transcends the conditions of the established society”, that is, which cannot “be identified with a real organization subject to the servitudes of political alienation”. But this ethical concept (the magic of words!) of the proletarian Party requires the
intervention, as in the case of the Bordiguists, of a communist Fraction that will know how to turn this Party into a “spur and instrument for proletarian spontaneity” rather than “an organ of class collaboration” (“Remarques sur le concept de parti prolétarien chez Marx” [Observations on the Concept of the Proletarian Party in Marx], Revue française de sociologie, Vol. 2, No. 3,
In situations where the historical movement of the working class ceases to be a factor, Marx would always attempt to “euthanize” those organizations which failed to play a determinant role in revolutionary movements (1848, the Commune):

- In 1852, with the renewed expansion
of capitalism and the integration of the proletariat, the Communist League was disbanded;

In 1872, with the counterrevolution in Europe after the defeat of the communards, the headquarters of the IWA was transferred to New York, heralding its
dissolution in 1876.

During those periods, Marx would criticize every attempt to preserve formal or institutionalized organizations and would refuse to obey any directives from existing workers Parties, in the following terms:

“I told them straight out that we owed our
position as representatives of the proletarian party to nobody but ourselves; this, however, had been endorsed by the exclusive and universal hatred accorded us by every faction and party of the old world."

(Marx to Engels, May 18, 1859)
Furthermore, in certain circumstances, Marx also preferred to devote himself to work of reflection and theoretical elaboration rather than participate in organizational deliberations. Thus, in 1866, when he was engaged in the continuation and intensification of his research in order to produce as complete an economic analysis of the capitalist system as possible (the drafts
of *Capital*), he would refuse, despite the pleas of his closest friends, to attend the IWA Congress at Geneva. He explained his decision in the following terms:

“I think that this work which I am doing is of far greater importance to the working class than anything that I, personally, could do at any [quelconque]
So as to leave no stone unturned, we must also mention that this preference expressed by Marx, besides privileging theory over the problems of organization at that particular juncture, must also be considered in the context of the polemic with the Proudhonians, whose
workerism dominated the IWA and caused it to disparage the contributions of non-manual workers to the struggle of the proletariat.

Marx therefore often adopted a policy of remaining on the sidelines, whether in relation to a Blanquist-type substitutionist campaign when the mass movement of the working class was silenced and integrated into
capitalism, or with respect to reformist debates within the mass Party when the conditions for resuming the class struggle were nonetheless present. As M. Rubel says (see “Le parti prolétarien” [The Proletarian Party] in *Marx, critique du marxisme*, Payot, 1957, p. 190):

“Henceforth, it can be understood that Marx
was able to speak, in his correspondence and in certain public addresses, of ‘our party’, at a time when no official organization was linked to the group of friends in the ‘Marx party’. This political group had no statutes, but it did have a creed, communism, and it was Marx’s vocation to provide it with
theoretical foundations.”

d) The “Marx Party”, or the elitist concept of the Communist Party

In Marx, if there is one positive idea, it is certainly the one that, contradicting other statements he made, leads him to formulate the impossibility of a revolutionary mass
organization outside of periods of open confrontation by the proletariat as a whole with the system. This would be recognized by Rosa Luxemburg in her critiques of social democracy and the Second International in the light of the Russian experience of 1905. The historic Party is therefore conceived as a spontaneous product of working class struggles during the course of
the revolutionary process (in fact, it would be the Workers Councils that would arise as the unitary political expression of the proletariat, abolishing by the very fact of their existence the division between parties and trade unions that corresponded with the previous conditions!) While waiting for the key periods to arise during which the Party can be formed, however, the
consciousness of what the historic Party will be, in a practical manner, is embodied in a “laboratory-sect” that preserves (the Bordiguist theme of Invariance) or re-adapts (enriches)—this depends on the texts one consults—the communist Program. In effect, Marx and his “group” (Engels…) set themselves up as the elite guardians of the theory that the practical
movement was supposed to realize: they are the historic Party on the theoretical plane! When Marx said, “When theory grips the masses, it becomes a material force”, this was not so very different from Lassalle’s formula concerning “the alliance of science and the proletariat” … nor is it very far removed from what Kautsky and Lenin would subsequently write
concerning consciousness introduced from outside of the class struggle into the proletariat. Thus, M. Rubel states at the end of his text, “Le parti proletarien” (cited above):

“It remains for sociological analysis to show just how such a concept of charismatic choice differs, or does not differ, from the
idea that Marx had concerning political sects."

There are in fact important differences between what Marx-Engels said and, for example, what Kautsky said with his ideological and therefore bourgeois view of theory:

“England gave them the greater part of the
economic documentation that they used, and German philosophy gave them the best method to deduce from that documentation the goal of contemporary social development; the French Revolution clearly showed them the need to conquer power, and especially political power in order
to attain their goal. In this way they created modern scientific socialism by merging everything that English thought, French thought and German thought possessed that was great and fertile.”

(“Les Trois Sources du Marxisme” [The Three Sources of Marxism], Spartacus, series B, no.
These differences are essentially based on Marx-Engels’ recognition of the determinant role played by the real movement of the proletariat in relation to intellectual production. The class struggles of the 1840s had helped them to discard
not only Hegelian idealism, but also the bourgeois materialism that was the basis of the dualism of thought and action (see “Theses on Feuerbach”, 1845):

“The theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or
discovered, by this or that would-be universal reformer.

“They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes.”

(The Communist
Manifesto, 1848)

“They ‘evolve’ the idea by ‘consistent’ studies which leave no trace behind. They then ‘carry this idea to our workers’ organizations’. To them, the working class is so much raw material, a chaos into which they must breathe their Holy...
Spirit before it acquires a shape.”

(“Les prétendues scissions dans l'Internationale” [Fictitious Splits in the International] (1872), Spartacus, “Textes sur l’organisation” [Texts on Organization], series B, no. 36, p. 89 [in English, see: https://www.marxists.or
Before this critique of the maneuvers of the Bakuninist Alliance, Marx-Engels had in the same text differentiated their position from the positions of the utopian sects by showing what distinguishes the IWA from the latter:

“The International’s Rules, therefore, speak
of only simple ‘workers’ societies’, all aiming for the same goal and accepting the same program, which presents a general outline of the proletarian movement, while leaving its theoretical elaboration to be guided by the needs of the practical struggle and the exchange of ideas in
the sections, unrestrictedly admitting all shades of socialist convictions in their organs and Congresses.”

(Our emphasis—PIC)

As a final example of these differences, one may cite the following passage from the “Circular Letter of Marx-Engels to Bebel, Liebknecht,
Bracke and other leaders of the German Social Democratic Party” of September 1879, with regard to the abandonment of the revolutionary principles of the proletariat by exiles from that Party (including Bernstein) as a consequence of an “emergency law” enacted by Bismarck that targeted the socialists:

“As for ourselves, in
view of our whole past there is only one path open to us. For almost forty years we have stressed the class struggle as the immediate driving force of history, and in particular the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as the great lever of the modern social revolution; it is
therefore impossible for us to co-operate with people who wish to expunge this class struggle from the movement. When the International was formed we expressly formulated the battle-cry: the emancipation of the working class must be achieved by the working class itself. We cannot therefore
co-operate with people who say that the workers are too uneducated to emancipate themselves and must first be freed from above by philanthropic bourgeois and petty bourgeois. If the new Party organ adopts a line corresponding to the views of these gentlemen (C.H.}
Schramm, C. Höchberg and E. Bernstein), and is bourgeois and not proletarian, then nothing remains for us, much though we should regret it, but publicly to declare our opposition to it and to dissolve the solidarity with which we have hitherto represented the German Party abroad” (!).
Despite these differences, however, and despite the fact that for Marx-Engels, unlike Kautsky-Lenin, socialism is not born from the head of the intellectuals but arises from the practical necessities of the workers struggle confronted by the crisis of capitalism, a separation was nonetheless present in their conception of the question, between the theoretical interpretation
(consciousness) of the real movement, and the practice of the movement. This is very clearly demonstrated when, on the organizational plane, Marx-Engels posed the question concerning what distinguishes the role of the communists from that of the other workers parties in the proletarian Party as a whole (the working class in movement). For they responded to this question as
follows:

“... theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement.”

(The Communist
The line of march, the conditions, the ultimate general results.... Everything is laid down in black and white for that "great mass of the proletariat" which does not have "the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march", and therefore does not have any theoretical contribution to make, at least not in any fundamental
sense! This proletariat is, in a way, a blind man who must allow himself to be guided by them, the communists, who possess the program from A to Z:

“The Communists, therefore, are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that
section which pushes forward all others.”

(ibid.)

The revolutionary process is in fact nothing but the practical realization of a theory possessed by a particular fraction, that of the communists, because:

“… they always and everywhere represent
the interests of the movement as a whole.”

If one pursues this idea to its logical conclusions, there is no communist movement properly speaking. For Marx-Engels, communism is a program borne by the Party, that “communist Party” that enlightens the proletarian Party, that is, the historical movement of the working class. Thus, there are
passages in Marx-Engels that express the idea that they are nothing but interpreters of reality, but privileged interpreters, in the likeness of those sages who observe phenomena and deduce their general laws:

“Just as the economists are the scientific representatives of the bourgeois class, so the Socialists and the
Communists are the theoreticians of the proletarian class. So long as the proletariat is not yet sufficiently developed to constitute itself as a class, and consequently so long as the struggle itself of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie has not yet assumed a political character, and the productive forces are
not yet sufficiently developed in the bosom of the bourgeoisie itself to enable us to catch a glimpse of the material conditions necessary for the emancipation of the proletariat and for the formation of a new society, these theoreticians are merely Utopians who, to meet the wants of the oppressed classes,
improvise systems and go in search of a regenerating science. But in the measure that history moves forward, and with it the struggle of the proletariat assumes clearer outlines, they no longer need to seek science in their minds; they have only to take note of what is happening before their eyes and to
become its mouthpiece. So long as they look for science and merely make systems, so long as they are at the beginning of the struggle, they see in poverty nothing but poverty, without seeing in it the revolutionary, subversive side, which will overthrow the old society. From this moment, science,
which is a product of the historical movement, has associated itself consciously with it, has ceased to be doctrinaire and has become revolutionary.”

(Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, 1847) (Our emphasis—PIC)

Furthermore, it was Engels
who would institutionalize the formula of “scientific socialism” as opposed to “utopian socialism”. With this kind of theoretical pretension and his assimilation of a veritable “science of the proletariat”, the value of the succession of social experiences themselves that might have made possible the supersession and constant enrichment of the preceding
theoretical positions (and don’t give us any of this talk of definitive knowledge, or of any “historical thread” or “organic continuity”!), on the one hand, and on the other, the necessary task of putting into perspective all theoretical contributions from one or another fraction precisely in accordance with the experiences of the movement as a whole in its confrontation with the
changing objective conditions, would gradually fade away and disappear in their collision with the dogma and elitism that is inherent to such a position. Like the metaphysics of Christianity, or Reason for the philosophers of the 18th century, "scientific socialism" would become the cornerstone of a new religion called "Marxism", and its churches, the political parties
christened as “socialist” or “communist”!

We therefore once again observe the negative role played by the French Revolution in the consciousness of Marx-Engels. What lies behind this separation of theory and practice that would lead to ideological deformation is the separation between political tasks and social
tasks for the proletarian process that is modeled, in its first (political) stage, on the bourgeois process, in accordance with the objective conditions of the 19th century:

“Its own struggle against the bourgeoisie cannot begin until the day of the victory of the bourgeoisie.”

(Marx to Kugelmann,
February 23, 1865);

“In all civilised countries, democracy has as its necessary consequence the political rule of the proletariat, and the political rule of the proletariat is the first condition for all communist measures.”

(Engels [“The Civil
Despite the lessons derived from the experience of the Paris Commune, the key formula of the “Manifesto of the Communist Party”—the conquest of political power by way of the democratic process—would undergo further development in the
German Social Democratic Party, which, by the way, always refused to join the IWA despite the efforts of Marx-Engels. The separation of the political/social stages would be cast in high relief by the Communist-Jacobin Party, which realizes this separation in practice, a party of specialists in politics, professional revolutionaries, theoreticians of the proletariat.
For Marx-Engels, the party which is the bearer of the theory elaborated by the communists, and thus the mediator (Lukács) between theory and practice, was an interpreter, certainly a privileged one, and a revealer of the proletarian movement, but it also arose as a product of the revolutionary spontaneity of the working class. For social democracy
and Bolshevism, the Party that is formed prior to emergence of the revolutionary movement will become the vehicle for the introduction of ideological consciousness into the proletariat, which is considered to be merely trade unionist!

Subsequently, the Bordiguist themes of the Invariance of theory, organic continuity
and organic centralism on the organizational plane, would end up mummifying all interpretation of reality due to its elitist delirium, and its Messianic program for communism, entirely conceived as an ideology to be realized:

“Leaping over a whole cycle, communism is the knowledge of a plan of life for the species.”
That is, for the human species.”

(“Proprietà e capitale” [Property and Capital], Prometeo, series II, p. 125)

To conclude this analysis of the “Marxist” concept, we shall offer a quote from Engels that will once again confirm the fact that, despite their many errors occasioned
by the conditions of their time, neither Engels nor Marx ever completely succumbed to this ideology, due to their utilization of the materialist, historical and dialectical method. Contradiction is and always will be the source of all social life, even in communism:

“Herr Heinzen imagines communism
is a certain doctrine which proceeds from a definite theoretical principle as its core and draws further conclusions from that. Herr Heinzen is very much mistaken. Communism is not a doctrine but a movement; it proceeds not from principles but from facts. The Communists do not
base themselves on this or that philosophy as their point of departure but on the whole course of previous history and specifically its actual results in the civilised countries at the present time. Communism has followed from large-scale industry and its consequences, from the establishment of the world market, of the
concomitant uninhibited competition, ever more violent and more universal trade crises, which have already become fully fledged crises of the world market, from the creation of the proletariat and the concentration of capital, from the ensuing class struggle
between proletariat and bourgeoisie.
Communism, insofar as it is a theory, is the theoretical expression of the position of the proletariat in this struggle and the theoretical summation of the conditions for the liberation of the proletariat.”

(Engels, “The
Communists and Karl Heinzen”, Deutsche-Brüsseler-Zeitung, Nos. 79 and 80, October 3 and 7, 1847)

The “Social Democratic” Concept of the Party

During the whole course of its historical development, Social Democracy would
abandon the positive contributions that Marx was able to make thanks to the application of his method: principally the concept of a revolutionary mass organization that arises as a product of the spontaneous movement of the proletariat in periods of crisis in capitalism and of open confrontation between the workers and that system of exploitation; but also that of
an organization that plays an active role in the destruction of the State and, for that very reason, is inscribed in a process of non-separation between the political tasks and the directly social tasks of the proletarian revolution (refer to the lessons of the Paris Commune).

Only the left wing fractions of the Social Democracy, having already expressed
profound theoretical disagreements with the Party prior to 1914 (Rosa Luxemburg, Anton Pannekoek...), and then the entire current known as the “ultra-left” (except for the Italian Left, or Bordiguism), would reassert the preeminence of the real movement on the plane of the formation of the revolutionary mass organization, but they would
preserve, with some nuances (see the analysis in the chapters that follow), the idea of the “Party”, of its privileged role and therefore of the separation between the political stage and the social movement. It was the revolutionary upsurge of the proletariat itself on the historical stage (1905, and then 1917-1923) that was responsible for this dissident trend and, later, for the
growing radicalization of the various currents.

The Social Democracy, however, would proceed to amplify all of Marx’s negative features due to the limits imposed on its theory by the economic-democratic development of the capitalist system in the second half of the 19th century, but also due to the tactics it elaborated and implemented, especially
in Prussia. From the concept of the Party as the privileged interpreter and theoretical vehicle for the revelation of the revolutionary spontaneity of the proletariat, it would engineer the further separation of these factors until it arrived at the concept of the Party as the bringer of socialist consciousness to a proletariat that can only be "trade unionist" if left to its own devices. In this manner
the perfectly static separation between theory and practice was realized: the Social Democratic Party, the sole possible mediation, stood guard over the maximum program (that is, ideologically preserved the political content, and then the social content, of a communist revolution postponed until the Greek Calends) while it implemented the minimum
program (i.e., repairing capitalism by implementing “working class reforms”).

A point of no return had thus been reached in the denial of all the revolutionary capabilities that characterize the real movement of the proletariat. Everything else would follow: from then on, the only thing that mattered was the democratic stage; the Party conceived as a mass
organization, constructed prior to the existence of any movement of the working class—which was itself only perceived as a simple means of furthering the growth of that type of organization—had no other “final goal” than the conquest of political power (even, once again, by way of universal suffrage) and, therefore, the management of the capitalist State.
In the mainstream historiography of what is called “the workers movement”, according to the interpretations of a traditional type (left wing: Socialist Party, Communist Party) or leftist (including contemporary ultra-left currents!), we note the continued existence, with reference to the explanation of how Marx and the Social
Democracy are related, of attempts to assure a “historical affiliation” between them, and on the other hand attempts to “cleanse” the former to one degree or another of any responsibility for the “reformist sins” of the latter! We are obliged to point out that if there is an affiliation, it is with “Marxism”, that is, an ideology (and later, a State religion: the USSR,
China…) which no longer had anything in common with Marx’s original method, which for its part was based on the fundamental antagonism between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. This ideology not only appropriated and exacerbated the theoretical errors of Marx that were induced by the conditions of the 19th century, evidently without any attempt to
analyze the changes that those conditions were undergoing (the expansion of capital due to the assertion of its imperialist tendencies on a planetary scale after 1880: the first effects of the economic crisis in Europe during this period which led to a colonial repartition of the world and to the imperialist rivalries that arose as a result, as in the Fashoda incident in 1898 in
which the opponents were England and France!), but also transformed the general analysis of the system elaborated by Marx in Volume I of *Capital* (“The Critique of Political Economy”), using his draft manuscripts to construct the “abstract” concept of a system that functions in isolation (see Volumes II, III and IV, edited by Engels and Kautsky). Of course, even if
the world market was not yet completely formed, imperialist tendencies, in impressive displays, have existed since the beginning of capitalism. After all, this system, based on competition, could only develop historically by destroying the vestiges of prior modes of production and therefore modes of production that were external to its own sphere of
economic operations (production-circulation of commodities among capitalists, or for sale to wage workers). As Rosa Luxemburg pointed out in *The Accumulation of Capital* (1913), it is the need to realize all of its surplus value in the form of money, a condition sine qua non for ensuring an endless extended reproduction, which forces capitalism to venture outside
of its own sphere in search of markets.

The bourgeoisie was historically revolutionary, for it made possible a distinctly higher level of development of the productive forces compared to previous systems, but it was only revolutionary, above all, from the perspective of capital, of which it was a product and whose real rule it
made possible. Thus, the proletariat has had the right to nothing but crumbs, more or less substantial depending on the periods and their struggles, scattered by that ruling class, contributing to the movement of capital. Its role, due to its antagonistic position towards the bourgeoisie in the relations of production, could only be, from the very start, to engage in an intransigent war against
the bourgeoisie, the main stronghold, along with the State, of capitalist exploitation. The working class did not have to collaborate with any of the bourgeois forces, not even the most democratic, nor did it have to try to play the role of a substitute for them in order to “accelerate History” (!) should those forces show indecisiveness, or even an openly stubborn refusal, to
liquidate the old regime (the remnants of feudalism).

Due to the limitations of his concept of the political stage that the proletariat was supposed to embark upon, and due to the tactics that he and Engels advocated to achieve this goal ("permanent" revolution, proletarian Party, etc.), Marx, during his lifetime, and then Engels, would make a
significant contribution to paving the way for social democracy, and especially, and first of all, German social democracy.

1. Social Democracy during Marx’s lifetime or ... “the vagaries of the proletarian Party in Germany”

“In all my writings, I never called myself a social democrat, but a
communist. For Marx, as for me, it is absolutely impossible to use such an elastic expression to designate our concept.”

(Engels, 1894 Introduction to a pamphlet containing articles published by Volksstaat, the journal of the Eisenachers, between 1871 and 1875
“Whatever else I may be, I am not a Marxist!”

(Marx, in a statement recounted by Engels in a letter to Paul Lafargue dated August 27, 1890)
seem to be supported by the circumstance that, prior to the merger with the Lassalleans of the Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein [General German Workers Association] (ADAV) at the Congress of Gotha in 1875, Marx and Engels appeared to possess a clear politics, that is, a communist politics, as opposed to the social democratic currents and
especially their “supporters” in the “Social Democratic Workers’ Party”, founded in Eisenach in 1869. The assertions of the intelligentsia of the “Marx experts” concerning the evolution of the “workers movement”, however, belong, once again, to the domain of deceitful interpretation! For, besides a few *a posteriori* declarations intended to serve as self-
justification, the “Founding Fathers”, in practice, gave their imprimatur (despite the existence of “private” critiques of the “leaders” circulated via the back door of their private correspondence) to the politics of the “German Marxists”, first to the ADAV between 1863 and 1869, and then to the Party of Eisenach from 1869 to 1875, and finally to the “unified” party
after 1875, a politics that was, from the very beginning, of a social democratic nature. This will make it possible to put into perspective the all-too-famous “concessions” to Lassalleanism in the “Gotha Program”, to which the paternity of all “deviations” has been attributed: reformism, legalism, revisionism…. Why? Because, in view of the
absence of a revolutionary bourgeoisie in Germany after 1848, when that country was objectively at the threshold of the necessary stage of its “bourgeois political revolution” (like England in 1646 and France in 1789), it was Marx and Engels who personally elaborated an entirely social democratic political tactic for the German proletariat. In their view, the German proletariat
must lead the movement for democratic demands, substituting for the bourgeoisie—the great moguls of industry and finance—who, incapable of affirming themselves in the political arena, had entered into an alliance with semi-feudalism as represented by the big landowners of Prussia and their spokesman, the Junker, Bismarck. Even before 1848, Marx had
already produced—in a style that was bloated with metaphors—a veritable “ideological salad” that anticipated the subsequent elaborations of this tactic:

“If we compare the meek, sober mediocrity of German political literature with this titanic and brilliant literary debut of the German workers; if we
compare these gigantic children’s shows of the proletariat with the dwarf-like proportions of the worn-out political shoes of the German bourgeoisie, we must predict a vigorous future for this German Cinderella. It must be granted that the German proletariat is the theoretician of the European
proletariat just as the English proletariat is its economist and the French its politician. It must be granted that the vocation of Germany for social revolution is as classical as its incapacity for political revolution.”

(Marx, “Critical Notes on the Article: ‘The
Later, Engels was somewhat more prosaic in his praise for the actions of the German proletariat when, leaving its bourgeoisie behind, it helped the struggle for democratic demands by forming organizations for that very
“The social and political activities of the proletariat have kept pace with the rapid growth of industry since 1848. The role of the German workers, as expressed in their trade unions, their associations, political organisations and public meetings, at
elections, and in the so-called Reichstag, is alone a sufficient indication of the transformation which came over Germany in the last twenty years. It is to the credit of the German workers that they alone have managed to send workers and workers’ representatives into the Parliament – a feat
which neither the French nor the English had hitherto accomplished."

(Engels, 1870 Preface to the Second Edition of *The Peasant War in Germany*)

In a note on the above text and on the tactic implemented in Germany in the 19th century by Marx-
Engels, R. Dangeville—as a consistent Bordiguist … among other things!—clearly exposed the link that would make Lenin the standard-bearer of such a tactic in Russia at the turn of the 20th century:

“The history of Germany was therefore a kind of laboratory in which valid solutions for all the countries of
the world had to be formulated! (that is, the backward countries, since the bourgeois revolution had not yet taken place in them). Thus, his study of the conditions of Germany after 1848 and of the political tactic elaborated by Marx-Engels made it possible for Lenin, beginning in 1905, to expound the
‘Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution’ in Russia. Masterfully defining the aspects of the ‘backward’ material conditions that imposed a non-communist, social democratic politics, Lenin advocated, in the absence of a revolutionary
bourgeoisie, the seizure of the reins of the revolution from the beginning of the process—the bourgeois stage—in order to lead it to its conclusion—socialism...."

(Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, *La Social-démocratie allemande* (German Social Democracy), translated)
From this book, which, like the four volumes on *Le parti de classe* [The Class Party] (Maspero), is meticulously documented, we have taken a large number of quotations that contradict the positions...
defended by its author, instead of supporting them, as he believes!

In order to transform his tactic into practice, Marx needed a mass Party in Germany. As this represents a key period in the gradual transformation that would take place with respect to the “Marxist” concept and the “social democratic” concept of the Party, we shall
examine it in detail, in the context of the organizational events that followed one after another in rapid succession.

a) The origins of the General German Workers Association (ADAV):

After the period of reaction that followed the workers movements of the late 1840s in Germany (the Cologne Trial, for example) and the
dissolution of the Communist League, the General German Workers Association was formed in 1863 in Leipzig under the leadership of Ferdinand Lassalle and his disciples.

8

After his dispute with Lassalle, immediately following Lassalle’s fruitless visit to London (July 1862), Marx was isolated from the
ADAV’s formative years. After the death of its “Guide”, however (Lassalle died as a result of wounds incurred in a duel over a woman in August, 1864), the ADAV looked for a successor to assume leadership over the organization. Wilhelm Liebknecht, one of the future leaders of the Eisenach Party and subsequently of the unified Social Democracy, then asked Marx on several
occasions to accept the presidency of the ADAV, saying that Bernhard Becker (named successor-designate in Lassalle’s Last Will and Testament) had suggested him as a candidate.

Marx, who had just assumed the leadership of the International Workingmen’s Association, responded as follows:
“Enquiries have reached me, e.g., from Berlin, as to whether I would accept the presidency? I replied that it was impossible, because for the present I am still forbidden to take up residence in Prussia. However, I would certainly think it a good gesture by the party, vis-à-vis both the Prussian government
and the bourgeoisie, if the workers' congress were to elect me, to which I would make a public reply explaining why I cannot accept the election.”

(Letter from Marx to Carl Klings, October 4, 1864; Klings was still in contact with some of the old members of the Communist League
who remained in Germany after the League’s dissolution

It turned out, as expected, that Becker was “elected” to the presidency of the ADAV. As a result of this episode, it can be seen that Marx had no illusions about the effectiveness of any kind of official plebiscite to modify the Lassallean orientation of the Association, although he did not discount its symbolic
impact in order to try to use it within the framework of his political tactic. More fundamentally, however, his tactic was based on what we defined above as the “historic Party” (or the “Marx Party”), that is, on the elitist concept of a communist fraction serving as the theoretical directors of the “formal Party”, that is, the proletarian Party that had already existed for only a short time with an
internationalist vocation (the IWA):

“... the International Association takes up an enormous amount of time, as I am in fact, the head of it.”

(Letter from Marx to Engels, March 13, 1865)

Thus, although he continued
to try to persuade the ADAV to join the First International, Marx did not lose sight of the need for a theoretical struggle against the ideas of „Saint Ferdinand Lassalle”. However, he gradually began to put this struggle on the back burner in order to pursue a tactic designed to ensure the recruitment of a “working class base” in Germany to confront those whom he called his
“enemies”, that is, the French and Italian émigrés in London, who represented the influence of Proudhon’s theories, and/or Bakunin’s, and also constituted an overwhelming majority of the supporters of the International in these countries:

“You will perhaps have seen that Engels and I have agreed to become
contributors to the Berlin Social-Demokrat. Nevertheless—this _entre nous_—either that paper will have to dissociate itself from the apotheosis of Lassalle, or we shall dissociate ourselves from it. But the poor devils have a lot to contend with…. You understand that it is
necessary that the General Association of German Workers should join only for a start, on account of our opponents here. At a later date, the whole organisation of this association will have to be broken up, as its basis is fundamentally wrong.”

(Marx to Carl Siebel,
The creation of a mass organization of the working class, prior to any movement of general confrontation with capitalism, was therefore necessary in Germany before the Marx-Party could impose its ideas either by persuasion or by force, as, by the way, he did: from his explanation of how the communists are “distinguished from the other
working-class parties” (“The Communist Manifesto” of 1848) to the bureaucratic elimination of so-called “enemies” (Congress of The Hague, 1872)!

The First Congress of the IWA was not held in Brussels in 1865, as planned, but in Geneva, September 3-8, 1866. Under pressure from the Lassallean leaders, particularly the new
president of the ADAV, J. B. Von Schweitzer, the ADAV did not join the International. Then, due to economic-political developments in Germany (reform struggles waged by the workers against the aggravation of exploitation caused by growing industrialization, and the acceleration the drive towards territorial and administrative unity after the victory of the Prussian army
over Austria at Sadowa in 1866), the struggle between “Marxists” and Lassalleans intensified within the ADAV. The opposing views crystallized around the question of whether or not workers’ trade unions should be formed to confront the employers’ power in industry. In an attempt to maintain their influence over the masses, the Lassallean leaders tactically abandoned
the principal legacy of their “Master”: the goal of workers cooperatives supported by State aid. Thus, at the Hamburg Congress of the ADAV (August 1868), in an attempt to counteract the trade union policy of the “Marxists” that was definitively elaborated at the fifth congress of the League of German Workers Associations (Nuremberg, September 5-7, 1868), and in
the presence of the delegate from the IWA, Eccarius (a former member of the Communist League), J. B. Von Schweitzer even proposed that a trade union congress should be held in Berlin. His proposal aroused the opposition of a majority of the implacables who, not understanding his opportunist tactic, wanted to remain faithful to the Lassallean program of workers.
cooperatives, and he had to threaten to resign unless his proposal was approved. The ADAV also approved other resolutions that brought its official positions closer to the theories of the IWA and rendered homage to *Capital* as “the Bible of the militant working class” (!). On the pretext of an “international conspiracy” (among other allegations), the Leipzig police ordered the dissolution
of the ADAV a few days later (September 16, 1868) and the closure of its Berlin section. Because he believed in the possibility of real collaboration with J. B. Von Schweitzer in the framework of the social democratic politics that he advocated for Germany, and due to his hope for unity with the ADAV’s supporters, Marx wrote to Von Schweitzer in response to various “enthusiastic”
letters, in one of which Von Schweitzer had invited Marx to attend the Hamburg Congress:

“Dear sir,

“I recognise, without reserve, the intelligence and energy with which you are active in the workers’ movement. I have concealed this view
from none of my friends. Wherever I have to express my views in public—in the General Council of the International Working Men's Association and in the German Communist Association here—I have always treated you as a man of our party, and never let drop a word about
points of difference.

“However, such points of difference do exist…. (An explanation of these points of difference follows)

“Yet whatever the shortcomings of the organisation, they can perhaps be cancelled out, to a greater or
lesser degree, by rational application. As secretary of the International I am ready to act—naturally on a rational basis—as mediator between you and the Nuremberg majority, which has adhered to the International directly. I have written in the same vein to Leipzig [to Wilhelm
Liebknecht]. I understand the difficulties of your position, and never forget that each of us depends more upon circumstances than upon his own will.

“I promise you, under all circumstances, the impartiality that is my duty. On the other hand, I cannot promise
that I shall not, some day, acting as a private author—as soon as I feel it to be absolutely dictated by the interests of the labour movement—publicly criticize the Lassallean superstition, on the same way as I dealt, in its time, with the Proudhonist superstition.”
In order to build a mass organization, Marx had to become embroiled in the "battle of leaders", whether he wanted to or not. Any attempt to persuade people like W. Liebknecht or A. Bebel, who constituted a veritable fraction both within and outside of the ADAV, to
support the IWA, acutely posed the problem of the leadership of what would eventually become the proletarian Party in Germany. When one reads the following letter Marx sent to Engels shortly before he sent the letter cited above to Von Schweitzer, one immediately notes the contradiction between Marx’s two concepts regarding the formation of
the Party. In his letter to Engels he puts the accent on the movement of the working class itself, outside of the maneuvers of the apparatus and its leaders, whether Lassallean or even “Marxist”:

“... I do not believe that Schweitzer had an idea of the impending blow. Had this been the case he would scarcely
have clucked so triumphantly about the ‘tight organisation’. I believe it was the ‘INTERNATIONAL WORKINGMEN'S ASSOCIATION’ that moved the Prussian government to this decisive blow. As for the ‘warm fraternal’ letter from Schweitzer to me, this is explained simply by his fear that
following the Nuremberg decision I might now publicly speak up for Wilhelm and against him. Such a polemic would certainly be awkward after the Hamburg affair (le bonhomme had written to me requesting me kindly to come to Hamburg in person, ‘to have the well-earned laurels
placed upon my brow’!).

“The most essential thing for the German working class is that it should cease to agitate by permission of the high government authorities. Such a bureaucratically schooled RACE must undergo a complete course of ‘self help’. On the other hand, they
undenbtedly have the advantage that they are starting the movement at a period when conditions are much further developed than they were for the English and that, as Germans, they have heads on their shoulders capable of generalising.”

(Marx to Engels,
The “impartiality” that Marx wanted to practice in the interests of unity only had an ephemeral existence: three weeks after the dissolution of the ADAV, J. B. Von Schweitzer reconstituted the ADAV under the same name in Berlin, stating in the new statutes that the organization sought to act strictly within the framework of Prussian
law. Engaging in open collaboration with Bismarck, whose policy of German unification under the Prussian jackboot he supported, he then devoted himself to a witch-hunt against “Marxists” elements. The latter, after trying to preserve the unity of the organization by isolating J. B. Von Schweitzer, were finally obliged to resign. In a public declaration dated
February 18, 1869, W. Liebknecht proclaimed:

“I am prepared to confront Herr Von Schwietzer in a public meeting and provide evidence that he—whether for money, or by inclination—has been trying to systematically deceive the organization of the workers Party since the
end of 1864 and that he has been playing the game of Bismarckian Caesarism. And furthermore, I will prove that my friends and I have not neglected any means to promote the unity of the party and that Herr Von Schweitzer has up until now frustrated all our efforts to do so.”
A few months later, the “Marxists” resigned and founded the Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei [Social Democratic Workers Party] in Eisenach (August 7-9, 1869).

b) The “Eisenach Party” (1869-1875)
In his 1874 Addendum to the 1870 Preface to *The Peasant War in Germany*, Engels depicted the evolution of the situation in Germany since 1869-1870 (the date of his previous “Preface” to this book; see citation above). He stressed the importance of industrial development and bourgeois reforms, but he once again called attention to the refusal of the bourgeoisie to exercise political power on
its own account in order to accelerate and complete the democratic program. Confronted with the government of the Prussian Junkers, the social democratic political tactic therefore still consisted in encouraging the proletariat to assume responsibility for implementing the democratic program in the place of the bourgeoisie! Towards this end, Engels began to
cultivate myths ("scientific socialism" conceived as the continuation of classical German philosophy) which he would subsequently reinforce, and later this job would be taken over by Kautsky in the epoch when the latter had become the "orthodox center" of the Social Democracy:

"The German workers have two important
advantages compared with the rest of Europe. First, they belong to the most theoretical people of Europe; second, they have retained that sense of theory which the so-called ‘educated’ people of Germany have totally lost. Without German philosophy, particularly that of Hegel, German
scientific Socialism (the only scientific Socialism extant) would never have come into existence. Without a sense for theory, scientific Socialism would have never become blood and tissue of the workers. What an enormous advantage this is, may be seen on the one hand from the indifference
of the English labour movement towards all theory, which is one of the reasons why it moves so slowly in spite of the splendid organisation of the individual unions; on the other hand, from the mischief and confusion created by Proudhonism in its original form among the Frenchmen and
Belgians, and in its caricature form, as presented by Bakunin, among the Spaniards and Italians.”

(Engels’ 1874 Addendum to the 1870 Preface…).

In addition, Engels advocated forms of struggle and of agitation (the role of leaders, inculcating the proletariat
with “socialist science”, building the mass organization under the auspices of Party/Trade Union, greater participation in elections…) which, despite the “internationalist” note appended to the end of the passage quoted above, would only be further amplified right up until 1914! The ideology of the Social Democracy as the Great Bourgeois Workers
Party, the only Party capable of eliminating the remnants of feudalism by making the proletariat participate in the development of its national capitalism, was already more than merely incipient in the following passage (the Social Democracy would play the role of opposition party against His Majesty while it awaited the opportunity to “conquer power”, which would finally arrive in
November 1918):

“...It is the specific duty of the leaders to gain an ever clearer understanding of the theoretical problems, to free themselves more and more from the influence of traditional phrases inherited from the old conception of the world, and constantly to keep in
mind that Socialism, having become a science, demands the same treatment as every other science – it must be studied. The task of the leaders will be to bring understanding, thus acquired and clarified, to the working masses, to spread it with increased enthusiasm, to close the ranks of the
party organisations and of the labour unions with ever greater energy. The votes cast in favour of the Socialists last January may represent considerable strength, but they still are far from being the majority of the German working class; and encouraging as may be the successes of the
propaganda among the rural population, more remains to be done in this field. The slogan is not to flinch in the struggle. The task is to wrest from the enemy’s hands one seat after the other, one electoral district after the other. In the first place, however, it is necessary to retain a real international spirit
which permits of no chauvinism, which joyfully greets each new step of the proletarian movement, no matter in which nation it is made.” (!)

(Engels’ 1870 Preface to *The Peasant War in Germany*)

At that time, in that particular economic-social
context, Marx-Engels thought that breaking with the Lassallean sectarianism of the ADAV would entail clarification favorable to the application of their social democratic political tactic. In the “Eisenach Party”, they thought they had finally found the proletarian Party that was right for Germany, and that it would be a section of the IWA. Despite a certain number of incidents that
seemed to vindicate their expectations (during the Franco-Prussian War, for example) and their never-renounced public support for the Eisenach Party, they were nevertheless soon disillusioned with the Party’s lack of rigor and coherence in the pursuit of its general policy; which they expressed privately in an important series of letters to the main leaders of the Party (it must
be pointed out, by the way, that several of these letters, especially the ones in which Marx-Engels most bitterly reproached these leaders, have been lost, as if by chance!

The Social Democratic Workers Party was founded at the Eisenach Congress in the summer of 1869: the Congress was attended by 263 delegates representing
200 sections in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. It was Bebel who, along with W. Liebknecht, W. Bracke and A. Geib, drafted its proposed program, inspired by the preamble of the statutes of the IWA written by Marx. The latter text left the door open to Lassallean and liberal influences in such a way as to allow admission to the International of a large part of the “Sächsische
Volkspartei” [Saxon People’s Party], which was composed of elements that had broken away from the “Deutsche Volkspartei” [German People’s Party] that existed between 1863 and 1866 and was based on opposition to the policy of Prussian hegemony. The draft program was adopted by the Congress after a few minor revisions.
In 1870, just before the IWA’s annual Congress was scheduled to convene in Mainz for the purpose of increasing the International’s influence in Germany (and therefore, the influence of the “Marx-Party”), the war between Prussia and France broke out, provoked by Napoleon III. During this conflict, the Social Democratic Workers Party came to terms in the practical
sense with the instructions of Marx-Engels: support for a “defensive war” for German independence against reactionary Bonapartism (see the references in Part One, above, “The ‘Marxist’ concept of the Party”), and demand guarantees from Bismarck’s government to the effect that, if it was militarily victorious, it would not indulge its predilection for domination and
annexation (Alsace-Lorraine).

“For their part, they went forward and now are demanding ‘guarantees’: the guarantee that their immense sacrifices have not been in vain, a guarantee that they have won their freedom, a guarantee that the victory over
the Bonapartist armies would not become, as in 1815, a defeat of the German people; and, as the first guarantee, they demand an honorable peace for France and the recognition of the French Republic.”

(Marx, The Civil War in France, 1871)
the German Social Democratic Workers Party published a manifesto on September 5 (based on instructions contained in a letter from Marx) vehemently insisting on these guarantees.

“‘We,’ they say, ‘protest against the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine. And we are conscious of
speaking in the name of the German working class. In the common interest of France and Germany, in the interest of western civilization against eastern barbarism, the German workmen will not patiently tolerate the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine.... We shall faithfully stand by our fellow
workmen in all countries for the common international cause of the proletariat!"

“Unfortunately, we cannot feel sanguine of their immediate success. If the French workmen amidst peace failed to stop the aggressor, are the German workmen more
likely to stop the victor amidst the clamour of arms? The German workmen’s manifesto demands the extradition of Louis Bonaparte as a common felon to the French republic. Their rulers are, on the contrary, already trying hard to restore him to the Tuileries as the best man to ruin France.
However that may be, history will prove that the German working class are not made of the same malleable stuff as the German middle class. They will do their duty.”

(Marx, *The Civil War in France*)

This is a good example of the negative impact of the
“chessboard politics” pursued by Marx (see its other facets in Part II, below). It consists of: speaking in the name of the proletariat (Party substitutionism); shackling the proletariat to the interests of the national development of each bourgeoisie (the extension of democracy against the remnants of feudalism); and then demanding (!) — without
possessing the means to impose their point of view (having neglected to concern themselves with the task of preserving the political independence of the proletariat within the framework of the bourgeois process)—that their rulers abide by their democratic promises and not their imperialist inclinations.

However, after having said
that any attempt on the part of the working class to overthrow the new government of France would be “desperate folly” and that it would be better to “calmly and resolutely improve the opportunities of republican liberty, for the work of their own class organization”, Marx was nonetheless capable of performing the requisite about-face to support the spontaneous
movement of the workers that would later take the form of the Paris Commune, and he would then derive the most positive lessons for the working class movement as a whole from that experience, lessons that would therefore totally contradict the social democratic political tactic that he had been actively pursuing. That tactic was based on faith in the virtues attributed to the objective
growth of capital and on the obligatory denunciation of anarchist theories:

“If the Prussians win, the centralisation of the state power will be useful for the centralisation of the German working class....

“...Their predominance over the French on the
world stage would also mean the predominance of our theory over Proudhon’s.”

(Excerpts from a letter from Marx to Engels, dated July 20, 1870; the letter was therefore written before the war and before the first two Addresses from the General Council of the IWA).
The Eisenach Party more or less followed Marx in this about-face, and Bebel declared in one of his speeches:

“...The entire European proletariat and all those who have any inclinations towards freedom and independence, have their eyes fixed on...
Paris.... Even though Paris may now have been put down, I must tell you that the struggle in Paris is only a small outpost skirmish, that the main affair in Europe is still ahead of us, and that before a few decades have passed the battle cry of the Paris proletariat: 'War on the palaces, peace to the
cottages, death to poverty and idleness!’ will become the battle cry of the entire European proletariat.”

(August Bebel, Speech in the Reichstag, May 25, 1871)

During the following year, however, Marx-Engels complained about the fact that the German Party did not
join the International, and about the silence of the social democratic leaders on this issue, especially that of W. Liebknecht, who was responsible for foreign relations. Engels therefore wrote as follows to Liebknecht:

“What view does the ‘Committee’ in Hamburg take of the International? We must
now try and clear up the situation there as quickly as possible so that Germany can be properly represented at the Congress. I must ask you straight out to tell us frankly how the International stands with you.

“1. Roughly how many stamps have been distributed to how
many places, and which places are involved? The 208 counted by Fink are surely not all there are?

“2. Does the Social-Democratic Workers’ Party intend to be represented at the Congress and IF SO how does it propose to place itself *en règle* with the General
Council in advance so that its mandate cannot be queried at the Congress? This would mean a) that it would have to declare itself to be the German Federation of the International in reality and not merely figuratively and b) that as such it would pay its dues before the Congress. The matter is
becoming serious and we have to know where we are, or else you will force us to act on our own initiative and to consider the Social-Democratic Workers’ Party as an alien body for whom the International has no significance. We cannot allow the representation of the German workers at the
Congress to be fumbled or forfeited for reasons unknown to us, but which cannot be other than petty. We should like to ask for a clear statement about this quickly.”

(Letter from Engels to Wilhelm Liebknecht, May 22, 1872)

Adolf Hepner, representing
the Eisenach Party, attended the Hague Congress (September 2-7, 1872) that culminated in the expulsion of the Bakuninist “enemies” from the IWA: these Bakuninists were suspected of having participated in the secret activities of the Alliance of Socialist Democracy! Yet this did nothing to clarify the relations between the
International and the German Party. On the one hand, Adolf Hepner, just like other Social Democratic leaders (A. Bebel, W. Liebknecht) fell victim to the repression initiated by Bismarck’s government, which prohibited international contacts: condemned to one month in prison, the authorities then expelled him from Leipzig (spring of 1873) and he had to relocate
to Breslau, on the other side of Germany; Bebel and Liebknecht had already been sentenced to two years in military prison in March of 1872 and then, during yet another trial on the charge of insulting the Emperor, Bebel was sentenced to another nine months in prison and was stripped of his parliamentary mandate (Liebknecht was not released until April 15, 1874; Bebel
was released on April 1, 1875).

However, since repression alone was incapable of explaining all the organizational shortcomings of the Party in its relations with the IWA, it was evident that the influence of Lassalleanism had the support of the majority within the Eisenach Party itself. Ever since 1871, its
executive committee was based in Hamburg and openly pro-Lassallean elements such as Geib and Yorck had assumed positions of control on the committee. Between 1872 and 1873, the question of what position should be taken towards the ADAV occasioned countless confrontations in debates within the Eisenach Party. At the Mainz Congress (September 1872), Geiser
violently attacked the anti-Lassallean policy of *Volkstaat* and demanded the immediate cessation of the polemic against the *Neuer Sozial-Demokrat*. The Congress resolved that the ADAV was "the only natural ally of the Socialist Workers Party, and then mandated that the committee must once again make an attempt to find a way to engage in principled collaboration with
the General German Workers Association.” As a result, the editors of *Volkstaat* were ordered to “immediately cease publishing all polemical articles against the ADAV and its leadership”. At this time, Yorck was putting so much emphasis on a policy of compromise with the Lassalleans that Hepner wrote to Engels on April 11, 1873:
“Yorck’s Lassalleanism is so narrow-minded that he hates everything that is not like the Neuer Sozial-Demokrat….

Liebknecht, due to his ‘patronizing tolerance’, which is most often improperly indulged, bears no small share of the responsibility for the fact that Yorck has gone so far. However,
when I speak of this to Liebknecht, he claims I am seeing things, that it is not such a big deal. But it is actually just as I describe it.”

Liebknecht and Bebel, who had concluded a “truce” with the Lassalleans, and were increasingly more obsessed with arranging a merger with
the ADAV, effectively attempted to defuse the explosive situation, and tried to dissuade Marx-Engels from intervening in the “internal affairs” of the German Party through the IWA:

“It is impossible for you, from a distance, to fairly judge our situation, and Hepner does not have any
practical sense…. Yorck’s influence is insignificant, it all the less dangerous, insofar as Lassalleanism is by no means widespread in the party. If we have to take precautions this is only because of the numerous honorable workers who have gone astray, who will surely be on our side if we act with dexterity…. I
hope that after these disagreements, you will not hesitate to continue your collaboration with *Volkstaat*. Nothing would be worse than losing your contributions.”

(Letter from Bebel [translated from the Spanish translation])

Marx-Engels did not cease to
collaborate with Volkstaat, but privately continued to criticize its supporters within the Eisenach Party. Devoted to promoting the influence of the historic Party (the “purged” IWA after the Hague Congress!) in the mass organizations of every country, and first of all in Germany, they incited their supporters in the Eisenach Party to resist the appeals to unity preached by the
Lassallean sirens. However, while Engels had an article published in the *Volkstaat* entitled, “News from the International” (August 2, 1873), as part of the ongoing critique of the anarchist current in Germany (to placate the ADAV, the Eisenachers had ceased all polemics directed against the Bakuninists), the public polemic against Lassalle’s theories was suspended:
“Marx cannot tackle Lassalle until the French translation [of *Capital*] is finished (approx. end of July), after which he will absolutely need a rest as he is very overworked.”

(Engels to Bebel, June 20, 1873)
The theme of unity made further progress and the planned merger was negotiated by the pro-Lassallean elements of the Eisenach Party; the negotiations later had the active support of Liebknecht, and to a lesser extent of Bebel, when they were released from prison. Thus, on March 7, 1875, Volkstaat and the Neuer Sozial-Demokrat simultaneously
published an appeal to all the social democrats of Germany, as well as a draft program and joint statutes drawn up at a preliminary conference held on February 4 and 15, 1875 attended by Eisenachers and Lassalleans.

The unification Congress took place during the week of May 22-27, 1875.

c) The “unified” Social
Democratic Party, or ... from criticism to patronage!

Marx and Engels were deliberately kept in the dark about the preparations for the merger by W. Liebknecht. This may be deduced from a letter sent by Engels to Bebel (March 18-28, 1875) in which its author, informed of the upcoming unification congress after having read the draft program of the
proposed new party that had just been published, wrote a five-point critique of the program and declared:

“I shall desist, although almost every word in this programme, a programme which is, moreover, insipidly written, lays itself open to criticism. It is such that, should it be adopted, Marx and I
could never recognise a new party set up on that basis and shall have to consider most seriously what attitude — public as well as private — we should adopt towards it. Remember that abroad we are held responsible for any and every statement and action of the German Social-Democratic Workers’ Party. E.g. by
Bakunin in his work *Statehood and Anarchy*, in which we are made to answer for every injudicious word spoken or written by Liebknecht since the inception of the *Demokratisches Wochenblatt*. People imagine that we run the whole show from here, whereas you know as well as I do that we
have hardly ever interfered in the least with internal party affairs, and then only in an attempt to make good, as far as possible, what we considered to have been blunders — and only theoretical blunders at that. But, as you yourself will realise, this programme marks a turning-point which may very well
force us to renounce any kind of responsibility in regard to the party that adopts it.

“Generally speaking, less importance attaches to the official programme of a party than to what it does. But a new programme is after all a banner planted in public, and
the outside world judges the party by it. Hence, whatever happens there should be no going-back, as there is here, on the Eisenach programme. It should further be considered what the workers of other countries will think of this programme; what impression will be created by this
genuflection on the part of the entire German socialist proletariat before Lassalleanism.”

This warning issued by Engels seems to be perfectly clear: the historic Party is threatening not to stand guarantor for the machinations of the proletarian Party in Germany, and even to publicly take a critical
position towards it. Towards the end of this same letter Engels condemns Liebknecht’s conduct in particular:

“... to Liebknecht I wrote but briefly. I cannot forgive his not having told us a single word about the whole business (whereas Ramm and others believed he had given
us exact information) until it was, in a manner of speaking, too late. True, this has always been his wont — hence the large amount of disagreeable correspondence which we, both Marx and myself, have had with him, but this time it really is too bad, and we definitely shan’t act in concert with him.”
The social democratic leader responded in an opportunist manner, as was his wont, saying that unification, even with some “gaps” in the program, favored subsequent clarification (!):

“The gaps in the program to which you refer do undoubtedly exist, and we were fully aware of this from the
very start. But they were inevitable at the conference if we did not want to break off the negotiations. The Lassalleans had just met with their executive committee and arrived with an imperative mandate concerning the few points that are most controversial. We had to yield to them, all the
more so because there was not the least doubt among any of us (or even among the Lassalleans) that unification would mean the death of Lassalianism.”

(Letter from W. Liebknecht to Engels, April 21, 1875 [translated from the Spanish translation])
Marx then decided to enter the fray and fought, in a sense, “the last battle” of the historic Party. In a letter to W. Bracke, one of his most loyal followers, he attached the “Marginal Notes to the Programme of the German Workers’ Party”, more commonly known as the “Critique of the Gotha Program”, in order to bring them to the attention of the
leadership of the Eisenach Party. He did not however, have any illusions about its efficacy, since he knew that the social democrats would maneuver to conceal his critical observations and would not use them to modify their program (see the note appended to the letter to Bracke). In fact, *Vorwärts* (the newspaper of the “Unified” Party) did not publish Marx’s critique of
the Gotha program until sixteen years after it was first privately circulated (supplement of February 1 and 3, 1891). Furthermore, *Vorwärts* omitted the Introduction written by Engels who, in opposition to W. Liebknecht’s intention to personally use—that is, without any explicit citations—Marx’s critique for the purpose of drafting a new program (which would be
adopted at Erfurt on October 14-20, 1891), sought to have the publication of this text serve as the basis for general discussion in preparation for the 1891 Congress. To confirm Marx’s lucidity, as well as his own, concerning the reasons for the policy of silence followed by the Social Democratic Workers Party during the preparations for the 1875 merger, here is what Engels wrote to Bebel
on May 1, 1891:

“What was the position? We knew as well as you did and, for instance, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* of 9 March 1875, which I found, that the matter was decided when your accredited representatives accepted the draft. Hence Marx wrote the
thing merely to salve his conscience, as is testified by the words he appended — *dixi et salvavi animam meam* [I speak and save my soul] — and not with any hope of success.”

As for Marx, by then exhausted due to illness, he instructed Bracke that, once he had received his Marginal Notes:
“When you have read the following critical marginal notes on the Unity Programme, would you be so good as to send them on to Geib and Auer, Bebel and Liebknecht for examination. I am exceedingly busy and have to overstep by far the limit of work allowed me by the
doctors. Hence it was anything but a ‘pleasure’ to write such a lengthy screed. It was, however, necessary so that the steps to be taken by me later on would not be misinterpreted by our friends in the Party for whom this communication is intended.
“After the Unity Congress has been held, Engels and I will publish a short statement to the effect that our position is altogether remote from the said programme of principle and that we have nothing to do with it.

“This is indispensable because the opinion –
the entirely erroneous opinion – is held abroad and assiduously nurtured by enemies of the Party that we secretly guide from here the movement of the so-called Eisenach Party. In a Russian book (*Statism and Anarchy*) that has recently appeared, Bakunin still makes me responsible, for
example, not only for all the programmes, etc., of that party but even for every step taken by Liebknecht from the day of his cooperation with the People’s Party.

“Apart from this, it is my duty not to give recognition, even by diplomatic silence, to what in my opinion is a
thoroughly objectionable programme that demoralises the Party.

“Every step of real movement is more important than a dozen programmes. If, therefore, it was not possible – and the conditions of the item did not permit it – to go beyond the Eisenach
programme, one should simply have concluded an agreement for action against the common enemy. But by drawing up a programme of principles (instead of postponing this until it has been prepared for by a considerable period of common activity) one sets up before the whole world landmarks by which it
measures the level of the Party movement.

“The Lassallean leaders came because circumstances forced them to. If they had been told in advance that there would be haggling about principles, they would have had to be content with a programme of action or a plan of
organisation for common action. Instead of this, one permits them to arrive armed with mandates, recognises these mandates on one's part as binding, and thus surrenders unconditionally to those who are themselves in need of help. To crown the whole business, they
are holding a congress before the Congress of Compromise, while one's own party is holding its congress post festum. One had obviously had a desire to stifle all criticism and to give one's own party no opportunity for reflection. One knows that the mere fact of unification is satisfying to the
workers, but it is a mistake to believe that this momentary success is not bought too dearly.

“For the rest, the programme is no good, even apart from its sanctification of the Lassallean articles of faith.”

(Marx to W. Bracke,
May 5, 1875)

In view of a letter like that, and after having read the text of the “Critique of the Gotha Program”, one would at least expect, after the unification congress, that Marx and Engels would have taken a public stand to denounce the “compromise” program and distance themselves from the
“Unified” Party. And one would be all the more justified in thinking so, insofar as the new Party’s “directive committee” was composed for the most part of Lassalleans, with Eisenachers in the minority.

Meanwhile, the political-theoretical struggle against the positions of the anarchists, and against Bakunin in particular,
continued, and not only had this struggle taken on an openly public dimension, but it had also resulted in the exclusion of the anarchists from the First International (and furthermore by the use of very bureaucratic means!). However, no such public declaration against Lassalle’s theories was forthcoming, and no detailed work was published to denounce them, although such a text was
announced as being planned (see, above, the letter to J. B. Von Schweitzer), while Proudhon’s theories, for example, had been subjected —and rightly so!—to a full-scale attack (see *The Poverty of Philosophy*). This, despite the fact that works critical of Lassalleanism (W. Bracke in 1873, B. Becker in 1874) were nonetheless listed in the catalogue of Party literature distributed by the Hamburg
Committee.

On the one hand, Marx continued to express unfavorable opinions concerning the German Party in his private correspondence; in a letter to F. A. Sorge, for example, the former secretary of the IWA in New York and a former member of the Communist League, dated October 19, 1877:
“A rotten spirit is making itself felt in our Party in Germany, not so much among the masses as among the leaders (upper class and ‘workers’).

“The compromise with the Lassalleans has led to compromise with other half-way elements too; in Berlin
(e.g., Most) with Dühring and his ‘admirers,’ but also with a whole gang of half-mature students and super-wise doctors who want to give socialism a ‘higher ideal’ orientation, that is to say, to replace its materialistic basis (which demands serious objective study from anyone who tries
to use it) by modern mythology with its goddesses of Justice, Freedom, Equality and Fraternity.”

On the other hand, however, Marx publicly and officially recognized the formal, existing party in Germany as the proletarian Party that he politically advocated, reaffirming that it must assume the task of replacing
the bourgeoisie in the struggle for democratic demands, thanks to the ‘theoretical prowess’ of the proletariat of that country and at the same time giving a kind of absolution to Lassalle for his ideas concerning the goals of the workers movement (!):

“[Interviewer:] I asked him to give me a reason for the rapid
growth of the socialistic party in Germany, when he [Marx] replied:

‘The present socialistic party came last. Theirs was not the utopian scheme which made headway in France and England. The
German mind is given to theorizing, more than that of other peoples. From previous experience the Germans evolved something practical. This modern capitalistic system, you must recollect, is quite
new in Germany in comparison to other states. Questions were raised which had become almost antiquated in France and England, and political influences to which these states had yielded sprang into life.
when the working classes of Germany had become imbued with socialistic theories. Therefore, from the beginning almost of modern industrial development, they have formed an Independent Political Party.
‘They had their own representatives in the German parliament. There was no party to oppose the policy of the government, and this devolved upon them. To trace the course of the party
would take a long time; but I may say this: that, if the middle classes of Germany were not the greatest cowards, distinct from the middle classes of America and England, all the political work against the
government should have been done by them.’

“I asked him a question regarding the numerical strength of the Lassallians in the ranks of the Internationalists.

“The party of Lassalle,’ he replied, ‘does not
exist. Of course there are some believers in our ranks, but the number is small. Lassalle anticipated our general principles. When he commenced to move after the reaction of 1848, he fancied that he could more
successfully revive the movement by advocating cooperation of the workingmen in industrial enterprises. It was to stir them into activity. He looked upon this merely as a means to the real end of the
movement. I have letters from him to this effect’.”

(From an interview with Karl Marx published in The Chicago Tribune, January 5, 1879)

Similarly, Engels gradually set about certifying the new “unified” Party as a “proletarian” Party. Thus, on
October 12, 1875, he concluded a letter to Bebel by saying:

“You are quite right that the entire matter is a pedagogical experiment that may promise a very favorable result even under these conditions. The party unification as such is a great success if it can last for just
two years. Undoubtedly, however, this would have been possible at a far cheaper price."

Two years later, he would praise the electoral effectiveness of the Gotha Party:

“The vote enables us to reckon our forces; the battalions are now able
to tell you what are the army corps of German socialism passing in review on election day. The moral effect—on the socialist party which registers its progress with delight, on the workers who are still indifferent, and on our enemies—is enormous; and it is a good thing that once every three years the
mortal sin of going to the polls is committed. The abstentionists can say what they like; a single event like the elections of January 10 is worth more than all their ‘revolutionary’ phrases.”

(First published in Italian in *La Plebe*, No. 7, February 26, 1877)
Aside from the persistence of certain criticisms in their correspondence, how can we explain the political choice made by Marx and Engels that led them to definitively give their public seal of approval (the only act that has any importance with respect to the real social movement) to a Party that they had all but condemned when it was created in 1875? How are we to account for
the fact that the historic Party, so intransigent ever since the “Manifesto” with respect to all the weaknesses of the various theoretical and formal expressions of the proletarian Party (the other working class parties that preceded the IWA, most of which subsequently joined the latter), would finally bend its knee before an organizational expression whose principles it had
abjured from the very start?

There are several reasons:

Some are conjunctural, and therefore secondary, such as, for example, the fact emphasized by Engels that the program of the new Party would either be largely ignored, or else “interpreted … communistically”:

“Fortunately, the
programme has fared better than it deserves. The workers as well as the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie read into it what should rightly be in it but is not, and it has not occurred to anyone from any side to investigate publicly a single one of these wonderful propositions for its real content.
This has enabled us to keep silent about this programme.”

(Letter to W. Bracke, October 11, 1875)

“Instead, the asinine bourgeois papers took this programme quite seriously, read into it what it does not contain and interpreted it communistically. The
workers seem to be doing the same. It is this circumstance alone that made it possible for Marx and me not to dissociate ourselves publicly from such a programme. So long as our opponents and likewise the workers inject our views into this programme, we may allow ourselves to keep quiet about it.”
Although secondary, these rationalizations testify to the duplicitous and elitist—and therefore bourgeois—politics that Engels practiced in his dealings with the workers movement: the workers are incapable of attaining a clear consciousness of things,
therefore the Party can manipulate them as it sees fit!

Other reasons for the position of Marx and Engels on the Gotha Party are theoretical, and therefore fundamental.

Marx posited a separation between the political movement and the social goal, between what he called the minimum program and
the maximum program; this separation arose from, among other things, the particular conditions of each country, and as a result there are national programs:

[Interviewer:]“‘But,’ I said, ‘socialists generally look upon the transformation of the means of labor into the common property of society as the grand
climax of the movement.

[Marx:] “‘Yes; we say that this will be the outcome of the movement, but it will be a question of time, of education, and the institution of higher social status.’

[Interviewer:] “‘This platform,’ I remarked,
‘applies only to Germany and one or two other countries.’

[Marx:] “‘Ah!’ he returned, ‘if you draw your conclusions from nothing but this, you know nothing of the activity of the party. Many of its points have no significance outside of Germany. Spain, Russia, England, and
America have platforms suited to their peculiar difficulties. The only similarity in them is the end to be attained’.”

(Interview published in The Chicago Tribune)

This separation, and this acknowledgment of “national” programs, were
contemporary with the liquidation of the IWA. For, after the Congress of The Hague, the International was reduced to the approved constituency and the transfer of its headquarters to New York signified nothing less than its imminent planned liquidation. At the time, Marx and Engels were engaged in articulating a theoretical perspective that considered an international
organization “superfluous”. If in this way the positive side of their contradiction was recovered, which impelled them to trust in the real movement as opposed to any previously-existing organization, it by no means helped them, in their subsequent development, in view of the changing objective conditions in Germany, to shake off their faith in organizational forms
of the national type which increasingly featured a minimal content at the level of the application of principles:

“‘But your International Society in London directs the movement?’

“‘The International Society has outlived its usefulness and exists
no longer. It did exist and direct the movement; but the growth of socialism of late years has been so great that its existence has become unnecessary. Newspapers have been started in the various countries. These are interchanged. That is about the only connection the parties
in the different countries have with one another. The International Society, in the first instance, was created to bring the workmen together, and show the advisability of effecting organization among their various nationalities. The interests of each party in the different
countries have no similarity….’’

(Ibid.)

Marx expressed a similar idea when he said that the defeat of the Paris Commune made the disappearance of the IWA inevitable (see the “Critique of the Gotha Program”, quoted in Part One above, “The ‘Marxist’ Concept of the Party”).
Engels would later make the same kind of claim during the era of Bismarck’s anti-socialist laws … even though he continued to grant his critical support to the activities, which were both clandestine and parliamentary, of the Unified Party, four years before the founding of the Second International (!):

“Today the German
proletariat no longer needs any official organization, either public or secret. The simple self-evident interconnection of like-minded class comrades suffices, without any rules, boards, resolutions or other tangible forms, to shake the whole German Empire to its foundations....”
On The History of the Communist League”, 1885

Confronted by the development of capital, a gradual transition to a new position was taking place. Repudiating the principle of the fundamental antagonism between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (see “The Manifesto”), the social
democratic politics elaborated by Marx and Engels could only result in privileging immediate struggles within the framework of demands for democratic political reforms.

Thus, the organizational contradiction was resolved in a very precise sense: it was necessary to support mass organizations that had been created prior to any social
confrontation, in order to emphasize the pursuit of reformist goals to their logical conclusions. The conquest of democracy, after the seizure of political power, both of which were originally conceived as preludes to the realization of the final goal, socialism, had been transformed into ends in themselves and no longer merely as stages within the process of “permanent
revolution”. The limitations of Marx and Engels with respect to the concept of a political stage were therefore transformed into errors by the separation, postulated theoretically and put into practice in Germany, between the stages and the social goal.

As the workers movement was increasingly circumscribed within the
bourgeois process, the struggle for principles was increasingly relegated to a secondary level of importance, or it was preserved in a private and elitist sense, that is, it was only accessible to the “leaders” (see the circular letters and the critical texts of Marx and Engels addressed exclusively to the leaders of German Social Democracy).
The “communist credo” took on the aura of a kind of distant ideal, of a “future paradise” (the famous “singing tomorrows”), due to the very fact that struggles were organized within the framework of immediate demands and in the particular context of each nation, thus contributing to the concentration of capital and the reinforcement of the
State under the aegis of the promotion of formal liberties (the right to vote for everyone, freedom of association, of the press, etc.).

The only task that remained for the historic Party was to embody itself in the proletarian Parties that effectively fought for democratic demands in different countries. And the
Party that proved most effective from this perspective: was it not, in view of the “predominant theoretical role” proclaimed for its proletariat, the German Party ... despite all its imperfections? Bismarck’s anti-socialist law, opening up a new period, should have, by the way, in the eyes of Marx and Engels, contributed to eliminating these
imperfections by forcing the Party to pursue a “revolutionary” course, which meant: prevent a “popular uprising” (above all, no “Communes” in Germany!) and contribute to the unfolding of a “radical” bourgeois process, that is, a process led by the proletarian Party (the unified Social Democracy).

As it turned out, on May 11
and June 2, 1878, the emperor Wilhelm was the target of two assassination attempts, the second of which was carried out by the anarchist, Eduard Nobiling. Bismarck took advantage of these attacks by blaming them on the Social Democracy, which he accused of preaching the violent seizure of power. After an initial rebuff, the German Chancellor
succeeded in having his anti-socialist law passed on October 19, 1878, after dissolving the Reichstag and thus ensuring his proposal of a docile majority.

With regard to Bismarck’s policy, Marx declared:

“... For the purpose of levying as he chooses, he has raised the ghost of socialism, and has
done everything in his power to create an *Emeute*.’

[Interviewer:] ‘‘You have continual advice from Berlin?’

‘‘Yes,’ he said; ‘my friends keep me well advised. It is in a perfectly quiet state, and Bismarck is disappointed. He has
expelled forty-eight prominent men – among them Deputies Hasselman and Fritsche and Rackow, Bauman, and Adler, of the *Freie Presse*. These men kept the workmen of Berlin quiet. Bismarck knew this. He also knew that there were 75,000 workmen in that city upon the verge of starvation. Once those
leaders were gone, he was confident that the mob would rise, and that would be the cue for a carnival of slaughter’.”

(“Interview published in The Chicago Tribune”)

And concerning the effects of this policy on the Party, he said:
“In fact Liebknecht, having made the tremendous blunder of treating with the Lassalleans, flung wide the door to all these demi-men and thus, \textit{malgré lui}, paved the way for demoralisation within the party which could be eliminated \textit{only} by the Anti-Socialist Law.”
(Marx to F. A. Sorge, September 19, 1879)

Engels expressed this same idea even more "optimistically":

"Agitation of the old, easy-going, lackadaisical sort, interspersed with an occasional 6 weeks-6 months in quod, is a
thing of the past where Germany is concerned. No matter how the present state of affairs comes to an end, the new movement is starting off on a more or less revolutionary basis and hence its character must be far more resolute than in the first period of the movement, now concluded. Either the
maxim about the peaceable attainment of the goal will no longer be necessary, or else no one will continue to take it seriously. By making that maxim impossible and giving a revolutionary cast to the movement, Bismarck has done us a tremendous service which more than outweighs the bit of
harm caused by interference with agitation.”

(Letter to J. Ph. Becker, July 1, 1879)\textsuperscript{11}

However, the anti-socialist law was far from solving all the problems that stood in the way of imposing this “revolutionary” course on the proletarian Party. To the contrary, Marx-Engels
clashed, on the one hand, with “non-radical” bourgeois elements over the question of the tactic that should be pursued while the Party was illegal (especially concerning the problem of the creation of a clandestine Party newspaper), and, on the other hand, with the parliamentary fraction of the Party due to its continuing pursuit of its legal activities, in exchange for all its compromises with
Bismarck. Marx then entered the fray to fight his last battles.

The official journal of the Social Democratic Party, *Vorwärts*, was banned and the Party leaders decided to publish an illegal newspaper, the *Sozialdemokrat*. A battle for control over the editorial committee of this newspaper then began, involving Marx-Engels, on the one side, who
wanted to impose their own picked man who lived in Paris as the editor-in-chief, and on the other side, the “petty bourgeois philistine” elements (a term employed by Marx-Engels) who had emigrated to Switzerland and enjoyed the support of the leaders who had remained in Germany (the Leipzig group: Liebknecht, Bebel … and the whole parliamentary fraction). Three of these
latter elements—Höchberg, Bernstein and Schramm—published the first issue of a newspaper in Zurich in August 1879 that contained an article entitled, “Retrospective on the Socialist Movement in Germany”, in which they expounded their “revisionist” program intended to downplay the “radical-bourgeois” nature of the proletarian Party.
(characterized by the struggle against the semi-feudal government instead of the struggle against the bourgeoisie) and, therefore, to make the Party more respectable in the eyes of the petty bourgeoisie who were shocked by some of the Party’s ideas (e.g., its justification of violence).

Marx and Engels then dispatched, as always when
they were in a difficult situation, a circular letter “just for private circulation among the German leaders, of course” (Marx to Sorge, September 19, 1879). In this text, they condemned the theses of the Zurich group concerning the future orientation of the Party and, as was customary for elitist, back-room politicians who considered themselves indispensable, issued a
warning to the Leipzig leadership, ordering them to exclude the “petty bourgeois” elements in Zurich or else Marx and Engels, as the “Founding Fathers”, would publicly break off all relations with the German Party:

“… There you have the programme of the three censors of Zurich. As regards clarity, it
leaves nothing to be desired. Least of all so far as we’re concerned, since we are still only too familiar with all these catch-phrases of 1848. There are the voices of the representatives of the petty bourgeoisie, terrified lest the proletariat, impelled by its revolutionary situation, should ‘go
too far’. Instead of resolute political opposition — general conciliation; instead of a struggle against government and bourgeoisie — an attempt to win them over and talk them round; instead of defiant resistance to maltreatment from above — humble subjection and the
admission that the punishment was deserved. Every historically necessary conflict is reinterpreted as a misunderstanding and every discussion wound up with the assurance: we are, of course, all agreed on the main issue. The men who in 1848 entered the arena as bourgeois democrats
might now just as well call themselves Social-Democrats. To the former, the democratic republic was as unattainably remote as the overthrow of the capitalist order is to the latter, and therefore utterly irrelevant to present political practice.... How the Party can suffer the authors of this article
to remain any longer in their midst seems to us incomprehensible. But should the Party leadership actually pass, to a greater or lesser extent, into the hands of such men, then the Party will be emasculated no less, and that will put paid to its proletarian grit.”

(See the circular letter
to A. Bebel, W. Liebknecht, W. Bracke, concerning the Sozialdemokrat and the tactics to be used under the anti-socialist law, in the draft text written in mid-September 1879; see citation in Part One above, a) The Marxist Concept of the Party [In English see: Karl Marx and Frederick Engels,
The leaders of the Social Democracy, however, officially acknowledged Höchberg’s sponsorship of the *Sozialdemokrat*, which was printed in Switzerland:
the main reason offered for this decision was that this philanthropist was paying the expenses of the newspaper (!). Once again, as in 1875 with respect to the Gotha Program, Marx and Engels failed to break off relations with the Party. Furthermore, when in 1881 the Sozialdemokrat assumed a “critical” attitude towards the parliamentary fraction, due to Bernstein’s new
orientation, they actually wrote a few articles for the newspaper.

Despite the proclamation of the anti-socialist law and the enforcement of a state of emergency in various cities, the Social Democratic Party always had deputies in the Reichstag and its parliamentary fraction continued to perform its legal functions, on the one hand by
repudiating all “revolutionary” principles and adopting the framework of bourgeois radicalism (reforms thanks to universal suffrage, rather than the violent conquest of political power), and on the other hand by supporting Bismarck’s economic and colonial policies (voting for laws like the one the Reichstag deputy Kayser supported calling for higher customs duties on
imports), that is, contributing to the development of German capital and to the super-exploitation of the country’s proletariat, even by means of repression (disciplinary measures). Thus, Liebknecht participated in the debates in the Reichstag, asserting in his speeches:

“It can be taken for granted that we obey
the law, because our party is certainly a party of reform in the most rigorous sense of the word, rather than a party that wants to make a violent revolution, which, in any event, is an absurdity. I solemnly deny that our efforts are directed towards the violent overthrow of the prevailing order
of the State and society.”

(Excerpt from the transcripts of the Reichstag session of March 17, 1879 [translated from the Spanish translation])

“We protest against the assertion that we are a revolutionary party…. Our party’s
participation in the elections, furthermore, shows that the social democracy is not a revolutionary party.... From the moment when a party is established on the basis of the whole legal order, and the right of universal suffrage, thus testifying that it is totally prepared to collaborate in the tasks of
legislation and in the administration of the community, from that very moment it has proclaimed that it is not a revolutionary party…. I mentioned a little while ago that the mere fact of participating in the elections proves that the Social Democracy is not a revolutionary party…. [etc.]”
Engels openly criticized this repudiation and the parliamentary Social Democracy’s compromises with Bismarck’s government:
“The storm that broke over the heads of the French Socialists after the Commune was after all something quite different from the outcry raised in Germany on account of the Nobiling affair. And how much more proud and dignified was the bearing of the French! Where do you find among them such
weakness, such paying of compliments to one’s opponents? They kept silent when they could not speak freely; they let the philistines scream as much as they liked knowing that their time would surely come again; and now it has come...."

(Letter to Bebel, November 14, 1879)
He refrained, however, from provoking a split in order not to weaken the external fraction of the Party that was the “guardian of the Party’s principles” by cutting it off from the “base” of the Party’s voters: this external fraction was the editorial committee of the Sozialdemokrat (!) which, under the leadership of Bernstein in Switzerland, had
since 1881 increasingly come under the influence of the leadership of the “historic Party” in exile in London. Engels even offered the pretext, in total contradiction of his previous “optimism”, that as long as the anti-socialist law was in force, it favored not a “revolutionary” course for the Party, but the emergence of strong “opportunist and right wing” tendencies (!). Preoccupied
with trying to maintain control over the mass organization in Germany and to assure its continuity, Engels clearly expressed the need for the theses of the historic Party to be increasingly embodied in the proletarian Party and for them to dictate the politics of the latter:

“Now that their worship, the wailers,
have formally combined into a party and constitute the majority in the parliamentary group, now that they have recognised, and are exploiting, the power they have acquired thanks to the Anti-Socialist Law, I consider it to be more than ever our duty to defend all our own
vantage points to the utmost, especially our vantage point on the *Sozialdemokrat*, which is the most important of all.

“These people *live* off the Anti-Socialist Law. Were there to be free discussion tomorrow, I should be all for letting fly at once, in which case they would soon
come to grief. But so long as there is no free discussion, so long as they control all the papers printed in Germany and their numbers (as the majority of the ‘leaders’) enable them to make the very most of gossip, intrigue, whispering campaigns, we, I believe, must steer clear of anything
that might lead to a breach, or rather might lay the blame for that breach at our door. That is the universal rule when there is a struggle within one’s own party, and now it applies more than ever. The breach must be so contrived that we continue to lead the old party while they either resign or are chucked
out.”

(Engels to Bernstein, June 5, 1884)

2. Social Democracy after Marx, or ... “The great peaceful force of the proletarian Party”

After the death of one of its two members, the historic Party in exile (Engels) focused its attention on two
kinds of activities that Engels considered complementary:

— On the conjunctural level of everyday activities and short-term trends, his analyses of the situation were now more than ever before characterized by gloating over the electoral progress registered by the Social Democratic Party, as he had always done ever since its first important successes. In
1884 he hailed the quantitative consolidation of the Party within German capitalist society as if it were the prelude to the “final victory” of the proletariat: the seizure of political power! Confronted by the compromises of the parliamentary fraction and their effects within the Party in the domain of “principles” (especially on the “leaders”), he sought a reason for
satisfaction in the extension of the electoral base of the Party (which was achieved in part thanks to the support of the peasants and petty bourgeois elements crushed by taxation: the votes of the “discontented”) in order to marshal evidence for his postulate of the “revolutionary” course imposed by the anti-socialist law and the measures implemented by Bismarck’s
government:

“For the first time in history a strong, coherent workers’ party exists as a real political power.... A power the existence and rise of which is as incomprehensible and mysterious to governments and the old ruling classes as was the rising tide of
Christianity to the authorities of the declining Roman Empire, but which is working its way to the fore as certainly and inexorably as once Christianity—so certainly that the rate at which its velocity will increase, and hence the actual time of its ultimate victory, already permits of
mathematical calculation.”

(Engels to Kautsky, November 8, 1884)

He would cling to this view of the “mass party” besieging capitalist society from within and inexorably advancing towards an assault on power until he died, for, ten years later, he would repeat the views expressed above.
almost verbatim:

“In Germany we are continuing as usual. It is a well-organised and well-disciplined army which is growing every day, and which is advancing towards its goal with a sure and implacable step. In Germany we can almost calculate the day when state power...
will fall into our hands.”

(Letter from Engels to Pablo Iglesias, founder of the Spanish Socialist Party, March 26, 1894)

Meanwhile, the Social Democracy had in fact obtained 1,427,323 votes (20 seats in the Reichstag) in the general elections of February 20, 1890. On March 1, 1890,
during the second round of voting, it won 15 more seats with 19.7% of the vote. Its voters had practically doubled in number since the elections of 1887; the Social Democracy had become the largest political party in Germany.

Along with the major strikes in the Ruhr that took place during the same period, these elections helped to bring
about the repeal of the anti-socialist law, the fall of Bismarck and the appointment of Leo von Caprivi as Chancellor by the new Emperor, Wilhelm II. A period of "bourgeois legality" that was no longer under the heel of "Bonapartist dictatorship" dawned, even though the privileges of the feudal elements were preserved. The reformism of the Social
Democratic Party (the minimum program) would grow in tandem with the “democratic cretinism” of its parliamentary fraction:

“Far be it from us to entertain the idea of provoking a violent revolution; we have already clearly stated that, faced with the technical as well as the economic development
of our time, it would be senseless, even absurd, to think about fighting in the streets or barricades and other such revolts.”

(Declaration of the Social Democratic deputy Grillenberger before the Reichstag, February 27, 1892; his speech was not repudiated by the
Faced with the opening of a “new period” following the electoral advances of 1890 and the subsequent repeal of the anti-socialist law, Engels, whose prediction concerning
the exclusion of the most opportunistic deputies from the Social Democracy had by no means been confirmed, then recommended, as a tactical measure, “prudence” and “responsibility”, since the Party still had to grow numerically and in terms of electoral strength:

“So I agree with you to the extent of saying that, for the present, we
should conduct ourselves as peacefully and constitutionally as possible and avoid every pretext for a clash....”

(Engels to W. Liebknecht, March 9, 1890)

He therefore reduced the struggle against opportunism to a question of abstract
principles, that is, to the terrain of polemics in the form of speeches and texts (an ideological step that prefigured Kautsky’s “orthodox Marxism”), while awaiting the decisive moment, when the party would enjoy an overwhelming majority, to seize political power, using violence if necessary:

“True, your philippics
against the use of force in any form and under any circumstances seem to me inopportune....”

(Ibid.)

“We are still far from being able to withstand an open fight, and we have the duty, in relation to the whole of Europe and America, of
not suffering a defeat, but of winning, when the time comes, the first great battle. To that consideration I subordinate every other.

(Engels to P. Lafargue, January 31, 1891)

— On the theoretical level, after Marx’s “final battle” in 1875, Engels fought a few
rearguard battles on behalf of the historic Party. Although he helped subdue the opposition of Die Jungen [The Young], who supported radical action by the workers as opposed to the parliamentary fraction’s collaboration with the government (this group, based in Berlin, issued an appeal to the workers not to go to work on May 1, 1890, despite the anti-strike
directives issued by the Social Democratic Party), he nonetheless attempted to give the formal organization a more “Marxist” program than the one approved at Gotha in 1875. Thus, in anticipation of the upcoming congress, he published Marx’s “Critique of the Gotha Program” that had previously been “confidential” (see above). Later, after the rejection of
the official draft program presented by the central committee (written for the most part by Liebknecht and Bebel)—concerning which Engels had written a “Critique” that would remain unpublished for ten years (1901) and then “buried” by Kautsky in the pages of *Neue Zeit* (a theoretical journal)—he advised those who drafted the “new program”: Kautsky for the theoretical part,
Bernstein for the political part (practical demands).

The congress was held in Erfurt from October 14 to 20, 1891, with 230 delegates in attendance. The congress adopted the “new program”, and expelled the spokespersons of “Die Jungen” (Wilhelm Werner and Carl Wildberger), who refused to submit to the resolutions of the congress.
The most opportunist fraction in the Party at the time, however, led by Vollmar, who claimed that the “Triple Alliance” (a military pact between Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy) was a “force for peace” (!) and who said that should a war with Russia break out the Social Democracy should collaborate with the government (the policy of
August 1914 announced in advance!), was allowed to remain in the Party because its members agreed to submit to the congress resolutions.

Previously, Engels, in order to reinforce the historic Party, initiated the process that led to a Second International that was an agglomeration of socialist parties of various countries, each based on the model of
the German Social Democratic Party, that is, parties with a national character that appealed to the masses by virtue not only of their minimum programs (reformism) but also thanks to their activities in the trade unions (transmission belts) and elections (constitution of an electoral base that was as broad as possible). The “parliamentary leaders” governed these parties, in
coordination with the "doctrinaires" whose job was to serve as ideological conservators of the maximum program (the "final goal"), when such coordination was possible, and when it was not, these conservators became the targets of revisionism (adaptation of principles: "the movement is everything, the goal is nothing"!). This Second International was
founded at the conclusion of the international socialist labor congress that was held in Paris between July 14 and 20, 1889 (attended by 400 delegates from 22 countries in Europe and the Americas). It would take two years, however, before “Marxist” domination could be imposed on the Second International, by way of the German Party, at the Brussels Congress (August 16-22, 1891). In fact,
the French “possibilists” (P. Brousse), who had from the very first days of the Second International, in alliance with the English Social Democratic Federation, openly challenged the Germans for the leadership of the new organization, rebuffed the “unity” invitation from the Brussels Congress, a majority of whose delegates, furthermore, voted against
recognizing the mandates of the anarchist delegates. Engels could then write:

“The Congress has proved a brilliant success for us AFTER ALL — the Broussists stayed right away while Hyndman’s chaps withdrew their opposition. And, best of all, the anarchists have been shown the
door, just as they were at the Hague Congress. The new, incomparably larger and avowedly Marxist International is beginning again at the precise spot where its predecessor left off.”

(Engels to F. A. Sorge, September 14, 1891)

There was one “discordant note” at this congress,
however. Domela Nieuwenhuis, a Dutch delegate, called upon the delegates to make preparations for a “military strike” against war, and he criticized the extremely vague proclamations of the Social Democratic leaders of the Second International with respect to the “general strike of the workers” to oppose an eventual capitalist conflict.
In an article published in the newspaper, *Le Socialiste* (September 12, 1891), Engels reduced this opposition to a manifestation of “sensationalist verbiage”, which was the same approach he used to attack the “Jungen” fraction, and the same one Lenin would later use against any and all radical opposition within the Bolshevik Party and the
Third International:

“The Domela Nieuwenhuis incident has shown that the European workers have finally left behind the period of the domination of the resounding phrase and that they are aware of the responsibilities incumbent on them:
they are a class constituted as a party of ‘struggle’, a party which reckons with ‘facts’. And the facts are taking an ever more revolutionary cast.”

Finally, in an attempt to disseminate the “Marxist” or “scientific socialist credo” in the Social Democratic Party and among “its” masses, Engels devoted himself to a
whole series of literary projects. After writing critical texts like the book directed against the influence of Dühring’s ideas, he finished editing Volumes II and III of *Capital* on the basis of Marx’s drafts and notes, and he tried to arrange for their publication. Later, taking advantage of the period of legality for the Social Democratic press after the repeal of the anti-
socialist laws, he published new editions (with new introductions) of Marx’s and his own “essential” works. Thus, during March and April of 1891 alone, new editions of the following texts were published in Germany: *The Civil War in France*, *Wage Labor and Capital*, and *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*. Despite all his efforts, however, Engels would never
be able to eliminate one particular influence on the party: the theories of Lassalle. The German Social Democracy would always call itself “the party of Marx … and Lassalle” and portraits of both men adorned all the speaker’s platforms of the meetings organized by the Party. As Kautsky wrote in an article entitled, “Our Programs” (*Neue Zeit*, No. 21):
“The attitude to be assumed towards Lassalle is one thing for Marx and another for the Social Democracy, which does not have the same assessment as Marx…. Can we ever forget a man whose works, for the older members of the party and also for the immense majority
of the younger ones, served as guides at the beginning of our study of socialism and illuminated our first enthusiasm for socialism? We attentively read and reflect on everything Marx ever said about his disciple, Lassalle, but we must not forget that Lassalle was also one of our masters and
one of our best combatants.”
[translated from the Spanish translation]

The publication of a new edition of *Class Struggles in France* gave Engels the opportunity to write his last important text (1895). He allowed several of its passages to be toned down under pressure from the leaders of the Social
Democratic Party who were reckoning with the needs of the moment: after four years of “bourgeois legality”, the German government was seeking to reintroduce repression by proposing a new anti-socialist law in the Reichstag under the rubric of “anti-sedition” legislation (ultimately, since most of the bourgeois parties resolved to vote against it, the legislation was defeated in the Reichstag
on May 11, 1895). Shortly thereafter, the revisionist tendencies, especially Bernstein, with his book, *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie* [published in English translation under the title, *Evolutionary Socialism*], used their “diluted” version of socialism to justify their integrally reformist, legalist
and pacifist theses. Engels’ own integral version of socialism, however, even if it emphasized the need to employ violence on the part of the Social Democracy for the conquest of political power (which is what Lenin and the Bolsheviks would do in October 1917!), did not really change anything fundamental. Thus, Riazanov, comparing the two versions in *Under the Banner*
of Marxism (1925), mentions that on page 21 of *The Class Struggles in France* Engels himself added the following passage to the printer’s galleys of the 1895 edition of the book:

“We can count even today on two and a quarter million voters. If it continues in this fashion, by the end of the century we shall
have the greater part of the middle strata of society, petty bourgeoisie and small peasants, and we shall grow into the decisive power in the land, before which all other powers will have to bow, whether they like it or not.”

Although he remained faithful on the level of
principles to the idea of the seizure of power by the Party thanks to the use of violence (the “final goal”), he had in practice put the finishing touches, based on the Social Democratic tactic he elaborated with Marx for application in Germany, on the disconnection of the “Marxist” concept from the “social democratic” concept on the organizational level (and obviously the
programmatic level as well). The proletarian Party was a mass organization, constructed prior to any social upheaval, with an ultra-national character (it tended to represent all the layers of Capital-Labor in the process of development ... except for the big capitalists!). The Second International was merely an ideological association of all these parties that were
actually divided by real antagonistic interests because every one of them embodied a veritable “State within a State” … in anticipation of becoming the State itself, that is, the Party-State! The separation between minimum and maximum programs was complete: if the “final goal” appeared to be a very distant prospect due to the reality of everyday reformism (implementation of the
minimum program) and by the tendency to pursue this reformism via the peaceful road (universal suffrage), the “communist credo” (the social goal) was for its part eclipsed for a very long time thanks to the embodiment of the historic Party in the proletarian Party:

“A million or two of workingmen's votes next November for a
bona fide workingmen's party is worth infinitely more at present than a hundred thousand votes for a doctrinally perfect platform.”

(Engels to Florence Kelley Wischnewetsky, December 28, 1886)

Engels no longer applied the vital method of Marx to
analyze the Proletariat/Capital relation by way of the development of that relation. Instead of practicing a politics of communist intervention in the class struggle by breaking with all the errors of the past (as in 1848 and 1871), he pursued the logic of the social democratic tactical line to its ultimate conclusions:
the political stage was conceived as the seizure of state power in the framework of a “permanent revolution”—which was itself inscribed within the bourgeois democratic process—rather than as the destruction of the state;
the proletarian Party was construed as an organization that existed prior to any movement, in which the communist fraction (the historic Party) constituted the elite that guarded the keys of History and revealed socialist consciousness; it is clear that this was no
longer the concept of the Party as a revolutionary mass organization produced by the struggle of the proletariat, that is, an organization that arises from the spontaneous, real movement of the working class against capital (the proto-councilist
aspects of the Commune). Following in the footsteps of Marx after 1871 and the dissolution of the IWA, Engels would develop a veritable “Marxist” ideology that he would denominate with the pompous title of “scientific socialism”! From
then on, the revolutionary contributions of the real movement of the proletariat were excluded: the intellectuals must introduce socialist consciousness from the outside, from their brains, into a proletariat that is only capable of attaining a “trade
unionist” mentality because, as Kautsky would say—seconded by Lenin in *What Is To Be Done?*—“socialism and class arise side by side and not one out of the other….!” (!) (Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?).

The German Social Democratic Party was
transformed into “the great peaceful force of the workers” that, in 1914, would deliver the proletariat bound hand and foot to the state juggernaut for the imperialist bloodbath.

In the sections that follow, in which we discuss the Leninist and ultra-leftist concepts of the party, we shall have occasions for further observations on the
nature of the Social Democratic Party under the reign of the “orthodox” Kautsky and the “revisionist” Bernstein.

*Note on Anarchism*

This first part of “On Organization” is devoted to the history of the concept of the Party since Marx. It is therefore natural that it is essentially about “Marxist”
theories, and does not examine the concepts of the other currents of what has come to be known as the workers movement, particularly anarchism. The organizational practices of anarchism will be discussed extensively in the second part, “The Parties Face the Test of the Facts”.

However, Marxist and anarchist practices often
seem to be very similar with respect to the question of organization. This was evident ever since the confrontation between Marx and Bakunin in the IWA. We shall address the question of the real nature of the First International later.

For now, we shall merely quote Malatesta who, in 1914, starkly depicted the last period of the IWA:
“Those of us who, in the International, were designated by the name of Bakuninists and were members of the Alliance, fought tooth and nail against Marx and the Marxists because they were trying to make their own program prevail in the International; but, regardless of the
honesty of the methods employed, concerning which it is now useless to insist, we did just what they were doing, that is, we were trying to use the International in order to achieve our own party goals”

(Volontà, 1914 [translated from the Spanish translation])
Furthermore, we must also point out that Malatesta was not alone in his use of the term “party”, which is a recurring theme in anarchism (in the “anti-authoritarian IWA” they would even speak of the “socialist democratic party of each country”), and also that, just as among the Marxists, it is not used in a neutral sense. This concept of the “party” is connected with a multi-national perspective.
on the question of organization, that is, of a party (or a federation) constituted within the national context, or, in other words, within the capitalist organizational framework.

This confinement within the capitalist organizational framework is perfectly logical. It corresponds to the terrain on which the movements produced by
anarchist or Marxist ideologies are situated: the construction of a counter-society (a counter-State) within the capitalist system, intended to replace the latter. This goal, which the anarchist movement was unable to achieve in the IWA, was taken to its logical conclusion by the proponents of anarchosyndicalism and “revolutionary” syndicalism. Thus, according to Pelloutier,
the *Bourses du Travail* intend to “constitute a veritable socialist (economic and anarchist) State within the bourgeois State, gradually eliminate capitalist forms of conduct, production and consumption and replace them with the corresponding communist forms”.

In anarchist ideology, as in Marxist ideology, one finds the same foundation. Far
from considering themselves to be partial contributions to the movement of the proletariat, every one of their respective organizations (Party, federation, trade union…) considered itself to be the essential expression of the proletariat. This led to the development of a strategy of struggle for power within the workers movement, whose logical consequence was the increasing separation of the
organizations from the reality of the movement.

In order to bring consciousness, or the Idea, to the masses, an organization must then be constructed prior to any revolutionary movement, yet this organization will already embody that movement in the form of intermediate structures (trade unions, cooperatives…) or
pedagogical structures (the role of education in libertarian ideology). If, for the Social Democrats, socialism is generally conceived as the product of an ineluctable process, connected with the progressive (and progressivist) concatenation of the various modes of social organization, for the anarchists it is necessary for men to understand what the
revolution will do for them, and for the Revolutionary Idea to penetrate their heads.

In both cases it is necessary for the vanguard, the spiritual guides, to be prepared in advance for the tasks for which they will be responsible, and trained for the management of society (capitalist society, of course), and for the management of the mass organizations....
This is why, without denying either the interest or the partial contributions of these expressions of the movements of the past (methodological contributions, formulation of important communist positions...), it is essentially by way of breaks and splits that new advances were, are, and will be possible.

With respect to F. Domela
Nieuwenhuis, one must refer to the book mentioned above, *Socialism in Danger* [see footnote 12 above], and especially the preface by J.-Y. Bériou: “A Biographical Sketch....” (pp. 11-26). The political-militant itinerary and the writings of Nieuwenhuis deserve a more extensive treatment than these few lines (this defect will be remedied in Part Two of this work on organization).
Basically, we will note that he was originally a Protestant Pastor, and joined the Social Democratic League of Holland after having broken with religion in 1870; later, beginning in 1891, he evolved towards anarchism.

During his social democratic period he corresponded with Marx and wrote a brief introduction to *Capital* in Dutch. Involved in frenetic
activity both in the Netherlands as well as on an international scale, he was in contact with the leaders of German Social Democracy—Engels, W. Liebknecht, A. Bebel—while the Dutch party was increasing its influence with its propaganda in support of mass struggles. Nieuwenhuis was elected as a Deputy to the Dutch parliament in 1889, where he spent two years sponsoring
reformist legislation. It was at the Second Congress of the Second International (Brussels, 1891) when he began to break away from the Social Democracy and move towards anarchism. The main point of debate at the Congress concerned the means to be employed to prevent the war that appeared to be imminent, and he presented a motion that declared: “The socialists of
all countries will respond to the declaration of war by proclaiming the general strike.” His proposed resolution was defeated under pressure from the German Social Democrats who took refuge behind “scientific” speeches in which they claimed that, to fend off the dangers of war, the only guarantee of peace was the further development of the power of the Second
At the Third Congress of the Second International (Zurich, 1893), Nieuwenhuis once again entered the fray and led the opposition to Plekhanov by reiterating his proposal for a general strike combined with a military strike (soldiers’ mutiny). Already an anti-militarist, he also
became an anti-parliamentarist. In 1894, he published the pamphlet that bears the title, *Socialism in Danger*:

“Let us now endeavour to establish the conclusion that SOCIALISM IS IN DANGER in consequence of the tendency of the vast majority. The chief
danger is the influence of capitalism on the social democratic party. Indeed the less revolutionary character of the party in some countries arises from the fact that a far greater number of adherents of the party there have something to lose if a violent social change were to take place. That is why
the social democracy shows itself by degrees more moderate, well-behaved, practical, diplomatic (in its own language, more cunning), until ultimately it will become thin-blooded by reason of its cunning, and so pale that it soon won’t know itself. Social democracy will capture
still more votes, although the increase is not as rapid as Messrs. Engels and Bebel imagined it would be, there will be more members of Parliament, more communal councillors and other socialist dignitaries, more newspapers, book shops, and printing offices; in countries
like Belgium and Denmark there will be more bakeries, drug shops, cooperative stores, etc.; Germany will furnish more cigar merchants, brewery firms, etc.; in a word, a great number of persons will be economically dependent on the future ‘peaceable and calm development’ of the
movement, that is, on the prevention of any revolutionary upheaval that would endanger their status. And this precisely defines the leaders of the party, and as a result of discipline, they are almost omnipotent. Here, as well, it is the economic conditions that determine their policy. When you see
the German party praised in the bourgeois press, as is sometimes done, putting it in contrast with vulgar Revolutionary Socialists, it gives material for reflection."

In protest against the final exclusion of the anarchists, approved by the majority
vote of the delegates at the Fourth Congress of the Second International (London, 1896), Nieuwenhuis walked out of the hall in which the Congress was being held, shouting and gesticulating. One year later, he broke with the Social Democratic League (SDB): the majority of its membership followed him and later formed various anarchist groups organized
around regional publications.

F. D. Nieuwenhuis also published a text entitled, *La débâcle du marxisme* [The Debacle of Marxism], demonstrating that his denunciation of the social democratic ideology was linked with a critique of Marxism. Thus, he fought from an anarchist point of view against the parliamentarism of Troelstra.
and the SDAP (the Social Democratic Workers Party), which had been founded on the German model—that is, the orthodox model (!)—as a consequence of a split, in 1894, from the SDB (the left wing of the SDAP, associated with Gorter and Pannekoek, during the same period, regularly denounced the opportunism of the leadership and published an independent journal, *De
Tribune, before finally breaking with the Party in 1909; see the section below on “The Development of the ‘Ultra-Left’ Concept of the Party”).

Constrained by his steadfast devotion to propaganda for the anarchist ideology, Nieuwenhuis was opposed to structured organizations and to all congresses. Thus, he did not attend the
International Anarchist Congress in Amsterdam (1907) where the polemic battle between Malatesta and Monatte on the question of syndicalism took place. His anarcho-communism, however, did lead him to engage in a critique of anarchosyndicalism:

“I am an anarchist above all else, and then a syndicalist, but I
think that many are syndicalists first, then anarchists. There is a big difference.... The cult of the trade unions is as harmful as the cult of the State; it exists, and it threatens to become worse yet. It truly seems as if men cannot live without divinity: they have hardly struck down one god, when another
arises. If the divinity of the social democrats is the State, the divinity of the syndicalists would appear to be the trade union.”

(Letter to Fritz Brupbacher, 1907 [translated from the Spanish translation])

After having led a tireless struggle against war, he was
one of the few who did not encourage the proletariat to participate in the imperialist massacre in 1914. Unlike the great majority of social democrats and anarchists, he defended a revolutionary internationalist position right up until his death in 1919.

The “Leninist” and related—“Trotskyist” and “Bordiguist”—
concepts of “the Party”

1. From Kautsky to Lenin: social democratic continuity

Leninist currents of every stripe have always endeavored to rewrite History by constructing the myth of a “pure and adamantine” Lenin, an intransigent opponent of
social democracy from the start, both Kautsky’s “orthodoxy” as well as Bernstein’s “revisionism”.

First of all, their Bible is the pamphlet written by Lenin in October-November 1918, “The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky”, in which he declares at the beginning of his preface:

“Kautsky’s pamphlet,
‘The Dictatorship of the Proletariat’, recently published in Vienna … is a most lucid example of that utter and ignominious bankruptcy of the Second International about which all honest socialists in all countries have been talking for a long time. The proletarian revolution is now
becoming a practical issue in a number of countries, and an examination of Kautsky’s renegade sophisticities and his complete renunciation of Marxism is therefore essential.”

However, this “long time” (our emphasis) only dates the critique of Kautsky to a point no earlier than the outbreak
of the war in 1914, as Lenin himself says in the lines that follow the passage quoted above. See, for example, his articles in *The Social Democrat* and *The Communist*, later collected and published in a volume edited by the Petrograd Soviet entitled, *Against the Current* (G. Zinoviev and N. Lenin, 1918).

Furthermore, their tactic
consists in implying that in practice, Lenin opposed the atmosphere that prevailed within the Social Democracy, and as a militant foresaw, long before 1914, “the collapse of the Second International”. Thus, they emphasize his activity at the Stuttgart Congress, where he sponsored, with Rosa Luxemburg and Martov, an amendment to the resolutions presented by Bebel
concerning the position that should be taken by socialists in case of war; an amendment that proclaimed that “the socialist duty”, if war was about to break out, was not only to struggle against the war, but also to take advantage of it to destroy capitalism.

Lenin, however, was satisfied with the resolutions of the Stuttgart Congress, which he
characterized as a great victory for revolutionary Marxism over revisionism (see the transcripts of the Congress proceedings edited by Lenin). Believing that the Second International was finally consolidated on a firm footing, he devoted the greater part of his activities to participating in the operations of the International Socialist Bureau. As the historian
Georges Haupt says in his introduction to
*Correspondance entre Lénine et Camille Huysmans, 1905-1914* [The Lenin-Camille Huysmans Correspondence, 1905-1914] (Mouton & Co., 1963):

“Lenin attended all the meetings of the ISB between 1908 and 1911, and had to
provide detailed reports on the Bureau to the Russian social democrats, as well a precise accounting of his own conduct in the Bureau: to comply with these demands, he drafted detailed transcripts of the proceedings of the Bureau for his newspaper, Proletarij.
“Later, Zinoviev claimed that Lenin attended the meetings of the ISB only with the greatest reluctance and returned from them almost sickened by the spectacle that he had witnessed. How much credibility do such claims really have, however, which date from after 1919, when the Comintern existed.
in an atmosphere of constant polemic attacks on the Socialist International? In fact, all the documentation, and especially the minutes of these meetings (including the transcripts edited by Lenin himself) categorically belie Zinoviev’s claims. But the correspondence with Huysmans
provides new evidence. It indisputably shows that until 1912, Lenin displayed complete optimism and absolute confidence in the future of the International, which aligned him with those who proclaimed their allegiance to it as the supreme moral authority of world socialism. The existence of many
different opinions, currents and tendencies within the International, and their freedom of expression, were for him, as for all the social democratic leaders, something normal, even natural. What distinguished him from the majority of the ‘orthodox Marxists’ who wanted to find a basis for
reconciling the extremes was the conviction that the duty of revolutionary Marxism is to combat the revisionist tendencies, isolate them and reduce them to a minority.

“Unlike most of the delegates of the big parties (particularly Germany and Austria),
Lenin viewed the ISB as the general staff of socialism, and saw his own participation in its operations as signifying participation in the leadership of the International.

“The fact that his presence at ISB meetings was his highest priority over any other commitment
is testified to in his letter to Huysmans dated March 1, 1908:

“‘My friends write me from Brussels that I am expected there shortly for the session of the International Socialist Bureau’.

“I should be very much obliged if you could let me know
whether this is so or not. Could you [tell me] exactly (or at any rate [approximately]), when the next session of the Bureau is to take place. I shall soon have to go for a few weeks to Italy, and therefore it is very important for me to know whether I will be needed in Brussels’.”
2. The “renegade” Kautsky and his disciple, Lenin

It is also amusing that the Bible of the Leninists on the question of organization is still the book written by their “Master” in 1902 entitled, *What Is To Be Done?* It is in this book, however, that yet more evidence of the social democratic continuity that unites Kautsky and Lenin
may be found. Indeed, when he wants to explain the relation between the working class and revolutionaries, between the practical movement of the class struggle and socialist theory, the founder of the Bolshevik Party immediately quotes the “guardian of Marxist orthodoxy”, and expresses his appreciation for his fundamental contribution:
“All those who talk about ‘overrating the importance of ideology’, about exaggerating the role of the conscious element, etc., imagine that the labour movement pure and simple can elaborate, and will elaborate, an independent ideology for itself, if only the workers ‘wrest their
fate from the hands of the leaders’. But this is a profound mistake. To supplement what has been said above, we shall quote the following profoundly true and important words of Karl Kautsky on the new draft programme of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party:
“‘Many of our revisionist critics believe that Marx asserted that economic development and the class struggle create, not only the conditions for socialist production, but also, and directly, the consciousness [Kautsky’s
italics] of its necessity. And these critics assert that England, the country most highly developed capitalistically, is more remote than any other from this consciousness. Judging by the draft, one might
assume that this allegedly orthodox Marxist view, which is thus refuted, was shared by the committee that drafted the Austrian programme. In the draft programme it is stated: ‘The more capitalist
development increases the numbers of the proletariat, the more the proletariat is compelled and becomes fit to fight against capitalism. The proletariat becomes conscious of the possibility and of
the necessity for socialism.’ In this connection socialist consciousness appears to be a necessary and direct result of the proletarian class struggle. But this is absolutely untrue. Of course, socialism, as a
doctrine, has its roots in modern economic relationships just as the class struggle of the proletariat has, and, like the latter, emerges from the struggle against the capitalist-created poverty and misery of the
masses. But socialism and the class struggle arise side by side and not one out of the other; each arises under different conditions. Modern socialist consciousness can arise only on the basis of profound
scientific knowledge. Indeed, modern economic science is as much a condition for socialist production as, say, modern technology, and the proletariat can create neither the one nor the other, no matter
how much it may desire to do so; both arise out of the modern social process. The vehicle of science is not the proletariat, but the *bourgeois intelligentsia* [Kautsky’s italics]: it was in the minds of individual
members of this stratum that modern socialism originated, and it was they who communicated it to the more intellectually developed proletarians who, in their turn, introduce it into the proletarian class struggle
where conditions allow that to be done. Thus, socialist consciousness is something introduced into the proletarian class struggle from without [von Aussen Hineingetragenes] and not something that
arose within it spontaneously [urwüchsig]. Accordingly, the old Hainfeld programme quite rightly stated that the task of Social-Democracy is to imbue the proletariat (literally: saturate the
proletariat) with the consciousness of its position and the consciousness of its task. There would be no need for this if consciousness arose of itself from the class struggle. The new draft copied this proposition from
the old programme, and attached it to the proposition mentioned above. But this completely broke the line of thought....”

(What Is To Be Done?; emphasis is ours [PIC’s] where not otherwise indicated)
It is true that in his Preface to the anthology, *Twelve Years* (1907), Lenin would tend to limit the scope of his theories in *What Is To Be Done?* concerning the organization of professional revolutionaries in a vanguard Party. He would reduce them to a policy implemented for immediate political purposes in *Iskra* in his battle against the influence of the
“economists”:

“What Is To Be Done? is a summary of Iskra tactics and Iskra organisational policy in 1901 and 1902. Precisely a ‘summary’, no more and no less. That will be clear to anyone who takes the trouble to go through the file of Iskra for 1901 and 1902. But to
pass judgement on that summary without knowing *Iskra*’s struggle against the then dominant trend of Economism, without understanding that struggle, is sheer idle talk.”

Immediately thereafter, however, he would proceed to reaffirm the bourgeois theory of an external
ideological consciousness, defined as “socialist”, which must be introduced into a merely “trade unionist” proletariat. In this sense, Lenin and his fraction within the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party, by continuing to deny all revolutionary capacity to the proletarian movement, demonstrated that they had learned nothing from the revolution of 1905 in Russia.
Furthermore, they had learned nothing from the events themselves, and first of all, from the meaning of the appearance of the soviets as a mass political organization emerging from the revolutionary spontaneity of the working class.

Thus, in 1913 Lenin would once again return to this concept of consciousness in “The Three Sources and
Three Component Parts of Marxism”, repeating, often word-for-word, what Kautsky had already written in his pamphlet entitled, “The Three Sources of Marxism” (1908) (the text of a speech delivered by Kautsky in Bremen in 1907). For the “renegade” and his disciple, Marxism was originally the product of an entirely intellectual double synthesis: that of the natural
psychological sciences, first of all, and then German philosophical thought, French political thought and English economic thought. This concept that transforms Marxism (or in other words, social democratic consciousness) into an ideological product, is the result of all the negative aspects propagated by Marx himself with respect to the relation, real movement/class
consciousness. However, it is contrary to the method that led Marx to criticize both idealism and vulgar materialism (see the “Theses on Feuerbach”). For, correctly applied, Marx’s method does not separate consciousness from, and therefore does not oppose it to, reality (objectivity); on the contrary, it unites both as a totality by way of the practical-theoretical activity
(praxis) that they have in common. For Marx, it is not a matter of "uniting" the workers movement and socialism, since they are naturally united; it is not necessary to create a "synthesis" of theory and practice, since they are intertwined as the moments and expressions of a single real movement: that of the class struggles of the
proletariat. 

As Kautsky declared:

"The materialist conception of History is a memorable milestone. With it begins a new era of science, despite all the objections of the wise men of the bourgeoisie. It is a milestone not only in the struggle for
social evolution, but also in politics, in the best sense of the word. For it brought about the unity of the workers movement and socialism, thus creating the most favorable conditions for the proletarian class struggle.

“The workers movement and
socialism are by no means identical by nature....” [translated from the Spanish translation]

Or when Lenin says:

“His [Marx’s] doctrine emerged as the direct and immediate continuation of the teachings of the greatest representatives
of philosophy, political economy and socialism.... It is the legitimate successor to the best that man produced in the nineteenth century, as represented by German philosophy, English political economy and French socialism.”

Both Kautsky and Lenin merely reinforced the
ideological system developed by Engels under the aegis of “scientific socialism”. This view of a “Science” of socialism that must transform the world by being embodied in the masses, is, properly speaking, anti-dialectical. It stands in opposition to the radical break that Marx … and Engels (!) carried out with respect to their shared philosophical past when they
wrote *The German Ideology* (1845-1846).  

This is why, when he “broke” with Kautsky in 1914, Lenin only accused him of “betrayal” of the “social democratic continuity” that Lenin would then have to defend. And that is why he only called him a “renegade”, as J. Barrot correctly explains in his text, from
which we have taken the title of this section:

“If Lenin calls Kautsky a renegade it’s clear that he thinks Kautsky was previously a follower of the true faith, of which he now considers himself the only qualified defender. Far from criticising Kautskyism, which he shows
himself unable to identify, Lenin is in fact content to reproach his former master-thinker for having betrayed his own teachings. From any point of view Lenin’s break was at once late and superficial.”

Unlike Rosa Luxemburg, whose ideas we shall discuss in the next section, Lenin
would not embark upon a “return to Marx”, back to the Marx of 1848 and 1871 (that is, the Marx who applied his own method without allowing himself to be led astray by his concept of “permanent revolution” or his tactics of “chessboard politics”, i.e., support for one or another national bourgeoisie in order to contribute to the development of the
productive forces). Lenin would be content to preach the application, adapted to circumstances, of an ideology: Marxism, which was propagated in association with the growth of international social democracy; in other words, in association with the gradual integration of the proletariat into the capitalist system prior to 1914. He would limit himself to
defending this ideological line against all “deviations”, whether “rightist” (Bernstein’s revisionism) or “centrist” (Kautsky’s orthodoxy).

Seizing the rudder of a sinking ship, he actually presented himself as the one true defender of “orthodoxy”. Even in *What Is To Be Done?*, discussing “Engels on the importance of the
theoretical struggle” (one of the section subtitles of Chapter I), he said:

“Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. This idea cannot be insisted upon too strongly at a time when the fashionable preaching of opportunism goes hand in hand with an
infatuation for the narrowest forms of practical activity.”

And in support of this claim, he quoted a long passage from Engels, an excerpt from the 1874 Addendum to the 1870 Preface to *The Peasant War in Germany*; an excerpt we already quoted in the previous section and from which we shall once again select one of its most
characteristic passages:

“... It is the specific duty of the leaders to gain an ever clearer understanding of the theoretical problems, to free themselves more and more from the influence of traditional phrases inherited from the old conception of the world, and constantly to keep in
mind that Socialism, having become a science, demands the same treatment as every other science – it must be studied. The task of the leaders will be to bring understanding, thus acquired and clarified, to the working masses, to spread it with increased enthusiasm, to close the ranks of the
party organisations and
of the labour unions
with ever greater
energy....”

It was only much later,
however, after the “break” of
1914, when Lenin would
devote the sixth and last
chapter of *The State and
Revolution* (1917) to what he
called “the vulgarisation of
Marxism by the
opportunists”, with special
attention to “question of the relation of the state to the social revolution, and of the social revolution to the state”. It is quite revealing that, in order to more effectively combat Kautsky, Lenin was obliged to make use of an article by A. Pannekoek \textsuperscript{19} entitled “Mass Action and Revolution” that was published in \textit{Neue Zeit} in 1912. This is how Lenin
presented Pannekoek’s article:

“In opposing Kautsky, Pannekoek came out as one of the representatives of the ‘Left radical’ trend which included Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Radek, and others. Advocating revolutionary tactics, they were united in the
conviction that Kautsky was going over to the ‘Centre’, which wavered in an unprincipled manner between Marxism and opportunism. This view was proved perfectly correct by the war, when this ‘Centrist’ (wrongly called Marxist) trend, or Kautskyism, revealed itself in all its repulsive
wretchedness.”

The way he used Pannekoek’s article, however, is even more revealing of his bourgeois stance in “defense of Marxism” (!). For, after having quoted from Pannekoek’s article, Lenin declares:

“The formulation in which Pannekoek
presented his ideas suffers from serious defects. But its meaning is clear....”

However, this is the passage from Pannekoek’s article that he used:

“The struggle of the proletariat is not merely a struggle against the bourgeoisie for state power, but a
struggle against state power.... The content of this [the proletarian] revolution is the destruction and dissolution [Auflosung] of the instruments of power of the state with the aid of the instruments of power of the proletariat.... The struggle will cease only when, as the result of it, the state
organization is completely destroyed. The organization of the majority will then have demonstrated its superiority by destroying the organization of the ruling minority.”

It is clear that Pannekoek had returned to the Marx who learned the lessons of the Commune: the State
machinery must be destroyed by a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat that does not establish a new State form, even if it is called a “proletarian” State (!).

The “serious defects” are Lenin’s own defects, for it was Lenin who criticized Kautsky’s opportunism (the conquest of political power without destroying the apparatus of the existing
through the spectacles of the “orthodox” social democratic interpretation of Marx’s teachings:

“Marx teaches us to avoid both errors (these “errors” are anarchism and opportunism—note added by PIC); he teaches us to act with supreme boldness in destroying the entire old state machine, and
at the same time he teaches us to put the question concretely: the Commune was able in the space of a few weeks to start building a new, proletarian state machine by introducing such-and-such measures to provide wider democracy and to uproot bureaucracy. Let us learn revolutionary boldness
from the Communards; let us see in their practical measures the outline of really urgent and immediately possible measures, and then, following this road, we shall achieve the complete destruction of bureaucracy.”

Here we see the cleverness of ideology; for the State that
had been thrown out the door, is smuggled back in through the window, adorned with the adjectives, “new”, “proletarian”, etc.

The “Leninist” concept of the Party is logically derived from Lenin’s ideas regarding socialist consciousness and its introduction into the spontaneous movement of the working class, as well as his ideas on Marxism and its
defense against all corrupting influences.

3. Social democratic continuity “corrected and reinforced” by Lenin, or ... the “Marxist-Leninist” concept of the Party

Lenin would apply in practice, and pursue to their ultimate consequences, the negative aspects of Marx’s ideas on the organizational
question that the German Social Democracy had already subjected to further reinforcement. This can be explained largely as due to the particular conditions of Czarist Russia; the influence of the Bolshevik Party once it seized power (the founding of the Third International, the embodiment of the “triumph of Marxism”) did the rest.

Thus, first of all, as J. Barrot
sends (in the text cited above):

“It is clear that this much desired union of the working class movement and socialism could not be brought about in the same way in Germany as in Russia as the conditions were different. But it is important to see that the deep divergence's
of Bolshevism in the organisational field did not result from different basic conceptions, but rather solely from the application of the same principles in different social, economic and political situations.”

Adapting the Social Democratic concept of the Party as the guardian of
consciousness to Russian conditions at the turn of the century, Lenin further reinforced the Party’s elitist character. He therefore developed the ideas of the professional revolutionary, and of the most selective and most conspiratorial organization possible. With respect to this last point, which was justified by the necessities of the clandestine struggle against the threats of
repression and infiltration by the Czarist police (the Okhrana), Lenin was inspired by the methods advocated by A. Blanqui, in France, in the 19th century. Here is what he wrote with respect to these three ideas:

“The political struggle of Social-Democracy is far more extensive and complex than the economic struggle of
the workers against the employers and the government. Similarly (indeed for that reason), the organisation of the revolutionary Social-Democratic Party must inevitably be of a kind different from the organisation of the workers designed for this struggle. The workers’ organisation
must in the first place be a trade union organisation; secondly, it must be as broad as possible; and thirdly, it must be as public as conditions will allow (here, and further on, of course, I refer only to absolutist Russia). On the other hand, the organisation of the revolutionaries must consist first and
foremost of people who make revolutionary activity their profession (for which reason I speak of the organisation of revolutionaries, meaning revolutionary Social-Democrats).... Such an organisation must perforce not be very extensive and must be as secret as possible.”

To organize, drill and lead
the working class forces, Lenin would emphasize the function of the nucleus of these professional revolutionaries. Organizational selectiveness and clandestine operations impose discipline, ultra-centralism and anti-democratism.

Efficacy requires, above all, secret decisions made by an elite that therefore cannot be
controlled by the masses, who are supposed to follow and implement its directives. This whole concept was expounded in the polemic against the “economist” tendencies (Boris Kritchevski, Martynov) of the “Union of Russian Social Democrats in Exile” which published the newspaper, *Rabocheye Dyelo* (The Workers’ Cause) and which criticized the anti-
democratism of *Iskra*:

“Try to fit this picture into the frame of our autocracy! Is it conceivable in Russia for all who accept the principles of the Party programme and render the Party all possible support to control every action of the revolutionary working in secret? Is it possible
for all to elect one of these revolutionaries to any particular office, when, in the very interests of the work, the revolutionary must conceal his identity from nine out of ten of these ‘all’? Reflect somewhat over the real meaning of the high-sounding phrases to which Rabocheye Dyelo gives utterance,
and you will realise that ‘broad democracy’ in Party organisation, amidst the gloom of the autocracy and the domination of gendarmerie, is nothing more than a useless and harmful toy. It is a useless toy because, in point of fact, no revolutionary organisation has ever practiced, or could
practice, broad democracy, however much it may have desired to do so. It is a harmful toy because any attempt to practise ‘the broad democratic principle’ will simply facilitate the work of the police in carrying out large-scale raids, will perpetuate the prevailing primitiveness, and will
divert the thoughts of the practical workers from the serious and pressing task of training themselves to become professional revolutionaries to that of drawing up detailed ‘paper’ rules for election systems. Only abroad, where very often people with no opportunity for conducting really
active work gather, could this ‘playing at democracy’ develop here and there, especially in small groups.”

(What Is To Be Done?, Chapter IV, Section E: “The ‘conspiratorial’ organization and ‘democratism’”)

This polemic on the
organizational function of the Party within the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party then led to the “famous” split at its Second Congress, in London, between the Bolsheviks (the majority) and Mensheviks (the minority), in 1903. This split did not involve any kind of profound debate concerning different concepts of the relations between the revolutionaries and their
organization with the class. The whole dispute was about what type of Party, what category of leaders (conspiratorial or democratic), would lead the Russian proletariat!!! With respect to this split, Lenin reiterated his theses on organization set forth in *What Is To Be Done?* and further elaborated them in “One Step Forward, Two
Steps Back” in 1904. He insisted on the need for discipline and for ultra-centralism because the organization of the party must take its inspiration from the organization of the capitalist factory that inculcated these “values” in the workers:

“For the factory, which seems only a bogey to some, represents that
highest form of capitalist co-operation which has united and disciplined the proletariat, taught it to organise, and placed it at the head of all the other sections of the toiling and exploited population. And Marxism, the ideology of the proletariat trained by capitalism
 Taupe: sic!), has been and is teaching unstable intellectuals to distinguish between the factory as a means of exploitation (discipline based on fear of starvation) and the factory as a means of organisation (discipline based on collective work united by the conditions of a technically highly
developed form of production). The discipline and organisation which come so hard to the bourgeois intellectual are very easily acquired by the proletariat just because of this factory ‘schooling’. Mortal fear of this school and utter failure to understand its importance as an
organising factor are characteristic of the ways of thinking which reflect the petty-bourgeois mode of life and which give rise to the species of anarchism that the German Social-Democrats call *Edelanarchismus*, that is, the anarchism of the ‘noble’ gentleman, or aristocratic anarchism,
as I would call it. This aristocratic anarchism is particularly characteristic of the Russian nihilist. He thinks of the Party organisation as a monstrous ‘factory’; he regards the subordination of the part to the whole and of the minority to the majority as ‘serfdom’ (see Axelrod’s
articles); division of labour under the direction of a centre evokes from him a tragi-comical outcry against transforming people into ‘cogs and wheels’ (to turn editors into contributors being considered a particularly atrocious species of such transformation); mention of the
organisational Rules of the Party calls forth a contemptuous grimace and the disdainful remark (intended for the ‘formalists’) that one could very well dispense with Rules altogether.”

(“One Step Forward, Two Steps Back”, Section Q, “The New Iskra. Opportunism In
In her text, “Organizational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy” (see the following section), Rosa Luxemburg would denounce this concept of organizational centralism as being steeped in the “spirit of the overseer” (!). She would also criticize the expression, “Jacobin
indissolubly joined to the organization of the proletariat”, used by Lenin to define the social democratic “revolutionary” (the last set of inverted commas are ours!) and his relation with the working class. One may reflect on just how revealing of Lenin’s bourgeois positions this adjective, “Jacobin”, really is, since he took it from the French Revolution of 1789 and
contrasted it with the positions of his enemies, whom he called “Girondins”. As we said with regard to his theses on socialist consciousness, the revolution of 1905 and the appearance of the soviets did not cause the slightest modification in Lenin’s theses or in the views of the Bolshevik fraction as a whole on the question of organization. For convincing proof of this, one need only
read the text entitled, “Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution” (July 1905), in which Lenin is content with explaining his tactical disagreements with the Mensheviks, with respect to a process that is analyzed only as unfolding on the terrain of the bourgeoisie. Thus, he writes in his “Preface” to “Two Tactics…”:
“Undoubtedly, the revolution will teach us, and will teach the masses of the people. But the question that now confronts a militant political party is: shall we be able to teach the revolution anything? shall we be able to make use of the correctness of our Social-Democratic doctrine, of our bond
with the only thoroughly revolutionary class, the proletariat, to put a proletarian imprint on the revolution, to carry the revolution to a real and decisive victory, not in word but indeed, and to paralyse the instability, half-heartedness and treachery of the democratic
bourgeoisie?"

The primordial goal of "Marxism-Leninism", the legitimate heir of Social Democracy, is expressed here: The proletariat, under the leadership of "its" Party, must take the place of the bourgeoisie and assume the task of implementing democratic reforms. Lenin, taking into account the predominance of the
peasantry in Russia, simply added the peasantry to the working class as a privileged ally and thus conceived the slogan of “The Revolutionary-Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Peasantry.” (!)

To impose his organizational schemes, Lenin then waged an offensive within the leadership of the
International Socialist Bureau (ISB), to which he devoted most of his attentions right up until 1914 (see the first part of our analysis of the “Leninist Concept of the Party”). He tried to usurp Plekhanov’s position as the representative of the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party in the ISB. Georges Haupt perfectly explains his reasons for this:
“What motives could have impelled Lenin, amidst the revolutionary situation that prevailed in Russia at that time, to insist so vehemently on what seems at first sight to be such a minor issue? In fact, the question of the representation of the RSDWP in the ISB constituted one episode
in the struggle between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. If he were to have succeeded in participating with full voting rights in the ISB, whose prestige and moral authority were very influential, Lenin would have avoided being isolated: he would have imposed the recognition of his fraction on the
International. In addition, there were other, more particular reasons that inspired him in his conduct in the ISB that we find set forth in his letters to the Central Committee. In the very first rank, financial reasons: the distribution of the funds collected by international socialism in support of the
Russian revolution provoked lively disputes among the Russian and Polish socialists who belonged to the various fractions and groups. Then there were the political reasons: Lenin hoped to influence the ISB with regard to ‘Russian affairs’, and also with regard to the orientation and the
spirit of the manifestos and circulars concerning the Russian revolution that the ISB issued in the name of revolutionary Russia. Finally, in the event that the conference called for by the ISB to resolve the question of the unity of Russian Social Democracy were to be held, he was already thinking of
ways to merge the fractions in a way that would favor the Bolsheviks. Furthermore, he had already elaborated, at the end of July 1905, a detailed tactical plan addressing these questions; and the only condition that he proposed to the secretariat of the ISB was that the proposed
conference must have ‘the character of a preliminary deliberation’. The executive committee of the ISB and its secretary Camille Huysmans were undoubtedly unaware of all the difficulties that Lenin had to overcome with his own Central Committee. They considered him to
be the authorized represented of Bolshevik Central Committee and, at the beginning of November 1905, they accepted without any reservations the official appointment of Lenin as the delegate to the ISB, an appointment signed by the Central Committee of the RSDWP.”
During the war, in 1916, in order to rally the social
democratic left against the right (revisionists) and the center (“orthodoxy”) of the Second International that had sent the proletariat to serve as cannon fodder on the various military fronts, Lenin (whose “revolutionary defeatism” in fact concealed an anti-Czarist policy whose purpose was to establish State capitalism in Russia), proposed as one of the conditions for the proposed
conference, that all its participating groups must break off relations with the ISB. After Zimmerwald, with the fall of the autocracy and the outbreak of the 1917 February Revolution in Russia, he “radicalized” his positions yet further, including his positions vis-à-vis the majority of “his” Bolshevik Party (see the April Theses of 1917), in order to more effectively
secure the unity of the movement. This was the period of the slogan, “All Power to the Soviets”, whose importance in relation to 1905 he finally understood. Behind the cover of this apparent radicalization, however, he still persisted in viewing everything from the perspective of the seizure of power by the Vanguard Party. This can be discerned even in the book, *The State and*
Revolution (August 1917), in which Lenin wants to nonetheless appear as if he were still attending classes in the “school of the masses” (!):  

“By educating the workers’ party, Marxism educates the vanguard of the proletariat, capable of assuming power and leading the whole
people to socialism, of directing and organizing the new system, of being the teacher, the guide, the leader of all the working and exploited people in organizing their social life without the bourgeoisie and against the bourgeoisie. By contrast, the opportunism now prevailing trains the
members of the workers’ party to be the representatives of the better-paid workers, who lose touch with the masses, ‘get along’ fairly well under capitalism, and sell their birthright for a mass of pottage, i.e., renounce their role as revolutionary leaders of the people against the bourgeoisie.”
For the seizure of power in October 1917, Lenin would prepare and put into practice a true coup d’état by making the decision to begin the insurrection against the Kerensky government without taking into account the organization of the Soviets. Once in power, the substitutionism of the Bolshevik Party only became more entrenched, in its
further pursuit of the logic of the establishment of State capitalism. October unleashed a process of counterrevolution that, with the signing of the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty, signified the liquidation of the proletarian revolution not only in Russia, but also all over the world. The creation of the Third International to serve as an instrument for the
defense of the Russian State contributed to the suppression of all the autonomous struggles of the proletariat in Western Europe, and especially Germany. Lenin then undertook the task of justifying his policy by silencing all the opposition currents within the various Communist parties and the Third International. First of all, he waged a ferocious
campaign against the German-Dutch Left, whose theses had led the majority of the German Communist Party (the KPD) to split from the Party and to form the Communist Workers Party of Germany (the KAPD). As part of this campaign against the left, he wrote “Left-Wing” Communism: An Infantile Disorder (1920), in which he clearly set forth his concept of the Party:
“Repudiation of the Party principle and of Party discipline—that is what the opposition has arrived at. And this is tantamount to completely disarming the proletariat in the interests of the bourgeoisie. It all adds up to that petty-bourgeois diffuseness and instability, that
incapacity for sustained effort, unity and organised action, which, if encouraged, must inevitably destroy any proletarian revolutionary movement. From the standpoint of communism, repudiation of the Party principle means attempting to leap from the eve of capitalism’s
collapse (in Germany), not to the lower or the intermediate phase of communism, but to the higher. We in Russia (in the third year since the overthrow of the bourgeoisie) are making the first steps in the transition from capitalism to socialism or the lower stage of communism. Classes still remain, and will
remain everywhere for years after the proletariat’s conquest of power. Perhaps in Britain, where there is no peasantry (but where petty proprietors exist), this period may be shorter. The abolition of classes means, not merely ousting the landowners and the capitalists—that is something we
accomplished with comparative ease; it also means abolishing the small commodity producers, and they cannot be ousted, or crushed; we must learn to live with them. They can (and must) be transformed and re-educated only by means of very prolonged, slow, and cautious organisational
work. They surround the proletariat on every side with a petty-bourgeois atmosphere, which permeates and corrupts the proletariat, and constantly causes among the proletariat relapses into petty-bourgeois spinelessness, disunity, individualism, and alternating moods of exaltation and
dejection. The strictest centralisation and discipline are required within the political party of the proletariat in order to counteract this, in order that the organisational role of the proletariat (and that is its principal role) may be exercised correctly, successfully and victoriously. The dictatorship of the
proletariat means a persistent struggle—bloody and bloodless, violent and peaceful, military and economic, educational and administrative—against the forces and traditions of the old society. The force of habit in millions and tens of millions is a most formidable force. Without a party of iron
that has been tempered in the struggle, a party enjoying the confidence of all honest people in the class in question, a party capable of watching and influencing the mood of the masses, such a struggle cannot be waged successfully. It is a thousand times easier to vanquish the
centralised big bourgeoisie than to ‘vanquish’ the millions upon millions of petty proprietors; however, through their ordinary, everyday, imperceptible, elusive and demoralising activities, they produce the very results which the bourgeoisie need and which tend to restore the bourgeoisie.
Whoever brings about even the slightest weakening of the iron discipline of the party of the proletariat (especially during its dictatorship), is actually aiding the bourgeoisie against the proletariat.”

From the justification of the Party, to the justification of the dictatorship within the
Party to ensure the dictatorship of the Party over the proletariat…. It’s all there!!!

4. Trotsky: From the critique of the Bolshevik Party to apologetics on its behalf

a) A critique of the “Leninist” concept of the Party

Like the Leninists, Trotskyist
currents of every variety have always tried to perpetuate the image of a Trotsky who was “faithful” to Lenin’s theses, a convert from the very beginning to the dogmas of Bolshevism. They were assigned this task by Trotsky himself, who, due to the requirements of his struggle against Stalin, downplayed the differences between himself and Lenin before his belated
membership in the Bolshevik Party (August 1917), especially those that he expressed most stridently before 1905. The resumption of the class struggle on a worldwide scale in 1968—the movement of May-June of that same year in France, for example—has made possible the publication and discussion of the texts in which Trotsky expressed his opposition to Lenin and to
Bolshevism (texts that the various Trotskyist parties and different Fourth Internationals had previously kept under lock and key).

Thus, as the delegate of the Siberian Union of the RSDWP (Russian Social Democratic Workers Party) to the Second Congress of the Party in London that culminated in the split between the Bolsheviks and
the Mensheviks, Trotsky was on the side of the “minority” and therefore spent a brief period as a “Menshevik” that lasted from the conclusion of the Congress in August 1903 to the publication of “Our Political Tasks” in August 1904. During this period, he denounced Lenin for his efforts to take over the leadership of the RSDWP and for his dictatorial
tendencies. In September 1903 he drafted the Menshevik resolution that confirmed the fraction’s boycott of the central institutions of the Party that were controlled by the Bolsheviks. It was, however, above all with the publication of the “Report of the Siberian Delegation” in 1903\(^\text{23}\) that his attacks on Lenin would assume importance. As Denis
Authier, the translator of the French edition of the text, explains in his interesting “Introduction”:

“The pretext for this booklet was the need for the delegate to submit a report on his activity at the Congress to those who had mandated him. But the booklet was above all a defence of the positions
and attitudes of the ‘minority’, and an attack on Lenin. This text shows what happened at the Second Congress better than ‘One Step Forward, Two Steps Back’, published four months later. The Report already contains in embryonic form the ideas which would be developed in ‘Our
Political Tasks’: in particular, the critique of Lenin's ‘Robespierrism’ and the idea that the ‘substitution’ of the Party for the class meant in short order the substitution of the organisation for the Party, of the Central Committee for the organisation and finally of the dictator for the
This is demonstrated by two quotations from the last part of the “Report…” in which Trotsky accuses Lenin of having forged his dictatorship thanks to the old “repentant Economists” who had only followed him out of opportunism in order to belong to the majority fraction and obtain positions in the Party:
"The Central Committee created by the Second Congress was nothing but an agency placed under the administration of the Council, which in turn was only a second adjunct of the Editorial Board. Obviously such a Central Committee runs no risk of becoming a political
leadership. It cannot be expected that it will begin to think and act independently. Creative work presupposes free initiative; this may lead to ‘insubordination’: The role of the Central Committee, according to Lenin, is something quite different. It must be the watchdog of centralism. It dissolves oppositions and closes
the gates of the Party. To express to the congress the meaning of the Central Committee, Comrade Lenin held up his fist (I am not speaking metaphorically) as the political symbol of the Central Committee. We do not know if this mimicry of centralism is entered in the minutes. Let us hope
so, for the fist would crown the whole construction....

“... Comrade Lenin transformed the modest Council into an all powerful Committee of Public Safety, in order to take on himself the role of the Incorruptible. Everything which was in his way had to be
swept aside. The perspective of the destruction of the *Iskra*-ist Montagne did not stop Comrade Lenin. It was simply a question of establishing, through the intermediary of the Council, and without resistance, a ‘Republic of Virtue and Terror’.

“Robespierre’s
dictatorship through the intermediary of the Committee of Public Safety could only hold if ‘loyal’ people were selected on the Committee itself, and if creatures of the Incorruptible were placed in all important state posts. Otherwise, the all-powerful dictatorship would have remained
suspended in mid-air. The first condition was provided, in our caricature of Robespierre’s career, by the liquidation of the old Editorial Board. A second condition was also ensured: the appropriate selection of the members of the Central Committee, and for the rest, the establishment of the
filter of ‘unanimity’ and ‘mutual co-option’.

“The nomination of all other ‘dignitaries’ depends on the Central Committee; the work of the latter is placed under the watchful control of the Council. Here, comrades, is the administrative apparatus which is to govern the Republic of
orthodox ‘Virtue’ and centralist ‘Terror’.”

In April 1904 Trotsky began to express disagreements with the Mensheviks. In his Preface to *Our Political Tasks*, however, which he wrote in August of the same year, he still claimed to belong to that fraction. With regard to the split in the RSDWP, Trotsky sought to broaden the debate by finding
deeper reasons that would explain the split. In this respect, his book, written between April and August of 1904, is in many respects very similar to Rosa Luxemburg’s article, “Organizational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy” (see the following section). In addition, numerous passages reflect the influence of texts written by Martov,
Plekhanov and Axelrod, who criticized the bureaucratism, the Jacobinism, etc., of the “majority” and of Lenin, especially in *What Is To Be Done?* and “One Step Forward, Two Steps Back”. Thus, numerous passages in *Our Political Tasks* are nothing but further elaborations of points raised in an article by Axelrod 24 entitled, “The Unification of
Russian Social Democracy and Its Tasks”, published in issues 55 and 57 of *Iskra* (late 1903). In fact, Axelrod’s article foresaw the bourgeois politics that the Bolsheviks would impose on the Party. Trotsky, however, distanced himself from these Menshevik literati by announcing an imminent revolutionary process whose content would not be exclusively bourgeois. He
also noted that it was with respect to the question of the self-determination of the proletariat and its autonomous class politics that “the source of all differences, the focus of all the internal troubles which up to now have so seriously wracked our Party” was to be found! And he condemned, thus initiating his break with the Mensheviks, both the Bolsheviks, whom he called
“politicians”, as well as the orthodox elements like Plekhanov, whom he called “Economists” (the inverted commas are Trotsky’s), because neither understood the necessity of the development of the revolutionary self-activity of the masses:

“The greater the distance separating the objective and
subjective factors, that is, the weaker the political culture of the proletariat, the more naturally there appear in the Party those ‘methods’ which, in one form or another, only show a kind of passivity in the face of the colossal difficulties of the task incumbent upon us. The political abdication of the
‘Economists,’ like the ‘political substitutionism’ of their opposites, are nothing but an attempt by the young Social Democratic Party to ‘cheat’ history....

“... So, if the ‘Economists’ do not lead the proletariat, because they are merely tail-ending it,
the ‘political’ elements do no better for the good reason that they themselves are carrying out duties in its place. If the ‘Economists’ are disarmed in the face of the enormity of their task, contenting themselves with the humble role of marching at the tail-end of history, the ‘politicians’ on the
other hand, have resolved the problem by trying to transform history into their own tail.”

Trotsky therefore rejected the organizational conception that posited the relation intelligentsia/proletariat exclusively in the form of teacher/student relations, which therefore leads to the substitution of the Party for
the working class. He directed his criticisms in particular against the theses of the “politicians”, that is, against Lenin’s fraction:

“The group of ‘professional revolutionaries’ was not marching at the head of the conscious proletariat, it was acting (in so far as it acted) in the place of
“… The proletariat, the very proletariat you were told yesterday ‘spontaneously tends towards trade unionism’, is today invited to give lessons in political discipline! And to whom? To the same intelligentsia which in yesterday’s plan was given the role
of bringing proletarian political consciousness to the proletariat from the outside! Yesterday, the proletariat was crawling in the dust; today it is raised to unimaginined heights! Yesterday too the intelligentsia was the bearer of socialist consciousness; today it is required to go through the process of
factory discipline!" (Here, Trotsky is emphasizing Lenin’s contradictions between his analyses in *What Is To Be Done?* and “One Step Forward, Two Steps Back”—Note added by Jeune Taupe.)

“... if one tries to transpose the methods and tactics of Jacobinism into the
field of class struggle of the proletariat, one ends up only with a pitiful caricature of Jacobinism, but not with Social Democracy. Social Democracy is not Jacobinism, much less a caricature of it....

“... It is no accident, but a characteristic position, that the head
of the reactionary wing of our Party, Comrade Lenin (once again drawing the comparison with Robespierre—see the “Report of the Siberian Delegation”—Trotsky also calls him “Maximilien Lenin”— Note added by Jeune Taupe), believed himself psychologically
obliged, by keeping up the tactics of a caricature of Jacobinism, to define Social Democracy in a way which is a theoretical attack against the class character of our Party. Yes, a theoretical attack, no less dangerous than the ‘critical’ ideas of some Bernstein…. (an
allusion to Lenin’s Jacobin definition of social democracy).

“… In any event, the authors of this document have the courage to clearly affirm that the dictatorship of the proletariat seems to them more like the dictatorship over the proletariat: it is not the
working class that, by way of its autonomous action, takes into its hands the fate of society, but a ‘strong and powerful organization’, which, reigning over the proletariat and through the latter, over society, assures the transition to socialism. To prepare the working class for political rule it is
indispensable to develop and cultivate its self-activity, the habit of actively and permanently controlling all the executive personnel of the Revolution. This is the great political task that international social democracy has set itself. For the ‘social democratic Jacobins’, however, for the
passionless representatives of the system of organizational substitutionism, the enormous social and political task of the preparation of the class for State power is replaced by an organizational-tactical task: the fabrication of a power apparatus.” (Trotsky is discussing
three committees from the Urals whose members, supporters of Lenin, had drafted a document that appeared as a supplement to issue no. 63 of *Iskra.*

Trotsky’s disagreements with the Mensheviks became more embittered. First, Plekhanov’s tendency accused Trotsky of being too
extreme in his attacks on Lenin and the Bolsheviks. A certain number of Committees reacted against one of his polemical articles attacking Lenin’s tendency, and the editorial board of *Iskra* refused to publish it because Plekhanov threatened to resign. More fundamentally, however, it was the positions of a Menshevik fraction led by Dan and Vera Zasulich,
calling for an alliance with the Russian liberal currents, which led Trotsky to break off all relations with Menshevik circles. Thus, barely one month after the publication of *Our Political Tasks* (September 1904), he sent an “Open Letter to the Comrades” to *Iskra* in which he explained the reasons for his break. This letter was never published and Trotsky
maintained an intermediate position, which he called “above the fractions”, until the summer of 1917.

From the standpoint of his pre-1905 critique of the Leninist concept of the Party, Trotsky effectively represented a revolutionary tendency, with the same degree of integrity as Rosa Luxemburg. As was the case with Luxemburg, however,
his positions implied major limitations, since the weight of the errors of the Marxist concept of the Party and its social democratic legacy made itself felt when it was a matter of positively defining what an organization of revolutionaries might be like and what form its relations with the proletariat would take. The idea of the Party was preserved and even when it was conceived in such a
way as not to be the substitute for the self-activity of the masses, it was still seen as a vanguard, of greater or lesser magnitude depending on the period, that was supposed to initiate the backward layers of the proletariat in class consciousness, thanks to Marxism:

“We can define the formal frontiers of the
Party as wider or narrower, ‘softer’ or ‘harder,’ depending on a whole series of objective causes, considerations of tact and political reasons. But whatever its dimensions, it is clear that our Party will always form a series of concentric circles, from the centre outwards,
increasing in number but decreasing in level of consciousness. The most conscious and therefore the most revolutionary elements will always be a ‘minority’ in our Party. And this can only be explained by our faith in the fate of the working class as being social revolution, and revolutionary ideas as
being those corresponding best to the historical movement of the proletariat. We believe that the practice of the class will, thanks to Marxism, raise the level of the less conscious elements.”

(Our Political Tasks)

Furthermore, Trotsky’s views
were already firmly rooted in the logic of a “good” leadership, and a “good” centralism, in order to save the vanguard Party from opportunism and to save the very principle of the need for a Party. Thus, the last paragraph of the “Report of the Siberian Delegation” contains observations that herald the later analyses of *The Revolution Betrayed* and *The Transitional Programme*:
“A grave danger threatens us at the present time; the inevitable and fast approaching collapse of Leninist ‘centralism’ carries with it the danger of compromising the idea of centralism in general in the eyes of many Russian comrades. The hopes placed in the
Party’s ‘government’ were high, infinitely too high. The Committees were sure it would give them men, literature, orders, material means. Now, a régime which to survive begins by driving out the best members in the fields of theory and practice, promises too many executions and too
little bread. It will inevitably create disillusionment which may turn out to be fatal, not just for the Robespierres and the islands of centralism, but also for the idea of a single combat organization in general. It is the ‘Thermidorians’ of socialist opportunism who will then be
masters of the situation, and the gates of the Party then really will be open wide.

“May it not come to that.”

Trotsky’s evolution towards a position “above the fractions” (1904-1917) must be situated first of all in the context of his intention to “rectify” the Party by calling
for the unification of its diverse fractions (mainly the Bolshevik and Menshevik currents); towards the end of this period, he would engage in critical collaboration with Lenin’s “majority”, after the Zimmerwald Conference.

b) From the concept of “permanent revolution” to apologetics for the Bolshevik Party
During the 1905 revolution, Trotsky, unlike the Bolsheviks, was fully aware of the significance of the Soviets and the role they played. Not only did he participate in the movement—he was elected to serve as President of the Petrograd Soviet—but he also drew some interesting conclusions from this revolutionary experience, which he defined as a “test-run”. In the texts
written immediately after 1905, such as *1905* and *Balance Sheet and Prospects*, he was even more insistent than ever before on emphasizing the importance of the dynamic of the self-activity of the masses, which, thanks to their revolutionary spontaneity, conferred a proletarian character upon what was originally a
democratic process. In this way he returned to the themes and sometimes even the very formulations of Marx. In his attempt to summarize the lessons of the movement, he elaborated the concept of “permanent revolution”. ²⁹

Because the Russian bourgeoisie was too weak to carry out its revolution, it
was the responsibility of the proletariat to implement the democratic program (overthrow czarism, seize political power), relying on the support of the peasantry, and assuming a leadership role over the peasantry in order to later establish socialism in Russia with the help of the internationalization of the revolution in the advanced capitalist countries. Trotsky
spoke of the “transformation” of the bourgeois revolution into the proletarian revolution. He explained this in his introduction to the book, *The Permanent Revolution* (1930), in which he defends his theses against Stalin and his allies, Radek, Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, etc., soon after he was deported from Russia:
“The permanent revolution, in the sense which Marx attached to this concept, means a revolution which makes no compromise with any single form of class rule, which does not stop at the democratic stage, which goes over to socialist measures and to war against reaction from without: that is, a
revolution whose every successive stage is rooted in the preceding one and which can end only in the complete liquidation of class society....

“Plekhanov, the brilliant progenitor of Russian Marxism, considered the idea of the dictatorship of the
proletariat a delusion in contemporary Russia. The same standpoint was defended not only by the Mensheviks but also by the overwhelming majority of the leading Bolsheviks, in particular by those present party leaders, without exception, who in their day were resolute revolutionary
democrats but for whom the problems of the socialist revolution, not only in 1905 but also on the eve of 1917, still signified the vague music of a distant future.

“The theory of the permanent revolution, which originated in 1905, declared war upon these ideas and
moods. It pointed out that the democratic tasks of the backward bourgeois nations lead directly, in our epoch, to the dictatorship of the proletariat and that the dictatorship of the proletariat puts socialist tasks on the order of the day.

Therein lay the central idea of the theory. While the traditional
view was that the road to the dictatorship of the proletariat led through a long period of democracy, the theory of the permanent revolution established the fact that for backward countries the road to democracy passed through the dictatorship of the proletariat. Thus democracy is not a
regime that remains self-sufficient for decades, but is only a direct prelude to the socialist revolution. Each is bound to the other by an unbroken chain. Thus there is established between the democratic revolution and the socialist reconstruction of society a permanent state of revolutionary
development.”

Lenin, for his part, as we saw above, introduced the slogan, “revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry” (see “Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution”). Remaining squarely within the framework of the problematic of a bourgeois solution to the agrarian
question (in fact, he would adopt the program of the Social Revolutionaries: “The land to the peasants!”), he tended to view the proletariat as a factor within a strictly democratic political process due to the indispensable alliance with the peasantry. Lenin even admitted that the peasants’ party, the Social Revolutionaries, might be the majority party in the government of an eventual
Adopting an opportunistic plan of action, however, as usual, with respect to the movement that overthrew Czarism in February 1917, he then supported the concept of the “permanent revolution”. In the “April Theses” he declared his support for the seizure of political power by the proletariat under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party, against the opposition
of the “majority” of his own Party.

Trotsky, who until February 1917 was the leading figure in the group that advocated a middle course, independent of the Bolshevik Party, decided to join the Bolshevik Party in August of 1917. With Lenin’s support for his position, he subsequently viewed this Party as the adequate instrument for
carrying out the “permanent revolution”. Despite his disagreement with the way the insurrection in October 1917 was carried out, and then, later, his initial dissident position on the negotiations for the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty, he would in fact become an agent of the generalization of capitalist exploitation in Russia. As D. Authier correctly explains in

“... through its second and third points (the transition to the socialist revolution in Russia through the internationalisation of the revolutionary process), the ‘theory of the permanent revolution’ played the
role of ideology for Trotsky and the Russian revolutionaries who adopted it: it enabled them to conceal from themselves the ‘limited bourgeois character’ of their movement, and it made it possible for this movement to become the leadership which it could not find in the bourgeoisie
His justification of State capitalism, christened as the “consolidation and defense of the revolution in Russia” at the expense of the internationalization of the proletarian process, would evolve into a veritable apology for the Bolshevik Party. In 1920, Trotsky was the “People’s Commissar of War”, and he organized the
“red army” using former Czarist officers. To defend the militarization of labor and all the “Terrorist” measures implemented by the Bolsheviks, he took his turn attacking the “renegade” Kautsky, and he wrote the book, *Terrorism and Communism*, which bore the subtitle, *A Reply to Karl Kautsky*, because he took the title of his book from a book with the same title written by
Kautsky. In this book, Trotsky reduced the role of the Soviets themselves to nothing and exalted the dictatorship of the Bolshevik Party:

“In the hands of the party is concentrated the general control. It does not immediately administer, since its apparatus is not adapted for this
purpose. But it has the final word in all fundamental questions. Further, our practice has led to the result that, in all moot questions, generally – conflicts between departments and personal conflicts within departments – the last word belongs to the Central Committee of the party. This
affords extreme economy of time and energy. and in the most difficult and complicated circumstances gives a guarantee for the necessary unity of action. Such a regime is possible only in the presence of the unquestioned authority of the party, and the faultlessness of its
discipline. Happily for the revolution, our party does possess in an equal measure both of these qualities. Whether in other countries which have not received from their past a strong revolutionary organization, with a great hardening in conflict, there will be created just as
authoritative a Communist Party by the time of the proletarian revolution, it is difficult to foretell; but it is quite obvious that on this question, to a very large extent, depends the progress of the Socialist revolution in each country.

“The exclusive role of
the Communist Party under the conditions of a victorious proletarian revolution is quite comprehensible. The question is of the dictatorship of a class. In the composition of that class there enter various elements, heterogeneous moods, different levels of development. Yet the dictatorship pre-
supposes unity of will, unity of direction, unity of action. By what other path then can it be attained? The revolutionary supremacy of the proletariat presupposes within the proletariat itself the political supremacy of a party, with a clear programme of action and a faultless internal
discipline.

“... We have more than once been accused of having substituted for the dictatorship of the Soviets the dictatorship of our party. Yet it can be said with complete justice that the dictatorship of the Soviets became possible only by means of the dictatorship of
the party. It is thanks to the clarity of its theoretical vision and its strong revolutionary organization that the party has afforded to the Soviets the possibility of becoming transformed from shapeless parliaments of labor into the apparatus of the supremacy of labor. In this ‘substitution’ of
the power of the party for the power of the working class there is nothing accidental, and in reality there is no substitution at all. The Communists express the fundamental interests of the working class. It is quite natural that, in the period in which history brings up those interests, in all their magnitude, on to
the order of the day, the Communists have become the recognized representatives of the working class as a whole.”

With these lines, Trotsky completely repudiated his former view of the importance of the self-activity of the masses, to which he had devoted so much attention just before
1905 and during the next few years. In his two volumes on *The History of the Russian Revolution* (1930), however, he expressed a very different opinion, stressing the important role played by the spontaneity of the masses and calling attention to the numerous occasions when the Party fell behind the initiatives of the proletariat, that is, the moments when the Party was obliged to
“jump onto a moving train” (!).

c) “Trotsky, the Stalin manqué”  

In *Terrorism and Communism*, along with an apology for the Party and its dictatorship over the proletariat, one also finds expressions of everything that would later be characterized as “Stalinist
tendencies”: compulsory and militarized labor, the need for discipline, “socialist” emulation, intensification of labor, utilization of “specialists”, etc. Thus, Trotsky wrote:

“"The very principle of compulsory labor service is for the Communist quite unquestionable. ‘He who works not, neither
shall he eat.’ And as all must eat, all are obliged to work.

‘… The whole of human history is the history of the organization and education of collective man for labor, with the object of attaining a higher level of productivity. Man, as I have already permitted
myself to point out, is lazy; that is, he instinctively strives to receive the largest possible quantity of products for the least possible expenditure of energy. Without such a striving, there would have been no economic development. The growth of civilization is measured by the productivity of human
labor, and each new form of social relations must pass through a test on such lines....

“... Consequently, wages, in the form both of money and of goods, must be brought into the closest possible touch with the productivity of individual labor. Under capitalism, the system
of piece-work and of grading, the application of the Taylor system, etc., have as their object to increase the exploitation of the workers by the squeezing-out of surplus value. Under Socialist production, piece-work, bonuses, etc., have as their problem to increase the volume of social
product, and consequently to raise the general well-being. Those workers who do more for the general interest than others receive the right to a greater quantity of the social product than the lazy, the careless, and the disorganizers.”

The distance separating these “edifying” phrases (Stalin
would, for his part, speak of “man, the most precious capital”!) from the repression of an autonomous workers movement that called for “All power to the Soviets” was not very great. \(^\text{32}\) Trotsky would soon confirm this by leading the assault against the rebels of Kronstadt; he said they should be “shot down like partridges” (!!).
Subsequently, the entire political career of this “field marshal”, whether in Russia up until 1927, or in exile until 1940 (left opposition, founding of the Fourth International), may be summarized as one long attempt to perfect his apology for the “true” Bolshevik Party and to argue that the state/imperialist capitalist regime of the USSR was a “degenerated
workers State” (i.e., it is a “bureaucratic caste” that holds political power rather than a class, since the “October revolution” realized the “foundations of socialism”: nationalization, monopoly over foreign trade, etc.).

In fact, in the process of formulating his opposition to Stalinism, Trotsky would lay claim to the title of the “sole
and true” heir of the Bolshevik-Leninist line, just as Lenin claimed to champion the “exclusive” continuity of Marxism against Kautsky. It must be pointed out that Trotsky went to great lengths to conceal his past critiques of Lenin. In his autobiography, *My Life*, he said nothing about his texts written prior to 1905 that were critical of Bolshevism. He would
always thwart all attempts to translate or publish new editions of *Our Political Tasks* and “The Report of the Siberian Delegation”.

In some of his texts, written during the last few years before his assassination, he would refer to these works, but only to condemn his own erstwhile analyses and to subject them to a kind of
“self-criticism” with distinctly religious overtones:

“In 1904 I wrote a brochure, Our Political Tasks, which in the organization sphere developed views very close to those of Rosa Luxembourg (Souvarine quotes this brochure with sympathy in his
biography of Stalin). However, all subsequent experience demonstrated to me that Lenin was correct in this question as against Rosa Luxembourg and me. Marceau Pivert counterposes to the ‘Trotskyism’ of 1939, the ‘Trotskyism’ of 1904. But after all since that time three
revolutions have taken place in Russia alone. Have we really learned nothing during these thirty five years?”

and the Mensheviks were still members of the same party, the pre-convention periods and the convention itself invariably witnessed an embittered struggle over the agenda…. I might add that I personally committed not a few sins on this score myself. But I have learned something since then.”
In his last book, *Stalin* (1940), while he concedes that some of his pre-1905 positions were still of interest, he only does so in order to further sanctify Lenin, whose practical actions vindicated his own best insights:
“In the pamphlet, ‘Our Political Problems,’ written by me in 1904, which contains not a little that is immature and erroneous in my criticism of Lenin, there are, however, pages which present a fairly accurate characterization of the cast of thought of the ‘committeemen’ of
those days, who ‘have foregone the need to rely upon the workers after they had found support in the “principles” of centralism.’ The fight Lenin was obliged to wage the following year at the Congress against the high and mighty ‘committeemen’ completely confirmed
the justice of my criticism....

“... The idea of making a fetish of the political machine was not only alien but repugnant to his nature. At the Congress he spotted the caste tendency of the committeemen at once and opened an impassioned fight against it.”
By reducing the problem of the transition to real socialism in the USSR to the need for a “political” revolution, Trotskyism revealed that it was nothing but the ideology of one bureaucratic faction that was eliminated by another bureaucratic faction. Furthermore, according to Trotsky, with a “good” leadership, and a “good”
vanguard party for the proletariat, the outcome would have been different not only in the USSR, but all over the world. This is what he claims in the “The Transitional Programme” (subtitle: “The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International” [in English: https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1938/tp/]) in September 1938:
“The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership.”

For Trotsky, the success of the proletariat was totally dependent on the existence of a strong, self-proclaimed revolutionary Party, built prior to the revolution. He would mechanically apply this rule to every historical
situation.

5. Bordiga and the “Italian Left”: from Abstentionism to Left-Wing Leninism, and then Ultra-Leninism

While the “official” Bordiguist sects emphasize the “Marxist-Leninist” continuity of the Italian Left (the themes of Invariance and of The Thread of History), others, not so bold,
who generally lay claim to the heritage of *Bilan* (a journal of the fraction of exiles of the Italian Left in Belgium, 1933-1939), try to call attention to what they call the “original” rather than the strictly dogmatic aspects of the Italian Left. Thus, the International Communist Current still wants to credit the idea of the “common” contributions, united under the term, “ultra-left”, of the
“abstentionist” fraction and the German-Dutch Left (Lenin’s anathemas pronounced against the entire European Left, accused of the sin of “left-wing communism, an infantile disorder of communism”, are supposed to be sufficient evidence of these “common” contributions!) Some tendencies that formed around certain individuals (J. Camatte, J. Barrot) or around
publications like *La Guerre Sociale*, although still referring to *Bilan*, try to present the theoretical writings of Bordiga after the Second World War (1946-1970) as if they were of revolutionary interest compared to his previous politics which were of a strictly Leninist type, and which were perpetuated and essentially incorporated by the Internationalist
Communist Party (later called the “International” Communist Party):

“From 1944 to 1970: this is the least known period of Bordiga’s life. All his work appeared anonymously in the newspapers, Battaglia Comunista (1948-1952), and then in Il Programma
comunista and the journals, Prometeo (1946-1952) and Sul filo del tempo [...]. It was during this period, however, that he was most productive and, above all, most original. Although he maintained his old pro-Leninist position, he broke with the rigorous scheme of Leninism, as well as with scientism;
likewise, while he glorified the proletariat right up until the end of his life, he produced a virulent and acerbic critique, in the style of the Jeremiad, of that same class. Although he officially accepted and acknowledged right up to the end, so to speak, the existence of a formal party, the PCI, he was not present at
its founding congress and he long considered it, as an organization, to be only a working model. His main concern was to transmit ‘the experience’ of the revolutionary world of the twenties and to restore Marxism....”

(J. Camatte, “Some Biographical Threads”, in Bordiga et la
“Bilan is one of the best expressions of the Italian Left. But to speak of the ‘Italian Left’ is a simplification
that amounts, among most commentators, to a distortion, just as the ‘German Left’ involves complex realities, even during the period when this term designated a vibrant social movement, which embraced concepts and activities as diverse as those of Gorter, Rühle and Pannekoek. The ‘Italian Left’ is often
entirely conflated with the persona of Bordiga, since in France he is known above all by way of his ‘official’ representative, the International Communist Party, which is in turn above all ‘Bordiguist’: this Party lays claim to the heritage of the Italian Left but conceals the fact that it does not
follow Bordiga’s line, or indeed a good part of Bordiga himself. *Le Réveil Communiste* had already pointed out in February 1929 that ‘it often happens that the Bordiguists contradict Bordiga….’ Bordiga is nothing but one aspect, the richest but also perhaps the most contradictory and sometimes even the
most erroneous, of the Italian Left. The two most profound elements in Bordiga are, on the one hand, his anti-educationism and his materialism, which run through all his work despite strong contrary tendencies (which culminate in the idealization of the Party); and, on the other hand, his
perspective on communism formulated during the early 1950s. The renascent revolutionary movement of the last few years is drinking deep from the wellsprings of this part of his work. But this theoretical ‘reconnection’ is also a critique of Bordiga’s mistakes, which is
furthered by, among other things, knowledge of the other currents of the Italian Left.”

(J. Barrot, “Gauche Italienne?” [An Italian Left?], in, Bilan, Contre-révolution en Espagne, 1936-1939, 10/18, Paris, 1979, pp. 79-80 [translated from
“Bordiga had the great merit of maintaining anti-productivist, anti-consumerist, and anti-technological positions during the 1950s. He had a tendency, however, to put the accent on mercantilism, the race for profits, economic
mechanisms and their immediate effects, the tendency to economize regardless of the price paid in catastrophes, rather than unmasking the anti-ecological nature of the phenomenon itself, as well as the problems that it has recently posed for capitalist expansion...."
a) The “Abstentionist” fraction of the Italian Socialist Party

Until January 1921, when the Congress of Livorno was convened, which provoked the split that led to the formation of the Italian Communist Party, Bordiga was an active member of the social democracy. He was a
member of the Socialist Party in Naples, where he fought against the consequences of reformism, primarily electoralism. At the Socialist Party congresses prior to 1914 he was associated with Benito Mussolini (!), who also made speeches in the name of the left faction. Bordiga’s goal was to rectify and regenerate the Party.
Beginning in 1910, a “radical” tendency made its appearance in the PSI, which had been founded in 1892. It arose in connection with demonstrations against the colonial war in Tripolitania, especially in the socialist youth organization. In 1912, Bordiga joined this tendency, founded the “Karl Marx Circle”, and contributed articles to various
newspapers and journals, such as *La Voce*, *Utopia* and *L’Avanguardia*.

It was at this time that Bordiga began to promote his own theses on the concept of the Party: the Party as a class organization that is not directed towards immediate achievements, since its theoretical positions guarantee its intransigence, protecting it from the
ideological pressure of capital. Thus, he put the accent on what would remain the touchstone of his definition of the Party until his death: the idea of the Program; in a speech at the PSI [Italian Socialist Party] Congress at Ancona (April 26-29, 1914), he declared:

“‘The Socialist Party cannot be brought to a halt by the corpse of an
impotent bourgeoisie that lies motionless in the middle of our road. The Socialist Party has precise functions and directives at the very moment when it is face to face with its final victory, otherwise it would have no reason to exist.

“... The revolution of 1848 induced an
immediate echo all over Europe. The propaganda of the Socialist Party for the proletarian international is becoming increasingly more generalized, extending to the whole inhabited world despite the disparity of environmental conditions; and if we renounce this historical
simultaneity of the revolutionary process, we would renounce the principal reason for the existence of our Party.” [translated from the Spanish translation]

During the war, Bordiga insisted that the Party must play the leading role in anti-war activity. Thus, at a conference of the PSI in Bologna (May 1915), he
recommended that the Party, rather than the trade unions or the Party’s parliamentary group, should conduct the general strike against mobilization (when Italy entered the war on the side of the Triple Entente—France, England and Russia—after having formed part of the Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary ... although remaining “neutral” in
1914!). In October 1917, in an article entitled, “For an In-Depth Discussion”, published in *Avanti!*, he emphasized the invariant nature of the program of which the Party is the bearer:

“A vanguard Party must ‘pay heed to the facts’, but it cannot say, ‘I expect my program to be created by the events”
themselves’. The events can only suggest to the Party the possibility of acting more or less energetically for the realization of the program that is its very reason to exist.”
[translated from the Spanish translation]

Bordiga wrote a series of articles in *L’Avanguardia* on
the victory of the Russian Revolution (October-December 1917). He proclaimed his agreement with the positions of the Bolsheviks and extolled Lenin’s personal role:

“And I predict that the day will come when the supreme council of the delegates of the soldiers and workers of all of Russia, having
disposed of the Generalissimo and Prime Minister in order to change course, will replace them with a man who is truly capable of being the interpreter of the feelings and the will of the triumphant proletariat.”

(“Mentre Lenin trionfa” [While Lenin
Beginning in this period, Bordiga would increasingly emphasize the connection between the Party’s programmatic criteria and the theories “that passed the test” in Russia:

“The new international
will therefore be the World Socialist Party, the collective organization of the working class for the violent conquest and exercise of power, and for the transformation of the capitalist economy into the socialist economy. Such a party aspires to a collective and conscious ‘discipline’
and will be the adequate means for the creation of the universal proletarian administration of the future.”

(“The Marxist Directives of the New International”, May 1918 [translated from the Spanish translation])
It was upon these bases that the “abstentionist” fraction arose, and it was upon these same bases that it would produce the platform of the Italian Left. The struggle against the reformism of the PSI was now underway in earnest:

- The newspaper, *Il Soviet*, was founded, replacing *Il Socialista*
(December 22, 1918);

- The Socialist Party leadership voted to join the Third International (March 22, 1919);

- The Theses of the Left Fraction were accepted by various sections of the Party: Florence, Turin, parts of Apulia and Calabria, etc. (April
1919);
- The Fraction held a congress in Rome (July 6, 1919): its program was published in *Il Soviet*;
- The PSI held its next congress in Bologna (October 4, 1919): the Fraction’s delegates demanded that the Party as a whole should adopt a
new program and call itself “communist”. Due to their desire to preserve Party unity, the other currents of the left did not support these demands: the reformists were not expelled and there was no split in the Party.
In a letter that was never delivered to the Moscow Committee of the Communist International because it was intercepted by the police (October 10, 1919), the Fraction criticized Gramsci’s Theses and l’Ordine Nuovo:

“As far as the question of tactics is concerned, in particular the setting up of Soviets, it
appears to us that errors are being committed even by our friends; what we are afraid of is that nothing more will be accomplished than to give a reformist twist to the craft unions. Efforts are in fact being made to set up workshop committees, as in Turin, and then to bring all the delegates
from a given industry (engineering) together to take over the leadership of the trade union, by appointing its executive committee. In this way, the political functions of the workers councils for which the proletariat should be prepared are not being tackled; whereas, in our view, the most
important problem is to organize a powerful class-based party (Communist Party) that will prepare the insurrectionary seizure of power from the hands of the bourgeois government.”

When the factory occupations took place in Turin (March-April 1920), the expression of an
important social movement in postwar Italy, Bordiga intensified his criticisms of Gramsci, and said that the leaders of the occupations movement had taken “a wrong road: posing the question of power in the workplace instead of posing the question of central political power” (“The Strike in Turin”, *Il Soviet*, May 2, 1920).
Besides his interesting observations on the confusion of factory committees with trade unions that hindered the formation of real workers councils, his criticism was above all based on the assertion of the essential role he attributed to the Party ... which reduces the function of the soviets to nothing! The perspective of “workers control” of production is not, in fact,
disparaged except insofar as it precedes the “conquest of political power” by the Party:

“The problem of control has been overestimated in Turin; they conceive of it as a direct conquest that the proletariat can wrest from the industrial class thanks to the new type of organization, thus realizing a
While Bordiga broke with certain democratic illusions
upon which Social Democracy had been based, he remained—obliged by his invariance—squarely in the direct line of Marxist succession with respect to the central role reserved for the Party as an absolutely necessary precondition for change. Furthermore, the principal lesson of the Commune (destruction of the State) is swept under the rug of the democratic watchword
of 1848: the conquest of political power!

The “abstentionist” theses of the Fraction (non-participation in parliament…) were condemned by Lenin in “Left-Wing” Communism: An Infantile Disorder (May 1920):

“… Comrade Bordiga and his ‘Left’ friends
draw from their correct criticism of Turati and Co. the wrong conclusion that any participation in parliament is harmful in principle. The Italian ‘Lefts’ cannot advance even a shadow of serious argument in support of this view. They simply do not know (or try to forget) the international
examples of really revolutionary and communist utilisation of bourgeois parliaments, which has been of unquestionable value in preparing for the proletarian revolution. They simply cannot conceive of any ‘new’ ways of that utilisation, and keep on repeatedly and endlessly vociferating
about the ‘old’ non-Bolshevik way.

“Herein lies their fundamental error. In all fields of activity, and not in the parliamentary sphere alone, communism must introduce (and without long and persistent effort it will be unable to introduce) something new in
principle that will represent a radical break with the traditions of the Second International (while retaining and developing what was good in the latter).”

In the same text, however, Lenin had previously affirmed his support for the struggle of the Italian Left against certain reformists,
that is, essentially the right wing of the PSI (Turati’s fraction):

“Comrade Bordiga and his group are right in attacking Turati and his partisans, who remain in a party which has recognised Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat, and yet continue their former
pernicious and opportunistic policy as members of parliament....”

And elsewhere in the same text, Lenin refers to:

“... the correctness of the demand by Comrade Bordiga and his friends on *Il Soviet*, who are insisting that the Italian Socialist
Party, if it really wants to be for the Third International, should drum Turati and Co. out of its ranks and become a Communist Party both in name and in deed."

Encouraged by this official recognition, the Italian Left would never cease to proclaim that its positions are essentially identical with
those of the Bolsheviks and it would subsequently always go out of its way to distinguish its positions from those of the ultra-left current:

“Today it has become fashionable to decree with professorial and smug arrogance that, in 1920, the Communist International fell prey to opportunism; to seek to prove this precisely
by referring to its tactical deviations, which, it is said, reflect a deviation with respect to principles, and therefore deplore the fact that the Italian Left waited until 1926 to break with the International. In parallel with that fashion, it has also become a matter of good taste in certain
milieus to rehabilitate the tribunists, councilists, kapists and other ‘European’ or ‘Western Marxists’ (the legendary ‘Left Communism’ or left-wing communism) that were supposed to have had the merit of seeing immediately what took us so much longer to recognize, and of having acted
accordingly by leaving the Comintern in 1921. It must be stated as emphatically as possible that we have nothing to ‘revise’ in our attitude towards that epoch, for the simple reason that the International was effectively the greatest conquest that the proletarian communist movement was then
capable of, the sole premise for more complete acquisitions in the future, and it was still such a premise for a few more years. This premise was given by the fact that it was based on an integral restoration of communist theory, principles and program, and on the fact that it left no stone unturned
in its efforts to correct its tactical insufficiencies (which it would have been anti-dialectical to immediately identify as deviations from principles under the pretext that these insufficiencies might in fact reveal their source, and that they could engender further deviations over the
long term), since the solid theoretical foundation upon which the Bolsheviks have established themselves makes this possible.”

(“La gauche marxiste d’Italie et le mouvement communiste international” [The Marxist Left in Italy and the International
By reducing its disagreements with the Bolsheviks to mere debates over tactics—even if these tactics would later engender problems for principles
(miracles of the dialectic!)— the Italian Left proclaims that its polemic with Lenin must be filed under “dialogues among Marxists”. It therefore supports the other anathemas pronounced in Lenin’s book (see “The Infantile Disorder: Condemnation of Future Renegades”, published in French translation in Programme communiste in 1972; the original Italian text
was first published in 1964 [an English translation may be consulted at:
http://www.quinterna.org/ling

In July 1920, however, in order to rally support for its struggle to impose its positions on the Communist International (Bordiga attended its Second Congress), the Italian Left entered into contact with all the left-wing groups in
Western Europe. The newspaper *Il Soviet* then published articles by Lukács, Sylvia Pankhurst, Gorter and Pannekoek.  

While Bordiga needed help to impose his anti-parliamentary line on the International against Bolshevik opposition, he also felt obliged to explicitly distance himself from the
KAPD with regard to the trade union question in his most important speech at the Second Congress:

“And now two observations on the arguments presented by Lenin in the pamphlet about ‘Left-Wing Communism’. I think that one cannot judge our anti-parliamentary tactic in the same way
as the tactic that advocates leaving the trade unions. The trade union, even when it is corrupt, is always a workers’ center....” (sic). [translated from the Spanish translation]

In order to further its efforts to found a Communist Party in Italy, the “abstentionist” fraction began to make certain accommodations with
the other left-wing currents in the PSI, such as Gramsci’s l’Ordine Nuovo. This was the purpose behind the publication of a manifesto-program at the conclusion of a meeting in Milan in October 1920. This meeting led to a national conference of the “communist fraction” of the PSI at Imola (late November 1920).

A precondition for unity was
the abandonment of abstentionism, in view of the fact that all the other currents were in favor of participating in elections. Once abstentionism was abandoned, this cleared the way for the split at the PSI’s Congress at Livorno in January 1921.

b) The “abstentionist” fraction in the Italian Communist Party and the
First of all, Bordiga tried to justify the split at Livorno, which took place as the result of a compromise on the question of abstentionism:

“Centralization is the basis of our theoretical and practical method: as a Marxist, I am first of all a centralist, and only after that an
In subsequent articles, he defended the split in the Italian Party in response to various proposals issuing from the Communist International whose purpose was to create the preconditions for the abstentionists.”

(Il Communista, April 14, 1921 [translated from the Spanish translation])
formation of a mass Party that would combine the Communist Party that emerged from the Livorno Congress with the "maximalist" fractions of the PSI. In fact, this was the same strategy that was implemented in Germany, where the KPD merged with the Independent Socialists.

In opposition to this proposal, Bordiga reiterated
what in his view distinguishes a real Communist Party and makes it possible for it to avoid “opportunist deviations”, that is, organizational rules, a program and tactics derived from historical experience:

“Therefore it is not necessary to be in favour of large—or small—parties; it is not necessary to advocate
that the orientation of certain parties should be reversed, under the pretext that they are not 'mass parties'. On the contrary, we must demand that all communist parties be founded on sound organisational, programmatic, and tactical directives which crystallise the results of the best
experiences of the revolutionary struggle on the international scale.”

(“Partito e azione di classe” [Party and Class Action], published in *Rassegna Communista*, May 31, 1921 [available online at: https://www.marxists.org])
During the sessions of the Third Congress of the Communist International, where the PCI was represented by Terracini rather than by Bordiga, the KAPD would throw a wrench in the works by denouncing the tactics that the Bolsheviks imposed in Germany: parliamentarism, trade unionism, united front, working class government, etc. Despite their
disagreements concerning the concept of the Party, which also explain their disagreements over the questions of participation in elections and the united front (Bordiga only accepted the implementation of the united front at the level of the trade unions!), the delegates of the Italian Left abided by the discipline of the International and continued to participate in the proceedings of the
The crucial polemic concerning the concept of the Party, however, would proceed unabated. Thus, in connection with the idea of the Program, Bordiga criticized the democratic principle as applied to the rules of the organization of a communist Party. Rejecting an operational structure...
based on democratic centralism, he formulated the concept of organic centralism:

“The democratic criterion has been for us so far a material and incidental factor in the construction of our internal organization and the formulation of our party statutes; it is not an indispensable
platform for them. Therefore we will not raise the organizational formula known as ‘democratic centralism’ to the level of a principle. Democracy cannot be a principle for us. Centralism is indisputably one, since the essential characteristics of party organization must be
unity of structure and action. The term centralism is sufficient to express the continuity of party structure in space; in order to introduce the essential idea of continuity in time, the historical continuity of the struggle which, surmounting successive obstacles, always advances towards the
same goal, and in order to combine these two essential ideas of unity in the same formula, we would propose that the communist party base its organization on ‘organic centralism’.”

(“Il Principio Democratico” [The Democratic Principle], Rassegna Comunista, February 28, 1922 [in
With his “Rome Theses” (presented at the Second Congress of the PCI, which was held in the Italian capital), Bordiga explicitly declared that all tactics must depend on the Program, and therefore must not be “variable” but rather previously determined by the
historic Party.

Nonetheless, at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International (November-December 1922) the Italian Left once again submitted to the conditions established by the Bolsheviks, accepting the prospect of a merger with the PSI, which had just expelled its right wing fraction (this proposed merger would later be rejected by the socialists).
After he was arrested and imprisoned in February 1923, brought to trial, and then released in October of the same year, Bordiga did not return to his position on the executive committee of the PCI (in 1924, he would also refuse an offer to serve as vice-president of the Communist International). While he was in prison, the leadership of the Party was
assumed by Togliatti with the assistance of Terracini. Furthermore, Gramsci had in the meantime formed a so-called “centrist” fraction that supported the positions of the Communist International. In 1924, Bordiga founded the journal, *Prometeo*, and defended his critical positions in many issues of this journal, but situated them within a “Marxist-Leninist” continuity,
proclaiming the following eulogy for the recently-deceased Lenin:

“First of all, we consider his works as restorative of the philosophical doctrine of Marxism, or, more accurately, of the general concept of nature and of society that pertains to the system of theoretical
knowledge of the revolutionary proletariat: the revolutionary proletariat not only needs to form an opinion concerning the problems of economics and politics, but also needs to take positions on a vast array of more far-reaching questions.”
Within the PCI, the positions of the “abstentionist” fraction were subjected to increasingly more strident attacks. At a conference in Como (May 1924), the
centrist and right wing fractions violently attacked the “Rome Theses” as the main obstacle standing in the way of the transformation of the PCI into a mass party. When the question was submitted to a vote, however, it turned out that the theses of the left wing were still supported by the majority of the delegates.

Likewise, beginning with the
Fifth Congress of the Communist International (June 1924), which he attended, Bordiga extended the scope of his critiques to the slogan of “Bolshevization” that was supposed to serve as a means to organize the western Communist Parties on the basis of factory cells. The conflict, within the PCI as well as the Communist
International, would then become more acute. Bordiga assumed the defense of Trotsky, even though he deliberately kept his distance from Trotsky with respect to the latter’s political positions. He wrote an article, “The Trotsky Question”, which was not published in L’Unità until July 4, 1925 due to the obstructionism of the leadership of the PCI. In
another article that was published on the same day, he summed up his opposition to the Communist International by calling for programmatic, rather than tactical, faithfulness to Lenin:

“We consider Lenin’s tactical method to be incompletely correct, insofar as it does not confer guarantees
against the possibilities that it might be applied in such a way that, while superficially faithful to, lacks the profound revolutionary purpose that always inspired, everything Lenin advocated and did.”

(“Il pericolo opportunista e l'Internazionale” [The
Finally, the theses of the “abstentionist” fraction were opposed by a majority of the delegates at the Third Congress of the PCI, held in exile in Lyon on January 20-26, 1926.
At the Fourth Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International held in Moscow (February-March 1926), Bordiga began by opposing Stalin’s “construction of socialism in one country”. Then, in his final speech at the Plenum, he recapitulated all his criticisms of the positions of the Third International, especially with regard to the
concept of the Party:

“Lately a certain kind of sport has been indulged in the Parties, a pastime which consists in hitting out, intervening, breaking up, ill-treating, and it very frequently happens that very good revolutionaries get hit...
“… Sanctions must be applied in exceptional cases, they must not be the rule, a pastime and an ideal of the leaders of a Party. It is all this which needs changing if we are to form a solid bloc….

“… Is there a historic example showing that any comrade has formed a fraction for
his own amusement? Such a thing has never happened. Experience has shown that opportunism makes its appearance among us always in the guise of unity. Moreover, the history of fractions goes to show that if fractions do no honour to the Parties in which they have been formed, they do honour to those
who have formed them. The history of fractions is the history of Lenin.…

“… Yet we are told: even if there are some shortcomings in the kind of the international connections, the leading role of the Russian Party offers us a good way out. Yet
here also we must make some reservations. I shall in my later exposition return to the question of the Russian Party and its problems. In passing, it is observed that one must ask where the leading factor of the Russian Party is to be found. Is it the old Leninist guard? But after the
last events it is clear that this can split and that both sides can with the same energy claim the right to speak in the name of bolshevism and accuse each other of deviating from true Leninism....

“... The correct solution is to be found elsewhere. We must base ourselves upon the
entire International, on the entire advance guard of the world proletariat. Our organisation can be compared to a pyramid. For all its sides are striving to a common summit. Yet this pyramid places itself upon its top and its centre of gravity is therefore too unsteady. It must be turned
upside down, the top must be the other way up in order that it must stand on a firm basis.”

[in English, see: “Bordiga: intervention at the Sixth Enlarged ECCI (Fifth Session, February 22, 1926)”, at the website of $n + 1$: http://www.quinterna.or

It is clear that at that time
Bordiga was still hoping to rectify the Communist International despite the preponderant influence of the Russian party. Thus, he proposed that an international congress should be convoked for the summer of 1926. Based on an imputed affiliation between the left and Lenin, the “abstentionist” fraction sought to constitute a “critical, yet disciplined”
opposition within the Communist International.

When he was finally excluded from the PCI (in 1930, for having once again taken up the defense of Trotsky), Bordiga retired completely from political life until 1944 and refused to contribute to attempts to found another International. He did not even maintain
contacts with the currents that laid claim to his legacy; neither with the left-wing fraction that emerged in the PCI (at Pantin in 1927)—which later broke with the Party (in 1935)—nor with the various exile fractions, such as *Bilan* in Belgium.

c) The legend of the Italian Left; or, the attempt to downplay its ultra-Leninist positions on the question of
the Party

Between 1926 and 1945, all the fractions that claimed to be part of the Italian Left current were reduced to the status of sects. They differed from Trotskyism insofar as their own analyses, based on the recognition of a process of counterrevolution, rather than mere bureaucratic degeneration, led them to conclude that the
construction of a new world Party was not in the offing. Thus, during the late 1930s, having concluded that the situation, due to the profound defeat of the proletariat in most countries, could be characterized as a “course set on war”, the “Bordiguist” fractions criticized the voluntarism that prevailed at the founding of the Fourth International (1938) by the “prophet” Trotsky and his
disciples.

Bordiga, for his part, pursued this logic to its extreme conclusions: since the formal existence of the Party was not possible, he retired to his marble tower and, despite a few earnest appeals, remained silent.

The fraction of exiles in Belgium, which published the journal, *Bilan*, nowadays
presented by some people as the “non plus ultra” of the groups of the inter-war period, was confronted by the “proof of the facts” in the uprising of the proletarians in Spain. In order to force a bothersome reality into the straightjacket of its schemas derived from a party-centered view of history, it denied the existence of the revolutionary process that unfolded between July 1936
and May 1937, and is even now still resisting all attempts to enlist it in the ranks of the anti-fascists. Since the Party did not exist, there could not be an autonomous development of the class struggle anywhere in the world. This thesis is a posteriori self-reflexive, since it fosters a confusion between a general analysis of the period in question, on the
one hand, and on the other, the perpetuation of a “Marxist-Leninist” concept of the Party that would be justified by that analysis. The theoretical analysis of an ongoing counterrevolution and the inauguration of a course set on war was effectively an unavoidable conclusion based on the facts, since the reality of that time seriously undermined the possibilities for an
extension of working class struggles. However, the denial that any proletarian movements existed, even isolated ones, and the refusal to focus on the possibilities of revolutionary intervention, merely reflected the reduction of all real processes to the possibility (or impossibility) of the (formal) emergence of the historic Party. The Party is the class; without it, the class
has no existence of its own!

Other groups that proceeded from the same kind of analysis of this period (counterrevolution, course towards war), however, inspired by the experience of the German-Dutch Left, began to undergo some interesting developments with respect to the concept of the Party. Union Communiste (1933-1939), for instance,
which welcomed those who broke with the Bordiguist fraction because of the positions taken by *Bilan* towards the workers struggles in Spain. However, compared to its evolution with regard to many other issues (critique of the USSR, of the popular fronts, of national liberation struggles, etc.), changes in its position on the question of the Party were very slow and
insufficient: its views on the Party question were largely informed by its contacts with the Group of International Communists of Holland (GIC), whose positions were at that time totally “vanguardist”. Above all, however, the most interesting developments were registered by the group, L’Ouvrier Communiste (1929-1931), which
published thirteen issues of a journal of the same name after having broken with the left fraction of the PCI in France. In contact with elements that were still involved with the KAPD and AAUD in Germany, but also with Myasnikov’s circle (the Workers Group of the Russian Communist Party), L’Ouvrier Communiste began to engage in a serious analysis of the problem of
the relations between revolutionary groups and the working class. As part of this effort, it sought to find a way to go beyond the Party without thereby rejecting, with regard to the accession to consciousness, a certain number of reference points whose origins lie in the old workers movement, such as, for example, that of “proletarian elites”.

43
During the Second World War, the “Bordiguist” fractions, unlike the Trotskyists, avoided being submerged in the resistance, despite some notable “vacillations” such as the episode of the “anti-fascist committee” formed by Vercesi in Brussels. After the war, controversy arose over the question of whether or not the situation was
favorable for the formation of the Party. The communist left of France, which published *Internationalisme*, argued that it was not, and defended its analysis positing an unfavorable conjuncture, while Damen’s fraction, which had founded the [original] Internationalist Communist Party in 1943 in Italy, obtained Bordiga’s support in 1945. All the groups of exiles were then
supposed to dissolve and their members were supposed to join the Party as individuals in order to form official fractions of the Party in other countries. The debate on the opportunities presented by that period did not question the “Marxist-Leninist” concept of the Party. In fact, the brothers-turned-enemies shared the intention of reaffirming the imperative need for that
particular kind of Party. Within the next few years (1945-1949), Bordiga would reestablish a strict orthodoxy to oppose the elements that wanted to question “the untouchability of the Party’s judgment”.44 And that was not all; he would also claim to be the legitimate heir of the legacy of the Communist International, associating the Internationalist Communist
Party with the party that emerged from the split at Livorno, rather than with the “abstentionist” fraction properly speaking, which had previously arisen within the PSI (especially at the Congress of Bologna), but which had also cultivated a furious ultra-Leninism.

Until his death in 1970, Bordiga was occupied essentially with theory. He
wanted to “restore Marxism”: he devoted himself to this task in numerous texts he read out loud during the course of meetings between 1951 and 1966; he also wrote a large number of articles about the most diverse topics: the human species, sports, religion, space exploration, Einstein, etc. On the basis of this vast output of Party literature, people like J. Camatte and J. Barrot
and a “group” like La Guerre Sociale attribute a revolutionary character to Bordiga’s postwar theoretical contributions. However, while it is true that with regard to certain points these texts contain some original analyses (critiques of the “rationalist faith” in science, in technology … and even in the proletariat, with respect to which Bordiga emphasized the limits of the
sociologically-defined “working class”, that is, the class as defined exclusively by capital), they remain more than ever securely embedded within the “continuity of Marxism”.

Bordiga’s constantly recurring theoretical refrains, stressed again and again, are: Party, Program ... and, consequently, apologetics for the Bolsheviks and Lenin for
having victoriously embodied what Marxism had preached (!). Although he did have some reservations with respect to the real-world formal Party, he nonetheless remained its éminence grise and guided all of its activities. Organic centralism sanctified a kind of Pope of Marxism whose blessing would be sought in organized pilgrimages to Naples.
There are numerous passages that could be cited to illustrate the ultra-Leninism of Bordiga and the Internationalist Communist Party (*Programme Communiste*) after the Second World War, not to speak of the other Parties that split from the ICP, each of which is still proclaiming itself to be the sole, true heir of the communist left of
We think that, for our purposes, it is sufficient to quote a long, but very significant passage, from the theses entitled “Programmatic Guidelines of the Party”, which were read into the minutes of the meeting held in La Spezia in April 1959 (the title of the Third Part published in

“Our conclusive thesis, which possesses not only a cognitive and theoretical, but also a practical and organizational significance, is that the communist party cannot conduct its
struggle over the course of history (just as the proletariat cannot do so, either, without being organized into a party, which the Manifesto of the communists proclaimed once and for all in 1848) unless it subordinates its activity, which takes place within the scope of a centuries-long
struggle, to clear programmatic guidelines. These programmatic guidelines, by concentrating everything that the theory and the praxis of the Party present as fundamental, can be considered to have been condensed into precise theses since the dawning of the era that
concerns us, during which the goal and the content of the historical struggle of the working class against modern capitalism first made their appearance.

“The basic outlines of these fundamental guidelines are for the most part delineated in the text of the Manifesto. But the
Manifesto constitutes a precise norm of action for the world of a particular era, rather than just the accumulated experience of action and doctrine that is common to all eras, and every country, as well.

“The basic program of the whole movement
must therefore be constructed by uniting the central theses that the Manifesto clearly formulated in the middle of the 19th century with those that figure in our classic texts, as a general perspective on the past and future history of the species in all of its manifestations and therefore, with this first
solution of the eternal enigmas that were formulated in these ‘Manuscripts’ [Marx’s “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844”] with an incomparable audacity (possible only in a being who did not allow himself to be overawed by the power of the prophetic gestures of a great man
of thought and action). Its essential content is the programmatic description of the characteristics of a communist society, the object of our inquiry and the supreme goal of our struggle.

“By way of prolonged labors over many years, we have demonstrated that this rigorous and
essential description is the object of the classic works of Marx and Engels, and that the various Marxists, whose prototype is Lenin, have always taken such a description as definitive and immutable. If the definition of the society of the future emanates from the
power of our method, the same thing is true of the characterization, in indelible lines, of the luminous road that leads to it.

“The importance of activity that tends to participate in such a ‘reconstruction’ of the essential guidelines of the movement is evident. The history of
the movement, with its deviations and its crises, is used to display the results that accrue when any other road is followed, besides the one traced in the fundamental theories, in the course of these prolonged deviations, whose determinant, sometimes irresistible, causes, our critique is
fully capable of identifying and denouncing. Both during and after Marx’s lifetime, the reaction to these shameful routs has always consisted in a rigorous return to first principles. All of these aspects have been comprehensively addressed in our work over the last fifteen years. Everyone knows
how we have depicted the war of Leninist Bolshevism, during the revolution, against the odious treason of the social patriots and the social democrats, as the supreme example of the total restoration of integral Marxism, to which the greatest result of the October victory can be attributed, for it was
not destroyed by the third wave of the corruptors who, on the other hand, have destroyed the social achievement—the socialist State of Russia; and the organizational achievement—the communist International.

“The Lenin-Bolshevik
Party dictatorship of the proletariat in 1917 therefore remains, although only in the realm of theory, the greatest victory of integral revolutionary communism in the form it first assumed around 1850, a glowing ingot from the forge of human history. An uninterrupted tradition right up to our time.
that will never be erased, while the names of Stalin and Khrushchev with their vapid sycophants will only be added to the sordid succession of revisionists and immediatists whose first wretched forerunners were pinned to the dissection board by the hand of Karl Marx himself.
“Our present task is informed by the purpose of once again putting in order the documentary theses that have been so often piled up in heaps, and explaining them in the light of their integral meaning, even if, in the current historical phase, a third restoration of this kind
has not yet encountered the real movement of revolutionary insurrection that it will have to avail itself of in the future.” [translated from the Spanish translation]

We must therefore make a clean break with the legend constructed around the “revolutionary contributions” of the Italian Left, because
its proponents tend to minimize the ultra-Leninist positions of the Italian Left with respect to the Party. Whether considered in the light of the Second World War, or earlier, in the light of the era of the founding of the PCI and its loyal opposition in the Third International, or during the 1930s, Bordiga and the various fractions of the Italian Left, and *Bilan* most of all, merely
underwent a transition from being a real expression of “left-wing Leninism” to being a merely verbal expression of a Byzantine “ultra-Bolshevism” which bears more than a passing resemblance to the totalitarian language so typical of Stalinist ideology and the left-wing sects (Trotskyists, Maoists). Furthermore, as we pointed out above, an emphasis on
the central function of the Party characterized the “abstentionist” fraction from its origins. If, however—setting aside the question of the Party—one wants to highlight some interesting aspects of the Italian Left without promoting the legend, they are much more likely to be found in the period during which the “abstentionist” fraction
represented a left opposition within Social Democracy, than in the period when, after having submitted to the discipline of the Comintern after the Congress of Livorno, it spent all of its time mechanically reciting the prayers of the “Marxist-Leninist” rosary!

The “Ultra-Left” Concept of the Party
In connection with Lenin’s book, “Left-Wing” Communism: an Infantile Disorder (1921), but also as a result of the mythology cultivated by certain groups in the wake of May ‘68, it has become customary to combine what have been called the “contributions of the German, Dutch and Italian lefts” under the label, “ultra-left”. We must,
however, break this habit. For, on the one hand, as we have already shown (see the section entitled, “The ‘Leninist’ and related—‘Trotskyist’ and ‘Bordiguist’—concepts of ‘the Party’”, above), the so-called Italian Left, except for some interesting analyses (critiques of democracy, anti-fascism, self-management), cannot lay claim to any original contributions that
would distinguish it from Bolshevism. Very much to the contrary, it seems more like a left wing of Leninism and the Third International, sharing some characteristics with the Trotskyist current and other disciples of the Bolsheviks, due to its furious Byzantine hair-splitting on the theme of the Party. The Dutch councilists, however, beginning with the GIC (Group of International
Communists), strove to eliminate all traces of the party-building aspects of the KAPD era (Communist Workers Party of Germany) without, however, also discarding the theses of Marx himself.

Over the course of the entire practical movement that, from the turn of the century until the conclusion of the revolutionary process of
1917-1923, would restore the preeminence of the real movement against the social democratic ideology and its subsidiary, Bolshevism, hardly anyone noticed the fundamental role played by Rosa Luxemburg in her attempt to engage in a “return to Marx” whose scope extended beyond her critique of the Second International and all its fractions.
Only a handful of people, like Paul Mattick (see below), emphasized the interesting features of her positions:

“The differences between Luxemburg and Lenin which we have here pointed out have in part already been more or less surpassed by history.”
Many of the things which gave substance to this dispute are of no moment today. Nevertheless, the essential factor in their debates, whether the revolution depends on the organised labour movement or on the spontaneous movement of the workers, is of the most pressing significance. But here
also history has already decided in favour of Rosa Luxemburg. Leninism is buried under the ruins of the Third International. A new labour movement which has no concern with the social-democratic remains which were still recognisable in Lenin and Luxemburg, nor yet has any intention of
renouncing the lessons of the past, is arising. To separate itself from the deadly traditional influences of the old labour movement has become its first prerequisite, and here Rosa Luxemburg is as great an aid as Leninism has been a hindrance. This new movement of the workers with its
inseparable nucleus of conscious revolutionists can do more with Luxemburg’s revolutionary theory, in spite of its many weaknesses, and derive from it more hope, than from the total accomplishment of the Leninist International. And as Rosa Luxemburg once said,
in the midst of the World War and collapse of the Second International, so the present-day revolutionists can say in view of the collapse of the Third International: ‘But we are not lost, and we shall conquer if we have not unlearned how to learn’.”
(“Luxemburg versus Lenin” (1935). See the anthology of texts by Paul Mattick published under the title, Integration Capitaliste et Rupture Ouvrier, EDI [in English: https://www.marxists.org/paul/1935/luxemburg-lenin.htm])

1. The origins of the “ultra-left” concept of the Party
Rosa Luxemburg’s “return to Marx”

Rosa Luxemburg first began to grasp the positive aspects of Marx’s concept of organization even before her experience of the revolutionary process of 1905 in Russia. Her most famous text on this topic, “Organizational Questions of the Russian Social
Democracy”, was published in *Iskra* and *Neue Zeit* in 1904.\(^{47}\)

In opposition to the theories of the Bolshevik fraction in the RSDWP, which she characterized as “Jacobin” and “Blanquist”, Rosa Luxemburg elaborated a perspective according to which the Party/organization “is itself the proletariat”: 
“The Social Democratic movement is the first in the history of class societies which reckons, in all its phases and through its entire course, on the organization and the direct, independent action of the masses.

“Because of this, the Social Democracy
creates an organizational type that is entirely different from those common to earlier revolutionary movements, such as those of the Jacobins and the adherents of Blanqui.

“Lenin seems to slight this fact when he presents in his book (page 140) the opinion
that the revolutionary Social Democrat is nothing else than a ‘Jacobin indissolubly joined to the organization of the proletariat, which has become conscious of its class interests’.

“... The fact is that the Social Democracy is not joined to the organization of the
proletariat. It is itself the proletariat.”

In her further inquiries based on these insights, she would subsequently deduce a large number of reasons to explain this difference with respect to previous movements. For Rosa Luxemburg, the prescient critic of the defects of Leninism, “this difference implies a complete revision of our ideas on organization
and, therefore, an entirely different conception of centralism and the relations existing between the party and the struggle itself”.

She therefore advocated the principle of a “self-centralism” that arises as the organized expression of working class spontaneity, and she condemned Lenin’s “ultra-centralism”, which is based on a concept of
discipline that is characteristic of the capitalist system:

“The discipline Lenin has in mind is being implanted in the working class not only by the factory but also by the military and the existing state bureaucracy – by the entire mechanism of the centralized
bourgeois state.

“We misuse words and we practice self-deception when we apply the same term – discipline – to such dissimilar notions as: 1. the absence of thought and will in a body with a thousand automatically moving hands and legs, and 2. the spontaneous
coordination of the conscious, political acts of a body of men. What is there in common between the regulated docility of an oppressed class and the self-discipline and organization of a class struggling for its emancipation?

“The self-discipline of the Social Democracy
is not merely the replacement of the authority of bourgeois rulers with the authority of a socialist central committee. The working class will acquire the sense of the new discipline, the freely assumed self-discipline of the Social Democracy, not as a result of the discipline imposed on it by the
capitalist state, but by extirpating, to the last root, its old habits of obedience and servility....

“... The ultra-centralism asked by Lenin is full of the sterile spirit of the overseer. It is not a positive and creative spirit.”
As for the relations between the organization and the struggle, Rosa Luxemburg conceived them in a way that is very similar to the way Marx viewed them when he was inspired by the experience of the proletariat (1848, 1871) rather than by the conclusions he drew from his analysis of the political panorama of his time (see the discussion of the concept of the “permanent revolution”
above). Not only did she understand the organization as a product of the struggle, before it could become, eventually, its “active factor”, but she also stressed the conservative nature of every mass organization constructed in advance, prior to the struggle, and therefore its role as a constraint on, but also as an opponent of, the spontaneous movement as a whole. Having observed and
analyzed the movements of 1896, 1901 and 1903 in Russia, as she would later observe and analyze the revolution of 1905, she wrote:

“Our cause made great gains in these events. However, the initiative and conscious leadership of the Social Democratic organizations played an
insignificant role in this development. It is true that these organizations were not specifically prepared for such happenings. However, the unimportant part played by the revolutionists cannot be explained by this fact. Neither can it be attributed to the absence of an all-
powerful central party apparatus similar to what is asked for by Lenin. The existence of such a guiding center would have probably increased the disorder of the local committees by emphasizing the difference between the eager attack of the mass and the prudent position of the Social Democracy. The same
phenomenon – the insignificant part played by the initiative of central party organs in the elaboration of actual tactical policy – can be observed today in Germany and other countries. In general, the tactical policy of the Social Democracy is not something that may be ‘invented’. It is the product of a series
of great creative acts of
the often spontaneous
class struggle seeking
its way forward.

“The unconscious
comes before the
conscious. The logic of
the historic process
comes before the
subjective logic of the
human beings who
participate in the
historic process. The
tendency is for the directing organs of the socialist party to play a conservative role. Experience shows that every time the labor movement wins new terrain those organs work it to the utmost. They transform it at the same time into a kind of bastion, which holds up advance on a wider scale.”
Subjecting all theory to the “test of the facts” and increasingly basing her analyses on the lessons learned from various past experiences, which arose in accordance with the objective conditions, Rosa Luxemburg determined that in order to understand the real movement, it is necessary to understand a process in which all phenomena,
including the organization, are interconnected and contribute to the development of the future conditions of their supersession:

“No constitutional project can claim infallibility. It must prove itself in fire....”

“... nothing is more contrary to the historic-
dialectic method of Marxist thought than to separate social phenomena from their historic soil and to present these phenomena as abstract formulas having an absolute, general application.”

Luxemburg therefore denounced all pretentions to possess a programmatic view
of the workers movement:

“That is why it is illusory, and contrary to historic experience, to hope to fix, once and for always, the direction of the revolutionary socialist struggle with the aid of formal means, which are expected to secure the labor movement against all possibilities
of opportunist digression.

“Marxist theory offers us a reliable instrument enabling us to recognize and combat typical manifestations of opportunism. But the socialist movement is a mass movement. Its perils are not the product of the insidious machinations of
individuals and groups. They arise out of unavoidable social conditions. We cannot secure ourselves in advance against all possibilities of opportunist deviation. Such dangers can be overcome only by the movement itself – certainly with the aid of Marxist theory, but only after the dangers
in question have taken tangible form in practice.”

In opposition to all the possessors of the Truth who, in the image of the Central Committee of the RSDWP, claimed to embody the historic Program of the proletariat, replacing the proletariat, Rosa Luxemburg restored the preeminence of the real movement. Like
Marx, before he cast his lot with the social democracy by backing the Gotha Program (1875) despite his confidential criticisms, she insisted on the fact—at the end of her text, in one of the most anti-religious and anti-ideological passages in the history of the revolutionary movement—that “the emancipation of the workers will be the task of the workers themselves” (Article
“In time we see appear on the scene an even more ‘legitimate’ child of history – the Russian labor movement. For the first time, bases for the formation of a real ‘people’s will’ are laid in Russian soil.

“But here is the ‘ego’ of the Russian
revolutionary again! Pirouetting on its head, it once more proclaims itself to be the all-powerful director of history – this time with the title of His Excellency the Central Committee of the Social Democratic Party of Russia.

“The nimble acrobat fails to perceive that
the only ‘subject’ which merits today the role of director is the collective ‘ego’ of the working class. The working class demands the right to make its mistakes and learn the dialectic of history.

“Let us speak plainly. Historically, the errors committed by a truly revolutionary
movement are infinitely more fruitful than the infallibility of the cleverest Central Committee.”

Having restored the only true historical subject—the proletariat itself—Rosa Luxemburg also foresaw with extreme lucidity the consequences of an elitist view of the revolutionary process:
“If we assume the viewpoint claimed as his own by Lenin and we fear the influence of intellectuals in the proletarian movement, we can conceive of no greater danger to the Russian party than Lenin’s plan of organization. Nothing will more surely enslave a young labor
movement to an intellectual elite hungry for power than this bureaucratic straightjacket, which will immobilize the movement and turn it into an automaton manipulated by a Central Committee. On the other hand there is no more effective guarantee against opportunistic intrigue
and personal ambition than the independent revolutionary action of the proletariat, as a result of which the workers acquire the sense of political responsibility and self-reliance."

In an article published in *Neue Zeit* (Vol. XII, 1903-1904, No. 2) under the title,
“Hopes Dashed”, she also insisted on the immanent nature of the class consciousness characteristic of the proletarian movement:

“For this reason, the inherent intelligence of the masses with respect to their tasks and the means to carry them to fruition is, for socialist action, an
indispensable historical precondition, just as the unconsciousness of the masses in other times was the precondition for the actions of the ruling classes.”

Here, one sees the whole fundamental difference between such a concept of class consciousness and the one expounded by Lenin in
What Is To Be Done? based on the Marxist ideology propagated by Engels and Kautsky (see the preceding part of this essay).

In her critique of the party’s leaders, Rosa Luxemburg denounced the role played by the decrees of the party apparatus. Thus, she did not hesitate to publicize the contents of letters sent to her by various social democratic
leaders (Molkenburg, Kautsky, Bebel). Furious over not being able to filter the information being sent to his “troops” according to his own criteria, Bebel, during the proceedings of the Congress at Jena in 1911, accused Rosa Luxemburg of committing a “serious indiscretion” and declared, “From that moment on I swore—not so much to cease writing to Comrade
Luxemburg, which would be impossible—but never to write anything of which she might later be able to make use....” (!), adding, “You have managed to get us to agree with the opinion which the International Socialist Bureau has of you” (quoted by J. P. Nettl in La vie et l'oeuvre de Rosa Luxemburg [The Life and Works of Rosa Luxemburg], Maspero, Protokoll, pp. 216-217, at the
When it was her turn to speak, Rosa Luxemburg replied by justifying her demand for transparency in all correspondence, as opposed to the policy of secrecy established by the elite of the leaders of the
German Social Democracy:

“I do not only dispute the fact that it is an indiscretion on the part of a party member to take issue in public with the activities of the party executive in the interests of the entire party, but I go further and declare: the party executive has been guilty of neglect
of duty, of not putting the whole case before us. It was its duty to publish the correspondence and to submit it to the criticism of the party. Quite honestly we are not dealing simply with formalities, but with a big question....."

(Ibid.)
Although she never questioned the very existence of a “leadership”, as is demonstrated by her persistence in maintaining the concept of the Party, her practice of political clarity as a fundamental condition for revolutionary effectiveness led her to break with one of the typical aspects of the social democratic *modus operandi* that Marx had pioneered (recall the
“private” character of Marx’s correspondence with the leaders of the Eisenach Party and some of his critical texts, such as the work directed against the preconditions for the merger with the Lassalleans at the Congress of Gotha. See “The Social Democratic Concept of the Party”, above).

In fact, the source of this particular aspect of Rosa
Luxemburg’s outlook was always her experience with the Polish Left since the 1880s (in the “Proletariat Party”), particularly in association with Leo Jogisches. The SDKPIL (Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania) functioned, in effect, in a much less “centralist” manner than the German Social Democratic
Party or the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party (under the sway of its Bolshevik fraction). Its internal relations were consistently maintained in accordance with egalitarian standards rather than in the form of a discipline that was imposed via the mediation of “official channels” (conferences, committees). The cohesion of the Polish organization did not prevent
militants or sections from taking the initiative.

As Nettl points out:

“Far from being an accidental lacuna in the party’s administration, this haphazard informality was deliberate and jealously guarded” [p. 264 in the English edition cited above]; “Where both
the Germans and the Russians automatically referred to their ‘party’, members of the Polish elite preferred to call themselves a ‘society’ (Stowarzyszenie)—at least in private communications to each other” [p. 265 in the English edition].

The experience of 1905 in
Russia, moreover, would lead Rosa Luxemburg to amplify and confirm the validity her theory of working class spontaneity, class consciousness and revolutionary organization.

It must be pointed out that Rosa Luxemburg participated effectively in the first Russian revolution. On December 28, 1905, bearing false documentation, she
travelled to Warsaw. When the movement was defeated, she was arrested (March 1906) and, after a few months in prison, she was released in July of 1906.

It should also be kept in mind that her theories concerning the revolutionary spontaneity of the proletariat and the mass organization to which it gives rise were elaborated immediately in the wake of
the mass strikes of 1902 and 1913 in Belgium. With regard to these strikes, Rosa Luxemburg criticized the ideas and the practice of the leaders of the Belgian Social Democracy, particularly its popular leader, E. Vandervelde:

“The history of all preceding revolutions shows us that broad popular movements, far
from being arbitrary and deliberate products of alleged ‘leaders’ or ‘parties’, as the policeman and the official bourgeois historian think, are instead elemental social phenomena produced by a natural force whose source lies in the class nature of modern society. The rise of social
democracy has changed nothing with regard to this state of affairs, and its role does not consist, furthermore, in prescribing laws for the historical evolution of the class struggle but rather, to the contrary, in placing itself at the service of these laws, in willingly submitting to them. If the social democracy were to
oppose revolutions that arise as a matter of historical necessity, the only result would be to have transformed the social democracy from a vanguard to a rearguard, an impotent obstacle standing in the way of the class struggle which, in the final accounting, will be victorious more or less effectively without
it and, if need be, against it.”

(Response to the Letter Sent by Vandervelde to Neue Zeit, May 14, 1902).

“The revolutionary energy of the masses does not allow itself to be bottled up and a great popular struggle does not allow itself to
be led like a military parade. One of two things will happen: either it will provoke a political assault of the masses or, more precisely, since such an assault is not provoked artificially, the excited masses allow themselves to go on the offensive, and they need to do everything possible to make this
assault even more impetuous, more formidable, and more concentrated; but then no one has the right, just at the moment when the assault is launched, to postpone it for nine months to prepare the masses for battle. Or else the masses choose not to launch a general assault, but then a mass
strike is a game that is lost in advance.”

(Article in the Leipziger Volkszeitung, No. 112, May 19, 1913). 51

Against the outspoken opposition of the German Social Democracy to any consideration of the strike as “an elemental form of revolution” (letter to
Henriette Roland-Holst, October 2, 1905), she decided to write the text that was later published as a pamphlet, “The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions”. In addition to an always powerful and evocative description of the events that shook Russia, she tried to reveal the fundamental lessons that justified the revolutionary
battles that were fought and which she sought to extend against the opposition of the majority, “orthodox” politics (Kautsky) of the Social Democracy of every country (the Second International):

“… in the mass strikes in Russia the element of spontaneity plays such a predominant part, not because the Russian proletariat are
‘uneducated’, but because revolutions do not allow anyone to play the schoolmaster with them….

“… With the psychology of a trade unionist who will not stay off his work on May Day unless he is assured in advance of a definite amount of support in the event of
his being victimised, neither revolution nor mass strike can be made. But in the storm of the revolutionary period even the proletarian is transformed from a provident *pater familias* demanding support, into a ‘revolutionary romanticist’, for whom even the highest good, life itself, to say
nothing of material well-being, possesses but little in comparison with the ideals of the struggle....

“... The rigid, mechanical-bureaucratic conception cannot conceive of the struggle save as the product of organisation at a certain stage of its
strength. On the contrary, the living, dialectical explanation makes the organisation arise as a product of the struggle. We have already seen a grandiose example of this phenomenon in Russia, where a proletariat almost wholly unorganised created a comprehensive network
of organisational appendages in a year-and-a-half of stormy revolutionary struggle....

“... Six months of a revolutionary period will complete the work of the training of these as yet unorganised masses which ten years of public demonstrations and
distribution of leaflets would be unable to do. And when conditions in Germany have reached the critical stage for such a period, the sections which are today unorganised and backward will, in the struggle, prove themselves the most radical, the most impetuous element, and not one that will have
to be dragged along. If it should come to mass strikes in Germany it will almost certainly not be the best organised workers – and most certainly not the printers – who will develop the greatest capacity for action, but the worst organised or totally unorganised – the miners, the textile workers, and perhaps
even the land workers.”

With her rediscovery of the positive aspects of Marx’s concept of organization, Rosa Luxemburg not only broke with the anarchosyndicalist view of the general strike, but also articulated the framework for the supersession of the social democratic ideology and its Bolshevik subsidiary:
The revolutionary mass organization can only be a consequence, rather than a premise, of working class movements and action;

This type of organization, the product of the struggle, therefore represents the real autonomous
movement of the proletariat as a whole, which Marx still called the “political party of the working class”, but in the historical sense, since it was “springing up naturally out of the soil of modern society” (Letter to Freiligrath, February 29, 1860) in the great
periods when, in a generalized confrontation, the fundamental antagonism between the proletariat and capital finally explodes.

But this “return to Marx” was not enough. The new period that was opening up necessitated a critical, in-depth reappraisal of Marx’s
theories; otherwise there would be a major risk of running aground on their negative aspects, i.e., the ones that contributed to Marx’s accommodation with social democracy. Unlike her analysis of the national question (as well as its consequences for the revolutionary process in Russia and all over the world) in which she did not hesitate to question the “old
ideas” of Marx-Engels or to challenge the “right of peoples to self-determination” proclaimed by Lenin’s fraction ... and by President Wilson of the United States in his Fourteen Points for peace released in January 1918 ... but also unlike her analysis in The Accumulation of Capital (the problem of realizing surplus value) in which she capably criticized the shortcomings
of Marx’s economic analysis with relation to the roots of crisis in the imperialist period (saturation of markets, exacerbation of competition), Rosa Luxemburg proved to be largely incapable of making any theoretical progress with respect to the question of organization.

The impact of the errors of the “Marxist concept of the Party” on Rosa Luxemburg
Despite the rise of the Soviets (workers councils) in 1905—a phenomenon that she does not analyze in her pamphlet on the mass strike—Rosa Luxemburg still employed the term, “Party”, to describe the movement of the proletariat as a whole that tended to organize itself by virtue of its revolutionary spontaneity:
“In this way we arrive at the same conclusions in Germany in relation to the peculiar tasks of direction in relation to the role of social democracy in mass strikes, as in our analysis of events in Russia. If we now leave the pedantic scheme of demonstrative mass strikes artificially brought about by order
of parties and trade unions, and turn to the living picture of a peoples’ movement arising with elementary energy, from the culmination of class antagonisms and the political situation – a movement which passes, politically as well as economically, into mass struggles and mass strikes – it
becomes obvious that the task of social democracy does not consist in the technical preparation and direction of mass strikes, but, first and foremost, in the political leadership of the whole movement.”

(“The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions”)
In effect, her concept of the revolutionary process stresses the insufficiency of the means utilized by the Social Democracy in the preceding period (parliamentarism and trade unionism) in the face of the needs of the coming proletarian revolution and in relation to the latter’s essential weapon: the mass strike. Rosa Luxemburg
therefore persisted in harboring illusions about the “left wing of social democracy” that wanted to save the “orthodox center” (Bebel, Kautsky) from the influence of “revisionist” theories and their leading advocate, E. Bernstein. Thus, she did not criticize the essential foundations of social democratic politics and tactics: participation in elections and parliament, and
development of the trade unions to serve as transmission belts for the Party. From her point of view, there were still some democratic demands that the working class should continue to try to realize in the stead of the bourgeoisie which had proven to be incapable of performing this role, and first of all, the German and Russian bourgeoisie (the democratic
phase). The theme of the mass strike would also tend, if it were to be accepted by the majority of the delegates of the Second International (the goal of the resolutions proposed by the left wing current at the Congresses of the Second International), to immunize the social democratic parties of every country against deviations caused by parliamentary practice and its corollaries:
reformism, legalism, revisionism.

That is why—despite her noteworthy lucidity that led her to say, "The present revolution realises in the particular affairs of absolutist Russia the general results of international capitalist development, and appears not so much as the last successor of the old bourgeois revolutions as the
forerunner of the new series of proletarian revolutions of the West” (see “The Mass Strike…”)—Rosa Luxemburg supported the “Marxist concept” of “permanent revolution” that Trotsky would define as the “transformation of the bourgeois revolution into the proletarian revolution” (!).

Although she revealed the unity of economic and
political struggles against the previous separation crystallized in the form of Party/Trade Unions, she still restricted her perspective on the process of mass struggles to the framework of democratic demands that had to be satisfied in order to eliminate the remnants of feudalism:

“This contradictory situation finds
expression in the fact that in this formally bourgeois revolution, the antagonism of bourgeois society to absolutism is governed by the antagonism of the proletariat to bourgeois society, that the struggle of the proletariat to bourgeois society is directed simultaneously and with equal energy.
against both absolutism and capitalist exploitation, and that the programme of the revolutionary struggle concentrates with equal emphasis on political freedom, the winning of the eight-hour day, and a human standard of material existence for the proletariat. This two-fold character of the Russian Revolution
is expressed in that close union of the economic with the political struggle and in their mutual interaction which we have seen is a feature of the Russian events and which finds its appropriate expression in the mass strike.”

(Ibid.)
Nor did the outbreak of the first imperialist world war in 1914 and the obvious collapse of the social democracy—which dragged the working class into that charnel house after having first integrated it into capitalism and then shackled it to the defense of the national state (in one or another imperialist camp)—cause Rosa Luxemburg to become aware of the errors
of that “Marxist concept” of “permanent revolution”.

On the basis of the historical evolution that had led to the industrialization of Russia, and therefore to the predominant class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, she expertly denounced the utilization on the part of the Social Democracy of a previous analysis by Marx who viewed
Russian Czarism, beginning in 1848, as the “shield of European reaction” which had to be undermined by supporting struggles for national liberation, especially the demand for Polish independence:

“After the social democratic group had stamped the war as a war of defence for the German nation and
European culture, the social democratic press proceeded to hail it as the ‘saviour of the oppressed nations’. Hindenburg became the executor of Marx and Engels.”

At the same time that she exposed the Social Democracy’s ploy that consisted in placing “the last
will and testament” of Marx at the service of Prussian militarism, she was still attached to the “Marxist” view of 1848 of a national program (according to which the concept of internationalism nonetheless imposes upon the proletarian process the need to follow the capitalist and bourgeois road of the “seizure of political power” or “the conquest of State power”
within the borders of each country):

“‘Yes, socialists should defend their country in great historical crises, and here lies the great fault of the German social democratic Reichstag group. When it announced on the fourth of August, ‘in this hour of danger, we will not desert our
fatherland,' it denied its own words in the same breath. For truly it has deserted its fatherland in its hour of greatest danger. The highest duty of the social democracy toward its fatherland demanded that it expose the real background of this imperialist war, that it rend the net of
imperialist and diplomatic lies that covers the eyes of the people. It was their duty to speak loudly and clearly, to proclaim to the people of Germany that in this war victory and defeat would be equally fatal, to oppose the gagging of the fatherland by a state of siege, to demand that the people
alone decide on war and peace, to demand a permanent session of parliament for the period of the war, to assume a watchful control over the government by parliament, and over parliament by the people, to demand the immediate removal of all political inequalities, since only
a free people can adequately govern its country, and finally, to oppose to the imperialist war, based as it was upon the most reactionary forces in Europe, the program of Marx, of Engels, and Lassalle.

“That was the flag that should have waved over the country. That
would have been truly national, truly free, in harmony with the best traditions of Germany and the international class policy of the proletariat.”

(“The Junius Pamphlet”)

These kinds of illusions would continue to be deeply rooted in Rosa Luxemburg
right up until the end, despite her position, which was radical, on the national question properly speaking. Thus, in her pamphlet on “The Russian Revolution” (1918), published posthumously by Levi, while articulating a series of radical critiques of the Bolsheviks and their directives, which she defined as “petty bourgeois” (the
right of peoples to self-determination, the land to the peasants...), she still persisted in her defense of bourgeois democracy because of her support for elections and the Constituent Assembly:

"It is precisely the revolution which creates by its glowing heat that delicate, vibrant, sensitive
political atmosphere in which the waves of popular feeling, the pulse of popular life, work for moment on the representative bodies in most wonderful fashion. It is on this very fact, to be sure, that the well-known moving scenes depend which invariably present themselves in the first
stages of every revolution, scenes in which old reactionaries or extreme moderates, who have issued out of a parliamentary election by limited suffrage under the old regime, suddenly become the heroic and stormy spokesmen of the uprising.” (!)
pointed out that, compared to 1905, she recognized the importance of the soviets and structures of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and called attention to the withering away of all political life within them due to the seizure of power by the Bolshevik Party:

“... in reality only a dozen outstanding heads do the leading
and an elite of the working class is invited from time to time to meetings where they are to applaud the speeches of the leaders, and to approve proposed resolutions unanimously – at bottom, then, a clique affair – a dictatorship, to be sure, not the dictatorship of the proletariat but only the
dictatorship of a handful of politicians, that is a dictatorship in the bourgeois sense, in the sense of the rule of the Jacobins (the postponement of the Soviet Congress from three-month periods to six-month periods!).”

(“The Russian Revolution”
Furthermore, clearly distinguishing her position from the official positions of Social Democracy, she insisted on the absolute necessity of an effective dictatorship of the proletariat in order to realize socialism, which, however, is totally incompatible, despite her denials, with her superannuated support for the forms of formal democracy:
“The proletariat, when it seizes power, can never follow the good advice of Kautsky, given on the pretext of the ‘unripeness of the country’, the advice being to renounce socialist revolution and devote itself to democracy. It cannot follow this advice without betraying thereby itself, the
International, and the revolution. It should and must at once undertake socialist measures in the most energetic, unyielding and unhesitant fashion, in other words, exercise a dictatorship, but a dictatorship of the class, not of a party or of a clique – dictatorship of the class, that means in the
broadest possible form on the basis of the most active, unlimited participation of the mass of the people, of unlimited democracy.”

(Ibid.)

Foundering amidst the errors of the “Marxist concept” of the Party without being able to overcome them, despite the succession of major
events that would moreover radically alter the political and economic landscape (world war, Russian Revolution), Rosa Luxemburg would cling to the idea of regenerating the existing proletarian Party (the Social Democracy and the Second International). Despite her bitter criticisms of Kautsky, whose famous "orthodoxy" she had understood long before 1914
to be in fact an ideological screen for Bernstein’s “revisionism”, she nonetheless accepted the merger of the “Gruppe Internationale”, and then, the “Spartakusbund”, with the independent Social Democrats who had split from the official Social Democracy in January 1917 and formed their own Party (the USPD) in April of that same year. The eruption of
the mass movement in Germany (Autumn 1918) was necessary to induce Rosa Luxemburg to finally apply the positive aspects of the “Marxist concept” of the Party. She turned her “return to Marx” into practice by denouncing the social democratic policies in her speech on the program of the Spartacus League or German Communist Party, which was founded between December
30, 1918 and January 1, 1919, for the most part by the merger of the Spartacists with the IKD (the International Communists of Germany):

“... [after the death of Engels] the theoretical leadership unfortunately passed into the hands of Kautsky. The result of this was that at every
annual Party congress the energetic protests of the left wing against the policy of parliamentarism-only, its tenacious struggle against the sterility of such a policy whose dangerous results must be clear to everyone, were stigmatized as anarchism, anarcho-socialism, or at least anti-Marxism. What
passed officially for Marxism became a cloak for all the hesitations, for all the turnings-away from the actual revolutionary class struggle, for every halfway measure which condemned German Social Democracy, the labor movement in general, and also the trade unions, to vegetate
within the framework and on the terrain of capitalist society without any serious attempt to shake or throw that society out of gear…..

“… What true Marxism is has now become plain; and what ersatz Marxism, which has so long been the official Marxism of Social
Democracy, has been is also clear. [Applause] You see what Marxism of that sort leads to – to the Marxism of those who are the henchmen of Ebert, David, and company…. No, Marxism could not lead in this direction, could not lead to counter-revolutionary activities side by side with men such as Scheidemann.
True Marxism fights also against those who seek to falsify it....

“... Today, circumstances allow us to finally say in our program: ‘The immediate task of the proletariat is none other than making socialism a reality and a fact and destroying capitalism, root and
branch!’ We stand on the terrain upon which Marx and Engels stood in 1848. The historical dialectic returns us to the point where Marx and Engels found themselves when they first displayed the banner of international socialism….

“… Here, comrades, you have the general
foundation of the program we are officially adopting today, whose outline you have to read in the pamphlet ‘What Does the Spartacus League Want?’ Our program is deliberately opposed to the standpoint of the Erfurt Program; it is deliberately opposed to the separation of the immediate, so-called
minimal demands formulated for the political and economic struggle from the socialist goal regarded as a maximal program. In this deliberate opposition [to the Erfurt Program] we liquidate the results of seventy years’ evolution and above all, the immediate results of the World
War, in that we say: For us there is no minimal and no maximal program; socialism is one and the same thing: this is the minimum we have to realize today.”

(See “Rosa Luxemburg and Her Doctrine”, *op. cit.* [in English: https://www.marxists.org]
While the preeminence of the real movement called for the supersession of the “Marxist concept” of organization, including its positive yet limited aspects, the organizational concept of the Spartacus League/KPD was still based on the Party. Contrary to her analysis of the 1905 events in Russia, however, Rosa Luxemburg, in connection with the lessons of 1917 in Russia,
affirmed the central role of the workers councils:

“From this consideration follows what we have to do to insure the presuppositions of the success of the revolution. I would summarize our next tasks as follows: First and foremost, we have to extend in all
directions the system of workers’ and soldiers’ councils....
You are aware that the counter-revolution has been engaged in the systematic destruction of the system of workers’ and soldiers’ councils....

“... The workers will learn in the school of action.
“Our motto is: In the beginning was the act. And the act must be that the workers’ and soldiers’ councils realize their mission and learn to become the sole public power of the whole nation. Only in this way can we mine the ground so that it will be ready for the revolution which will
crown our work. This, comrades, is the reason, this is the clear calculation and clear consciousness which led some of us, and me in particular, to say yesterday, ‘Don’t think that the struggle will continue to be so easy.’ Some comrades have interpreted me as saying that they wanted to boycott the National
Assembly and simply to fold their arms. It is impossible in the time that remains, to discuss this matter fully, but let me say that I never dreamed of anything of the kind. My meaning was that history is not going to make our revolution an easy matter like the bourgeois revolutions in which it sufficed to
overthrow that official power at the center and to replace a dozen or so persons in authority. We have to work from beneath, and this corresponds to the mass character of our revolution which aims at the foundation and base of the social constitution; it corresponds to the character of the present
proletarian revolution that the conquest of political power must come not from above but from below. The 9th of November was an attempt, a weak, half-hearted, half-conscious, and chaotic attempt to overthrow the existing public power and to put an end to class rule. What now must be done is that
with full consciousness all the forces of the proletariat should be concentrated in an attack on the very foundations of capitalist society. There, at the base, where the individual employer confronts his wage slaves; at the base, where all the executive organs of political class rule
confront the object of this rule, the masses; there, step by step, we must seize the means of power from the rulers and take them into our own hands.”

(See Rosa Luxemburg’s speech on the Program [“Our Program and the Political Situation”], ibid.)
One can therefore see that Rosa Luxemburg began to conceive of the organization of the proletariat as a whole as something distinct from a Party, even from a Party that is the product of the real movement. But she still conceived of a “final goal” that involved the “conquest of political power”. In her view, the social revolution as the immediate agenda, and
communism seen as the work of the masses themselves, therefore still needed the “political leadership” of a Consciousness-Fraction, a Party-elite that held the keys of history thanks to its possession of the “Credo”, that is, the communist Program.

Enlightenment philosophy was still wreaking havoc: the concept of the revolutionary
organization, even understood as a product of the real movement, still did not go as far as to break totally with the Logic of Reason introduced into History.

“The Spartacus League is not a party that wants to rise to power over the mass of workers or through them.
“The Spartacus League is only the most conscious, purposeful part of the proletariat, which points the entire broad mass of the working class toward its historical tasks at every step, which represents in each particular stage of the Revolution the ultimate socialist goal, and in all national questions the
interests of the proletarian world revolution....

“... The Spartacus League will never take over governmental power except in response to the clear, unambiguous will of the great majority of the proletarian mass of all of Germany, never except by the
proletariat’s conscious affirmation of the views, aims, and methods of struggle of the Spartacus League....

“... The victory of the Spartacus League comes not at the beginning, but at the end of the Revolution: it is identical with the victory of the great
million-strong masses of the socialist proletariat.”

(“What Does the Spartacus League Want?” [in English: https://www.marxists.org]

The counterrevolution fomented by the social democratic government and prosecuted by its “bloodhound”, Noske, at the
command of detachments of hired assassins, crushed the uprising in Berlin in January 1919. Murdered like Karl Liebknecht and thousands of workers and other revolutionaries, Rosa Luxemburg could not contribute to the process of further clarification that subsequently took place in the German Left concerning the problem of organization, but the milestones for which
she was responsible were the starting points of the development of this process.

2. The further development of the “ultra-left” concept of “the Party”

“This task is: to lead the masses to where they will no longer need the example and the leadership of a specially organized
group, of a political-spiritual aristocracy; to render themselves unnecessary. The communists labor in order to prepare for their own disappearance.”

(Henriette Roland-Holst, “The Communist Left and the Resolutions of the Second Congress of the
Communist International”, published in 1921 in *Kommunismus*, the official journal of the Communist International for Central and Southern Europe; up until 1921, this journal published the texts of the left communist currents [in English: https://www.marxists.or
“In as much as the Unions, as the class organisation of the proletariat, strengthen themselves after the victory of the revolution and become capable of consolidating the economic foundations of the dictatorship in
the form of the system of councils, they will increase in importance in relation to the party. Later on, in as much as the dictatorship of the proletariat is assured thanks to being rooted in the consciousness of the broad masses, the party loses its importance against the workers’ councils. Finally, to the extent
that the safeguarding of the revolution by political violence becomes unnecessary, in as much as the masses finally change their dictatorship into a communist society, the party ceases to exist.”

(Thesis No. 16 of the KAPD’s “Theses on the Role of the Party in the Proletarian
It was by affirming the preeminence of the real movement of the proletariat that the “ultra-left” concept of the Party underwent further development. In effect, by going beyond the limits of a simple “return to Marx” of the kind undertaken by Rosa Luxemburg, the German-Dutch Left would
produce a clear theoretical analysis of the postulate that the movement of the class as a whole is organized in workers councils, the spontaneous product of its revolutionary struggle, rather than in a political Party. Even if it preserved the name, “Party” (apart from Otto Rühle and the AAUD-E), to designate the group of revolutionaries, the contribution of this Party at
this point begins to be fully contextualized and viewed from a new perspective:

“The Communist Workers Party of Germany is not a traditional party. Its essential work will consist of supporting the emancipation of the proletariat from every leadership....”
a) From the weekly newspaper, De Tribune, to the IKD (International Communists of Germany)

The disputes that would later culminate in the first organizational splits in the Social Democracy began in
Holland after the major strikes of the longshoremen and railroad workers in 1903. The left wing tendency that was opposed to the leadership of the Party (the SADP), and especially the Party’s leader, the lawyer Troelstra, advocated support for “the revolutionary energy of the masses”, and in 1905 obtained approval of a resolution that prohibited any parliamentary support for the
liberal bourgeois government. The situation was further aggravated by the Party leadership’s violation of this resolution. The two main theoreticians of the left, Anton Pannekoek (1873-1960) and Herman Gorter (1864-1927), published their critiques of “opportunism” in *De Nieuwe Tijd*, the Party’s theoretical journal, which they controlled at the time. Later, in 1907, the
“minority” obtained an independent platform for their ideas, the weekly *De Tribune* (hence the name, “Tribunists”, by which they were known at the time) and, two years later, the organizational split took place. The “new Party” (the SPD), however, was still situated on the terrain of elections (thus, in 1913 it obtained one-tenth as many votes as the SDAP) and
sought to coordinate its activities with those of a trade union organization, the NAS (the National Labor Secretariat), a national federation of revolutionary syndicalist tendency founded in 1893 by the anarchist C. Cornelissen (see the appendix on anarchism and F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, above). Moreover, the Party still professed its allegiance to “orthodox Marxism” (!).
This is why Lenin was able to use the arguments of the Dutch Left for his own purposes in the International Socialist Bureau (see his article of December 1909 in the *Social Democrat*). As for Rosa Luxemburg, she wrote to her friend, Henriette Roland-Holst (August 1908):

“A splintering of Marxists (not to be confused with
differences of opinion) is fatal…. We cannot stand outside the organization, outside contact with the masses. The worst working-class party is better than none.”

H. Roland-Holst then assumed an attitude that was similar to the one adopted by Trotsky after 1904: she formed an “independent group” that was associated with the newspaper, *De Tribune*, but did not join the SDP until after the Zimmerwald Conference in 1916.

Having arrived in Germany
in 1906 to teach the history of materialism and social theories at the Social Democratic Party’s school, Anton Pannekoek, who lived in Bremen after 1909, would gradually become the theoretical center of gravity for all the left wing factions. Thus, in a text entitled, “Tactical Differences within the Workers Movement”, he analyzed the basic
foundations of the reformist current in Social Democracy and emphasized the need to resort to mass action to develop class consciousness against opportunism. In 1910, numerous “street battles” focused the attention of the left on the large industrial centers and, beginning in March of the same year, Pannekoek began to publish a weekly commentary in the
newspaper of the Bremen Social Democratic Party, the *Bremer Bürger-Zeitung*. During this period he met Karl Radek, Johann Knief and Paul Frölich. Like Rosa Luxemburg, he engaged in a polemic exchange with Kautsky that would demonstrate that the latter’s “orthodox Marxism” was in fact a fig leaf for the revisionism that had arisen in the Social Democratic Party.
In addition to his articles in the Bremen daily newspaper, he also wrote articles for *Neue Zeit*, the theoretical journal of German, and international, Social Democracy. His polemic with Kautsky became particularly inflamed in July 1912 with his essay, “Mass Action and Revolution”. Pannekoek attacked the organizational fetishism that was characteristic of mass
parties formed within the capitalist system prior to the revolution:

“The proletariat’s organization—its most important source of strength—must not be confused with the present-day form of its organizations and associations, where it is shaped by conditions within the framework
of a still vigorous bourgeois order. The nature of this organization is something spiritual—no less than the whole transformation of the proletarian mentality. It may well be that the ruling class, through legal measures and the police, succeeds in destroying the workers’ organizations; but, for
all that, the workers will remain as they were—just as effectively stripped of the old individualistic self which responded only to egotism and personal interest. The same spirit, compounded of discipline, cooperation, solidarity, the habit of organized action, will live in them more
vividly than ever, and will create new forms of intervention.”

(Bricianer, ed., *Pannekoek and the Workers’ Councils*)

Pannekoek nonetheless makes no references in this essay to the new form of organization, the Soviet, which had made its debut in the Russian Revolution of
1905. In another article, however, “Marxist Theory and Revolutionary Tactics”, also published in *Neue Zeit*, in which he responded to Kautsky’s critiques, he elaborated on the new type of organization that he was attempting to define:

“What distinguishes the workers’ organisations from all others is the
development of solidarity within them as the basis of their power, the total subordination of the individual to the community, the essence of a new humanity still in the process of formation. The proletarian organisation brings unity to the masses, previously fragmented
and powerless, moulding them into an entity with a conscious purpose and with power in its own right. It lays the foundations of a humanity which governs itself, decides its own destiny, and as the first step in that direction, throws off alien oppression.”

(Bricianer, p. 115 [in
We have already discussed the way Lenin used this polemic in *The State and Revolution* (see above, “The Leninist, and Related Concepts…”); it is therefore unnecessary to discuss it in this context.

In 1913, in the context of the arms race and the nationalist
fever that was sweeping Europe, Pannekoek obviously concentrated all of his theoretical powers on denouncing imperialism and war. He had also been criticizing the increasing popularity of nationalist ideology within the workers movement for several years.

All the currents of the Social
Democracy that were against the war and opposed to the counterrevolutionary policy of the Second International met at the Zimmerwald Conference. The left wing “radicals” of Holland and Germany, along with the Bolsheviks, voted in favor of a resolution that called for an immediate break with the Social Democracy, to “transform the imperialist war into a civil war”, and to
found a new international. At the end of the conference, groups from Bremen, Brunswick and Berlin resolved to form the ISD, the “International Socialists of Germany”.

Pannekoek was a major influence on the Bremen group because of his theoretical work, while Radek played a similar role in the Brunswick group. In
Berlin, the left was organized around the journal, *Lichstrahlen* (Rays of Light), founded by Julian Borchardt in 1913.

There was also a left-wing group in Hamburg that was in close contact with the groups mentioned above, but did not participate in the Zimmerwald Conference and did not join the ISD (it joined the IKD in November 1918).
In fact, it was strongly influenced by the revolutionary syndicalist-type movement in the United States, the IWW (the Industrial Workers of the World). Wolffheim, one of the two leading theoreticians of this Hamburg group along with Laufenberg, had been an active member of the IWW in California for several years.
With the founding of the ISD, the left current’s leading journal was, at first, *Lichstrahlen*, and then, after *Lichstrahlen* was shut down by the German government in April 1916, this role was assumed by *Arbeiterpolitik* (Workers Politics), published in Bremen after the Social Democratic Party regained control over the *Bremer Bürger-Zeitung* in June of the same year.
This radical left-wing current would grow until November 1918, when it would assume the name of IKD, “International Communists of Germany”, and would then account for the majority of the delegates, compared to the Spartacist minority, at the founding Congress of the KPD, the “Communist Party of Germany”:
“Numerous individual members and entire sections of the Spartacus League were in agreement with the ISD’s views concerning the need to create a left radical organization totally independent of social democracy: the Dresden sections (Rühle), for example, and those of Frankfurt and Duisburg. One can
thus understand why, while it was less important during the war than Spartacus, the ISD—or at least its theses—enjoyed the support of the majority at the founding Congress of the German CP.

“The two touchstones of the left at the founding Congress of
the German CP would, in effect, be electoral abstentionism and sabotage of the trade unions. These two positions were arrived at by the ISD in the course of its theoretical development, greatly influenced by the workers movement during the war. It was in *Arbeiterpolitik* that, for the first time, the
watchword of the German Revolution appeared: *Heraus den Gewerkschaften!* (Out of the Trade Unions!), at first to be subjected to criticism, and later to be adopted. Much the same thing took place regarding the concept of the *unitary organization* which was expressed for the first time in 1917 in the
same journal. This idea would be re-appropriated and further elaborated by Wolffheim and Laufenberg, providing the first theoretical foundations of the AAU. But the German Left went beyond the IWW: instead of basing itself on economic organizations which rejected politics, it
wanted to positively overcome the rupture between political and economic organizations. Finally, the critique of social democracy and its methods led the ISD to the rejection of parliamentarism as a tactic which fatally led to the domination of the parliamentary delegation over the rest
of the Party which would thus become the instrument for purely electoral ends. The later theoretical elaborations of this current are clearly of great interest today: ‘World Revolution and Communist Tactics’, by Pannekoek, as well as three texts by Rühle: ‘The Revolution is Not a Party Matter!’,
Pannekoek and Gorter were unable to attend the Zimmerwald Conference, but, with H. Roland-Holst, they assumed responsibility for the publication of a joint
publication of the Left and the Bolsheviks. Two issues of a German language international journal were published: *Vorbote* (Herald). Pannekoek wrote the lead editorial for the first issue (January 1916) and also contributed an article, “Imperialism and the Tasks of the Proletariat”, which had also appeared previously in the Russian journal, *Kommunist*. Advocating new
tactics for action and the formation of a new international, he infused more depth into his critiques of the social democratic apparatus compared to the contents of his pre-war texts:

“It is an entrenched and gigantic organization, functioning almost as a State within the State, with its own officers, finances, press,
intellectual world and ideology (Marxism). The general character of this organisation is adapted to the peaceful pre-imperialist period; the mainstays of this character are the officials, secretaries, agitators, parliamentarians, theorists and writers, numbering several thousand individuals.
who already constitute a distinct caste, a group with their own interests who thereby totally dominate the organisation spiritually and materially. It is no coincidence that they all, with Kautsky at their head, want to know nothing about a real and fierce struggle against imperialism. All their vital interests
are opposed to the new tactic, which threatens their existence as officials. Their peaceful work in offices and editorial departments, in congresses and committee meetings, in writing learned and unlearned articles against the bourgeoisie and against each other—this whole peaceful
hustle and bustle is threatened by the storms of the imperialist era. Kautsky’s theory and tactics are an attempt to secure this whole bureaucratic-learned apparatus against injury in the coming social revolutions. Actually, it can only be saved by setting it apart from the din of battle,
beyond the revolutionary struggle, and thus outside of real life. If the Party and its leadership followed the tactics of mass-action, the state would immediately attack and perhaps destroy the organisations (the foundation of their entire existence and life activity), confiscate their funds
and arrest their leaders. Naturally, it would be an illusion if they believed that the power of the proletariat would also be broken that way: the organisational power of the workers does not consist in the outer form of institutional bodies but in their spirit of cohesion, discipline and unity, which would
enable them to create new and better forms of organisation. But that would be the end of the officials, because that organisational form is their entire world, and without it they can neither exist nor function. Accordingly, their instinct for self-preservation and their future corporate interests necessarily
compel them to [adopt] the tactic of evading [the issue of] imperialism and capitulating before it. What took place before the War and at the outbreak of the War is therefore not an abnormal accident. They say now—as they so often did in the past—that such dangerous mass-struggles will
ruin the organisation and therefore must not be undertaken wantonly. It follows that organisations led by them will never wage the struggle against imperialism resolutely and with all their might. Their struggle will be a verbal struggle, with indictments, pleas and entreaties, a sham-
struggle avoiding every actual fight. The best proof of this is provided precisely by Kautsky, who, after long wavering, took up the fight against social imperialism only simultaneously to call the workers’ street demonstrations an ‘adventure’. Therefore imperialism must be fought with words
alone, not by daring to undertake any action!

“Therefore, nothing more must be expected from the previous party-bureaucracy other than further rejection of the revolutionary struggle against imperialism. It will attempt to limit the struggle to small quarrels in parliament
and the press, to long speeches on small issues, to petty union-battles. Although the reformists are partisans of imperialism and the centrist radicals its opponents, they can remain together on a common line of mere criticism and inaction. They will attempt to turn the party into a bourgeois reform party,
into a Labour Party on the English pattern but with some socialist phrases; a party that will vigorously champion the daily interests of the workers but age no great revolutionary struggle.

“The task of showing the workers the importance and necessity of mass-

actions against imperialism, and of standing at their head on every occasion, enlightening, helping and leading them, devolves upon the revolutionary socialists. But if this new tactic is only propagated by minorities or small groups that do not yet have the masses behind
them, while, at the same time, the great mass-parties want to know nothing about it—will not any mass-action, which is inconceivable without the masses, be a utopia? This contradiction only proves that mass-actions are not possible as conscious, deliberately planned
actions, prepared and led by the Social-Democratic Party, as the extreme Left in Germany advocated in its propaganda in the years before the War. They will come as spontaneous actions, erupting from masses who are whipped up by hardship, misery and outrage: in one case, as the unintended
consequence of a small struggle planned by the Party that overflows its limits, in another, as an event that breaks out against the will and decisions of the organisations, breaching all discipline but then carrying these organisations along in their powerful swell and forcing them for a time to go along with
the revolutionary elements. The possibility cannot be excluded that, if the War continues for some time, something of that sort could soon take place. The symptoms are already discernible.

“In the coming period, therefore, the existing organisations (the Party
and trade-unions), by virtue of their whole nature and in contradiction with the goals and tasks of the proletarian masses, will probably play above all an inhibiting role. But, if the new tactic is ever more prevalent, and if the power of the proletariat gradually increases in great mass-struggles, these
organisations will no longer be able to play that role. Then the rigid, immovable bodies of the Party and the trade-unions will become an increasingly subordinate part within a broader class-movement and a larger class-organisation, which will bind together the masses—not through its
membership-book but through the community of class-goals—into a powerful community of struggle.”

(Bricianer, *op. cit.*)

In the long passage quoted above, the characteristic principles of what would subsequently become the ultra-left concept of organization are formulated:
- relevance of the spontaneity of the masses and the role of class consciousness;
- emergence of the mass institutions of the proletariat as products of the latter’s own revolutionary struggles;
- the responsibility for
“spiritual leadership” that is incumbent upon minorities, who must contribute to the self-organization of the working class.

Upon reading the passage quoted above one may also discern the aspects that the ultra-left concept has in common with the positive theoretical elements
discovered by Marx and rediscovered by Rosa Luxemburg. The fundamental break carried out by the German-Dutch Left with relation to the errors of these theoreticians is therefore situated essentially within the process of the re-contextualization of the role of revolutionary minorities. If the latter are still attributed with a “leadership” function, it is only in the
ambit of class consciousness: the mass organization of the proletariat in struggle no longer has anything to do with the party form!

In addition to the polemic over the national question and the right of peoples to self-determination, which would soon bring an end to work in common with the Bolsheviks (there would only be two issues of *Vorbote*), the
conflict with Lenin over the concept of the Party is contained in embryo in the ideas discussed above.

b) From the founding of the KPD (Communist Party of Germany) to the founding of the AAUD (General Workers Union of Germany) and the KAPD (Communist Workers Party of Germany)

Under the pressure of the
events arising from the democratic revolution of November 1918, the ISD became the IKD at a national conference held on November 24 of that same year. Just like the Spartacists, it propagated the slogan, “All Power to the Councils”, but did not have any confidence in the Councils of Workers and Soldiers in the forms they had assumed at that time. In effect, the IKD
emphasized from the very beginning the differences between the bourgeois revolution and the proletarian revolution. It therefore denounced the attempts to seize control over the mass institutions not only on the part of the Social Democratic Party, but also on the part of the “excluded” members of the Party who had formed the USPD (the Independents). The “Revolutionäre Obleute”
[Revolutionary Stewards] (RO) had in the meantime appeared in every part of the country, representing the factory organizations that had not obeyed the trade union directives during the war (prohibition of strikes). However, these factory delegates were controlled by the “Independents”, except in a few cities like Berlin and Hamburg, where the action committees were largely
composed of left radicals.

Gradually, over the course of the struggles of 1919, real autonomous factory organizations arose that would result in the creation of the *Unionen* and their national organization, the AAUD.

The IKD consented to a proposal made by Radek, who was responsible for
Bolshevik diplomacy in Germany after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, to found the Communist Party of Germany by merging with the Spartacus League, but only on the condition that the Spartacus League would make a clean break with the “Independents”. The founding congress of the new party was scheduled for December 30, 1918, which was also the day that the
Spartacus League was supposed to convene its Second National Conference (the First National Conference of the Spartacus League took place in October and had in fact resulted in the League breaking with the USPD). “What Does Spartacus Want?” was unanimously adopted as the Program of the new Party, which would be called the Communist Party of
Germany-Spartacus League. Concerning the questions of boycotting the elections and destroying the trade unions, left wing positions were held by the overwhelming majority of the delegates. The Party organization was supposed to mould its forms in accordance with the mass movement, in opposition to the centralism that was so characteristic of the Social Democracy, but there was
still a great deal of confusion with regard to the nature of the autonomous organization of the class. In effect, the KPD still conceived of itself as a leadership Party that must seize power (see “The impact of the errors of the Marxist concept of the Party on Rosa Luxemburg”, above), and it also harbored illusions about the Councils as they existed at the time. Thus, Hugo Eberlein, who
would be the Party’s delegate to the founding Congress of the Third International (he had been ordered to vote against the founding of the International, but he only abstained), declared:

“The old organizations were already in their names and in all their activity election societies…. we must begin to build up from
the bottom and create a basis for the organization.

“... when we support the workers councils, when we demand that they shall take in their hands all economical and political power, would it then not be useful, in connection to these workers and soldiers councils to
find the form of organization which for us will be the best and most desired. We demand from the workers that they shall establish shop councils, factory councils and industrial councils, which shall occupy themselves with the total administration of the factories, which in the coming
transformation of the whole state organism shall be able to take over all industry and not only that: They shall also have the political task to take the power in their hands, in order to represent the interests of the working class and carry through the demands of the working class; would it
then perhaps not be useful that we direct our attention to see if it is possible to build our party organization in such a way that we no longer organize our members solely according to where they live, but also in the factories, in the workshops, perhaps introduce our party organization in the
whole industry, that we elect our representatives in the factories and try to unify the representatives of the members in the factories into communities, to associations inside the factories.”

[Hugo Eberlein, “Report on Our
All the questions posed by the German revolution, and particularly that of the role of the organization of revolutionaries in relation to the institutions of the struggle of the proletariat, would only be clarified by
paying a high price in the form of the bloody repression of the mass movements between January and May of 1919. During this same period, the Hamburg Communist Workers Daily [Kommunistische Arbeiter-Zeitung], one of the leading newspapers of the radical left, published a series of theoretical articles on the question of “unionism” that were inspired by the
Wolffheim-Laufenberg tendency. The idea of the need for the dissolution of the Party into mass organizations, of the “union” type, which the Party must help to generalize, began to take definite shape. These Unionen were understood as indispensable bases for the rise of the future revolutionary councils, which is why the sole criterion for membership in the AAU was
acknowledgment of the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat. In Hamburg, on February 14, 1920, the Unionen resolved to unite; they founded the AAUD, with 80,000 members.

Meanwhile, the Third International, whose policy was then predominantly oriented towards the defense of the Russian State, was advocating a turn towards the
right on the part of the KPD, as part of its campaign to form mass “communist” parties in the West that would be capable of putting pressure on their bourgeois governments in favor of a policy of “neutrality” or negotiations with the USSR. This right turn was organized first of all by Levi and his circle, with the assistance of Radek: it was their intention to exclude all the radical
elements who, because they constituted the majority of the Party membership, stood in the way of a return to the old, more or less “new and improved”, social democratic tactics (participation in elections, working in the trade unions, etc.). At the Frankfurt conference of the KPD (in mid-August 1919), Levi launched his offensive against the unionist theories and against those who were
calling for the immediate or gradual dissolution of the Party. It was only during the course of the Heidelberg Congress, however, which met secretly between October 20 and 24, 1919, that, thanks to a preponderance of hand-picked delegates, the leadership succeeded in excluding the left-wing elements. In a text entitled, "Principal Theses on the Fundamentals of Communist
“Tactics”, which Levi distributed to the Party membership at the last minute, camouflaging his machinations behind the conditions of clandestinity, he clearly delineated the right-wing position on the concept of the Party:

“The idea that the party should abandon its leadership role in revolutionary actions,
in favor of factory organizations [a meaningless sort of discussion, since the German party, while it was revolutionary, never ‘led’ anything—N.B. of Authier/Barrot] and that the party should limit itself to propaganda, is counterrevolutionary because it seeks to replace the clear vision
of the workers vanguard with the chaotic power of the masses in a state of flux.”

[Authier and Barrot/Dauvé, The Communist Left in Germany.... See: https://www.marxists.or 1918-23/dauve-authier/ch10.htm#fn4.]
Levi and Radek then began to prepare for the merger of the KPD, now disencumbered of its “radicals”, with the left wing of the USPD, since the “Independents” represented several hundred thousand members (the unification congress, which created the VKPD, would take place on December 5, 1920). The former members of the KPD who once constituted its majority, expelled from the
Party as a result of the procedural chicanery of the pro-Bolshevik fraction, did not immediately organize their own Party: their positions were expressed in various journals such as *Die Aktion*, the Hamburg *Kommunistische-Arbeiter-Zeitung* (mentioned above), *Der Kommunist* in Bremen, etc.

It was events themselves that
would put Levi’s ideas to the test—the legalist attitude of the KPD during the “Kapp Putsch” (March 13-17, 1920), and its condemnation of the armed actions and the Ruhr insurrection (late March/early April 1920)—and which would cause the left majority opposition to resolve to found a new Party. Previously, it harbored illusions to the effect that it could obtain the support of
the Communist International, and it even sent delegates to the Third Congress of the KPD (February 1920) to propose amendments to the Heidelberg Theses and to vindicate the rights of the opposition vis-à-vis the leadership.

After abandoning all hope of re-joining to the Party, the leftists, at the instigation of the Berlin district led by
Gorter and Schröder, would then convene a conference of the left opposition. It was as a result of this Congress, attended by delegates representing 30,000 militants, that the KAPD, the Communist Workers Party of Germany, was founded (April 3-5, 1920). The majority of the delegates (Berlin) rejected the theses of "National Bolshevism" advocated by the Hamburg
theoreticians, Wolffheim and Laufenberg (in their view, the national defense of Germany against the consequences of the Versailles Treaty was a task for which the proletariat, in alliance with the bourgeoisie, would have to assume responsibility!). This majority would agree to a compromise with Otto Rühle’s tendency (Dresden), which wanted to dissolve the
Party-form immediately and advocated “the unitary organization”. This explains the statement that appears in the KAPD’s “Appeal to the German Proletariat”, “The KAPD is not a traditional party”; and also the fact that Rühle could write his text, “The Revolution Is Not a Party Affair”\(^{60}\) while he was still a member of the KAPD.
A program was drafted in May 1920 and was adopted at the KAPD’s Second Congress in August. The ultra-left concept of organization was not only theoretically formulated at that time, but applied in practice: the preeminence of the proletarian mass organization (*Unionen*, Councils), and the new perspective on the role of the revolutionary minority.
“Through its nature and its inherent tendencies the factory organisation serves communism and leads to the communist society. Its kernel will always be expressly communist, its struggle pushes everyone in the same direction. On the other hand, the programme of the party has to deal with social
reality in its widest sense; and the most serious intellectual qualities are demanded from party members. A political party like the KAPD, which goes forward and rapidly modifies itself in liaison with the world revolutionary process, can never have a great quantitative importance (if it is not to regress
and become corrupt). But the revolutionary masses are, on the contrary, united in the factory organisations through their class solidarity, through the consciousness of belonging to the proletariat. It is this which organically prepares the unity of the proletariat; whereas on the basis of a party...
programme alone this unity is never possible. The factory organisation is the beginning of the communist form and becomes the foundation of the communist society to come.

““The factory organisation carries out its tasks in close union with the KAPD. 
“The political organisation has the task of bringing together the most advanced elements of the working class on the basis of the party programme.

“The relationship of the party to the factory organisation comes from the nature of the
factory organisation. The work of the KAPD inside these organisations will be that of an unflagging propaganda, as well as putting forward the slogans of the struggle. The revolutionary cadres in the factory become the mobile arm of the party. Further, it is naturally necessary that the party always
takes on for itself a more proletarian character, that it complies with the dictatorship from below. Through this the circle of its tasks grows wider, but at the same time it acquires the most powerful support. What has to be achieved is that the victory (the taking of power by the
proletariat) ends up in the dictatorship of the class and not the dictatorship of a few party leaders and their clique. The factory organisation is the guarantee of this.

“The phase of taking political power by the proletariat demands the firmest repression of capitalist-bourgeois
movements. That will be achieved by putting in place an organisation of councils exercising the totality of political and economic power. In this phase the factory organisation itself becomes an element of the proletarian dictatorship, carried through into the factory. This latter
moreover has the task of transforming itself into the base unit of the councils’ economic system.

“The factory organisation is an economic condition for the construction of the communist community (Gemeinwesen). The political form of the organisation of the
communist community is the system of the councils. The factory organisation intervenes so that political power is only exercised by the executive of the councils.”

The preeminence of the mass organization would be emphasized all the more strenuously as the movement
of the Unionen underwent qualitative and quantitative development in the enterprises after the founding of the AAUD. This movement expressed a rejection of trade unionism, and therefore of reformism, and even of anarchosyndicalism (the FAUD), which maintained the divisions within the working class due its basis on organization by trades. The
AAUD would have approximately 150,000 members during the winter of 1920-1921: its main strongholds were in Hamburg, Berlin (30,000 militants in December 1920) and central Germany.

At its Second Conference, which was held just after the Kapp Putsch (March 9-10, 1920), the AAUD adopted the theses of Rühle’s tendency:
nothing about the Party, very simple statutes, federalism. But once this tendency was excluded a few months later (October 1920), it was the majority positions of the Berlin group (Schröder, Gorter, Reichenbach, Jung, Schwab, etc.) that would influence and dominate the Third Conference of the AAUD, which was held in November 1920 in Leipzig. The extremely succinct
program and its “guidelines” which were debated and approved, express analyses that are almost identical to the contents of the essential texts of the KAPD of that same period. Thus, the program recognizes and affirms the need for a Party distinct from the Unionen, not only during but also after the revolution, during the early stages of the dictatorship of the
proletariat:

“The goal of the AAUD is unitary organization. All of its efforts will be directed towards the attainment of this goal. Without admitting the justification for the existence of political parties (since historical development impels towards their dissolution), the AAUD
does not fight against the political organization of the KAPD, whose goals and methods of struggle are also those of the AAUD, and strives to move forward alongside the KAPD in the revolutionary struggle.”

However, the rejection of all
"traditional" parties was clearly proclaimed, as was the predominance of the factory organization as "the preliminary step towards the formation of the specifically proletarian organization, or organization in councils":

"The form assumed by political parties is bound to parliamentarism. So much so that the parties
have precisely the character of capitalist organizations and are therefore constructed according to the following principle: leader and masses; as the leader over the masses, the organization goes from the top down. The leader commands, the masses obey. Above, a leader or a group of
rulers; below, an army of the ruled, a few foxes and millions of donkeys. It is the ‘Simon Says’ principle. The masses constitute the object of politics, an object which the “leaders” manipulate in accordance with their needs. The instrument of such a party is tactics, or more precisely, the tactics of
the capitalist businessman, pure fraud. The leader is the businessman, the party is his property. The neighboring businessman is his competitor. These tactics, the ever-more-refined ways and means of capitalist business practice, make for success. They stop at nothing. To be a
party man means: to enforce spiritual narrow-mindedness, to practice charlatanry, to stifle what is human in man.”

(See the excerpts from the guidelines of the AAUD in The German Left..., supplement to Invariance, pp. 92-93 [in English: https://www.marxists.or
“The Factory Organizations are above all organizations of class struggle.

“United in the AAUD (General Workers Union), they comprise neither a political party nor a trade union. These two terms are
employed in accordance with the meanings they have had up until now, that is, referring to institutions whose nature we can all understand with reference to today’s parties and trade unions.

“Within these organizations the
proletariat begins to consciously organize itself for the complete demolition of the old society and for its unification as a class. In the Factory Organizations the masses will be united by the consciousness of their class solidarity, of their proletarian class solidarity: they constitute the location
where the unification of the proletariat is organically prepared (that is, like a natural process, in accordance with the circumstances) ...."

(Ibid.)

Finally, it must be pointed out that one of the main concerns of the AAUD was not to succumb to the
“fetishism of the Council form”. For, even though it considered the organization of the Councils as one of the essential elements of the proletarian project, it had learned the lessons of the first phase of the German revolution (1918-1919), during the course of which the Councils had been recuperated—and even in some cases created from scratch—by the
counterrevolutionary forces whose ranks included government and “independent” social democrats:

“It is equally obvious that the workers councils are not just empty words but are completely the expression of the new proletarian organization. It could
happen that, while developing, authentic councils are corrupted and crystallize into a new bureaucracy. It will then be necessary to combat them as vigorously as the capitalist organizations. But the course of development will not halt, and the proletariat will not stop, until it has given
the new organization—the council system—its historically attainable expression in the classless society which lies beyond the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’.”

(Ibid.)

Faced with all these developments and the emergence and growth of
these organizations, Pannekoek began to adopt an attitude of critical withdrawal, even with respect to the KAPD, although his theoretical texts would continue to influence the German-Dutch Left. Thus, an excerpt from his text, “World Revolution and Communist Tactics”\textsuperscript{63}, in which he denounces the trade unions, is quoted verbatim in
the “Guidelines of the AAUD”, discussed above. After 1921, however, he remained aloof from organizational life and did not participate in it except to emphasize “the need for intensive propaganda, based on reality and the new tasks” (see “Marxism and Idealism”, written under the pseudonym, K. Horner, and published in Proletarier, the theoretical journal of the
Condemning the “March Action” and the policy of the Third International, his position was similar to that of Otto Rühle and the AAU-E. On the other hand, he distanced himself from Gorter’s “Open Letter to Comrade Lenin” because he deemed any response to Lenin’s “Left-Wing”
Communism: An Infantile Disorder to be superfluous, in view of the fact that Gorter’s text contained nothing new in relation to the positions elaborated in *World Revolution and Communist Tactics*. Pannekoek would come to increasingly downplay the significance of the function of revolutionary minorities within mass movements:
“The March movement was a fiasco that resulted from the policy planned by Moscow and from the tactics determined by the Second Congress. That is why an end must be put to the dictatorship of Russia over the Western European revolution…. In Western Europe, Communism will never
successfully progress in the form of a new party—with completely new cadres, slogans and programs—but a party analogous in its internal nature to the old parties, with the same political jobbery, the same blustering leadership tactics, and the same noisy publicity. Certainly, Russia has been a
beacon in the darkness and has awakened enduring hope; however, this light could only feebly filter through the thick smokescreen thrown up by lies in the news; and those who presented themselves here as the emissaries of this light were often too much influenced by the old Second International
spirit to be able to contribute effectively toward arousing the necessary enthusiasm. Simply replacing Scheidemann with Levi is not enough to give the workers the courage to face up to death and misery...."

[Pannekoek contrasts the tactic advocated by the Communist
International of a return to parliament and the trade unions with the tactics of] “… the factory organizations of Germany and of England, which arose spontaneously and in a more or less deliberate way among the most advanced workers…. These tactics consist of building up by means
of theoretical propaganda and of practical struggle, organizational forms that exclude any possibility of domination by professional leaders, and that combine, on the basis of the factory, all the wills to combat existing within the proletariat, so as to transform them into
forces for action. That these tactics alone can achieve our objective is something which the March experience has just shown.”

(“Sovjet-Rusland en het West-Europeesche Kommunisme”, De Nieuwe Tijd, 1921, quoted by Bricianer in Pannekoek and the Workers Councils)
Pannekoek would once again become involved in political activities in 1927. For several years, he devoted his time to astronomy, without ever completely breaking with the movement, however, but with less direct engagement and without joining any of the existing organizations.

c) The conflict between Gorter and Rühle within the
KAPD and the subsequent polemic on the party vs. the unitary organization (KAPD/AAUD-E)

In 1920, the opposition between the tendencies within the KAPD crystallized around two main questions:

- whether or not to immediately dissolve the Party into the factory
organizations (Unionen);

- what attitude should be adopted towards Russia and the Communist International.

With regard to the first question, ever since the founding of the KAPD, Otto Rühle’s influence made itself felt, as we have already pointed out above:
“The revolution is not a party affair. The three social-democratic parties (SPD, USPD, KPD) are so foolish as to consider the revolution as their own party affair and to proclaim the victory of the revolution as their party goal. The revolution is the political and economic
affair of the totality of the proletarian class. Only the proletariat as a class can lead the revolution to victory. Everything else is superstition, demagogy and political chicanery. The proletariat must be conceived of as a class and its activity for the revolutionary struggle unleashed on the broadest possible basis
and in the most extensive framework.

“This is why all proletarians ready for revolutionary combat must be got together at the workplace in revolutionary factory organisations, regardless of their political origins or the basis by which they are recruited. Such groups
should be united in the framework of the General Workers’ Union (AAU).

“The AAU is not indiscriminate, it is not a hotch-potch nor a chance amalgam. It is a regroupment for all proletarian elements ready for revolutionary activity, who declare themselves for class
struggle, the council system and the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is the revolutionary army of the proletariat.

“This General Workers’ Union is taking root in the factories, building itself up in branches of industry from the base up federally at the base,
and through revolutionary shop-stewards at the top. It exerts pressure from the base up, from the working masses. It is built according to their needs; it is the flesh and blood of the proletariat; the force that motivates it is the action of the masses; its soul is the burning breath of the
revolution. It is not the creation of some leaders, it is not a subtly altered construction. It is neither a political party with parliamentary chatter and paid hacks, nor a trade union. It is the revolutionary proletariat.”

(Rühle, “The Revolution Is Not A
Rühle was then adamantly insisting on the essential importance of the *Unionen*, and throughout the year 1920 he focused on the concept of “unitary organization”. Denying the need for any party, even a party like the KAPD, he called for the immediate dissolution of the latter into the AAUD.
The majority of the members of the KAPD, however, along with Schröder and Gorter, advocated the preservation of the Communist Workers Party as an institution distinct from the *Unionen* … although maintaining a commitment to the primacy of the unitary organization at an advanced stage of the revolution. Gorter expressed his positions on the party in a text written in August 1919
“What great change leads to the revolution? The fact that the masses must do everything themselves. Only the masses, when they attain national and international unity, can bring communism.

“But in this struggle the masses need a
vanguard. This vanguard is the International Communist Party. This vanguard must be absolutely pure and faithful to its principles. Pure in its means and its ideas. Because if it is not, the masses will become confused and lost.

“That is the way it is in
every revolution. There was always a nucleus, a vanguard, a minority, which finally became the majority. Such was the nucleus of the geuzen, Cromwell’s troops, and the various class groupings in the French revolution. As well as in the Paris Commune and the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917. Karl
Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg wanted the German Communist Party to be a nucleus of this kind.

“Given that the masses, when they unite, can now defeat capitalism and build socialism, all efforts must be focused on the goal of preparing the masses for this task. The
preparation of the masses must be the sole objective.

“Compromises, opportunism, the suppression of free expression, the deception of the masses, concealment of the intentions and the lust for power of the party or its leadership—all of this is now
absolutely harmful. As has been proven in Germany, Hungary and Bavaria, these things lead the proletariat to destruction.”

(See “The Opportunism of the Communist Party of the Netherlands”, included in the appendix of the work by Authier-Barrot cited above [in English:
Gorter’s concept of the Party, which he considered to be a grouping of the “pure” whose purpose was to fight against opportunism, was still contaminated by a viewpoint rooted in the process of the bourgeois revolutions (the philosophy of the enlightenment). This may explain his continuing interest in “establishing
grounds for discussion” with Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

In fact, with respect to the second topic listed above (the attitude that should be adopted towards Russia and the Communist International), Gorter persistently nourished illusions concerning the nature of the regime in Russia and the role of the Communist International. He
corresponded with Lenin because he believed that collaboration with the Bolsheviks was possible. Towards this end, Gorter tried to convince Lenin that, on the one hand, he was misinformed about the left-wing current, and, on the other hand, while his tactics of compromise were correct in the Russian context, they had already been revealed to be false in Western Europe:
“For you, who had to win a country of 160 million, with the help of seven or eight million, the importance of the leaders was certainly immense! To triumph over so many, with so few, is in the first place a matter of tactics. To do as you did, Comrade, to win such a huge land, with
such small forces, but with assistance from outside, all depends in the first place on the tactics of the leader. When you, Comrade Lenin, started the struggle with a small gathering of proletarians, it was in the first place your tactics that in the crucial moments waged the battles and won the
poor peasants.

“But what about Germany? There the cleverest of tactics, the greatest clarity, even the genius of leaders, cannot attain much. There you have an inexorable class enmity, one against all the others. There the proletarian class must tip the scales for itself
– through its power, its numbers. Its power, however, is based above all on its quality, the enemy being so mighty and so endlessly better organised and armed than the proletariat.”

(Gorter, “Open Letter to Comrade Lenin”)

The delegates at the founding
congress of the KAPD unanimously approved a resolution, however, proclaiming that “The KAPD stands without any reservations on the terrain of the Third International” (!). Along the same lines expressed by the Spartacists, with whom he had participated in political struggles during the war, Otto Rühle would take a critical position towards the
Bolshevik power and the Communist International.  
At the conclusion of a trip during which he had spent several weeks travelling through Russia, where he had been sent by the KAPD (May 1920) to attend the Second Congress of the Third International, Rühle wrote a report that condemned the Bolsheviks, not only for their conduct in power, but also
for their concept of the Party that had led to that conduct. It is therefore quite clear that Rühle’s position on the reconsideration of the role of the KAPD in relation to the mass movement was very closely connected with his critical assessment of the actions of the Bolsheviks in Russia:

“What appears in Russia as a caricature
is the consequence of a faulty, historically-superseded system. Centralism is the organisational principle of the bourgeois-capitalist age. With it the bourgeois state and the capitalist economy can be built up. Not however the proletarian state and the socialist economy. They demand the council system.
“In Russia, however, the councils are nothing but shadows. A tentacle of the bureaucracy of the party dictatorship. But by relying on the bureaucracy Russia arrives at a caricature of communism, economically and politically; a communism of a
barbarous State, sterile and unendurable.

“Why have the Russian comrades made this error? Because they are prisoners of the belief in the party. Because they see the party as the means to bring about the revolution and the construction of socialism. The party, however, as a form of
organization, is the incarnation of the centralist principle. This is the source of their error....

“... For the KAPD—unlike Moscow—the revolution is not a party matter, the party is not an authoritarian, top-down organization, the leader is not a military commander,
the masses are not an army condemned to passive discipline, the dictatorship is not the despotism of a clique of leaders, communism is not used as a springboard for a new soviet bourgeoisie. For the KAPD, the revolution is an affair which concerns the proletarian class in its entirety; within this
class is the party, which is only the vanguard, most mature and most determined. The masses must raise themselves to the level of the political maturity of this vanguard, but the KAPD does not expect this result to be obtained under the tutelage of leaders, discipline and
regimentation. On the contrary: with an advanced proletariat, like the German proletariat, these methods obtain precisely the opposite result. Such methods stifle initiative, paralyze revolutionary activity, short-circuit the power of persuasion, and diminish the sense of
responsibility. For the KAPD, it is a matter of giving free rein to the initiative of the masses, of freeing them from authority, of developing their self-consciousness, of nurturing their autonomy and thus increasing their participation in the revolution....”
After leaving Russia before the opening session of the Second Congress of the Communist International (July 1920), Rühle declared that he was opposed to the KAPD joining the
International and that there was no common ground of interests shared by the Bolsheviks and the European left. He was supported by the KAPD sections in East Saxony and Hamburg and by the editorial staff and contributors of the journal, *Die Aktion*, but the majority of the party described his attitude as a “serious mistake”, and the opposition between the tendencies in the
KAPD became irreconcilable. The KAPD decided to send another delegation to Moscow to join the Communist International and to form a revolutionary opposition within it, thereby indicating its agreement with the illusions nourished by Gorter in his “Open Letter”. Rühle and his supporters were expelled from the KAPD at a session of the Party’s Central Committee.
held on October 30-31, 1920, and a new delegation, composed of Gorter, Schröder and Rasch, departed for Moscow. The KAPD was finally admitted to the International as a “provisional member, as a sympathizing party with the right to participate in debates”, because the Bolsheviks were demanding that the KAPD must rejoin the KPD as soon as possible.
The party’s membership in the Communist International would be approved at the Third Congress of the KAPD (February 1921).

In 1921 the polemic between the supporters of the unitary organization and the KAPD grew more embittered. This polemic always revolved around the same two issues: the question of the Party and the role of the Bolshevik
In December 1920, the KAPD section in East Saxony dissolved and merged into the AAUD, while the Hamburg AAUD expelled from its ranks all those who wanted to remain in the KAPD. Throughout Germany, in 1921, a significant fraction of the Left opted for unitary organization. Its supporters
vehemently criticized the KAPD’s official position on the “March Action”. At that time, in March 1921, capitalizing on violent proletarian struggles in central Germany and Saxony (Halle, Mansfeld, Leuna), the VKPD, whose propaganda had assumed an “ultra-leftist” orientation (Levi had been removed from its Executive Committee), in
association with certain opposition currents in the Bolshevik Party and the Communist International (this was the period of the workers’ movements in Petrograd and Kronstadt, and the peasant movement in the Ukraine), openly called for a nationwide armed insurrection against the government. The KAPD believed that the VKPD was supporting positions
favorable to its own stance on the autonomous offensive of the class: “It is the proletariat itself which has spoken. The masses of the VKPD have taken action by following our watchword. They have compelled their leaders to do the same.” (Kommunistische Arbeiter-Zeitung, the newspaper of the Berlin District of the KAPD). The KAPD committed its forces to participate in the
insurrection alongside the VKPD (e.g., the offensive operations carried out by Max Hölz and his combat groups) and issued a joint appeal with the VKPD for a general strike of indeterminate duration in all of Germany (March 24). The movement failed to live up to the expectations of the two parties. It was a total failure; its last battles took place on April 1.
The AAUD current that supported unitary organization denounced the policy of the Communist International in Germany:

“The Bolshevik power has used the German revolution until its internal situation was totally stabilized.”

Rühle’s tendency emphasized
the fact that the Bolsheviks wanted to divert attention away from the bloody repression of Kronstadt, Petrograd and the Makhnovschina, and to conceal it behind the screen of totally spectacular and suicidal offensive actions. As Rühle said:

“The workers must know that the Action in central Germany was
an act of madness and a crime, for which the VKPD is entirely responsible.”

Gorter and the KAPD denounced the “putschism” of the VKPD, which had suddenly abandoned its “legalist” line, but they thought that the “March Action” was more than just a putsch. For them, it was an important moment of the real
movement of the proletariat in Germany: “The first class-conscious offensive action of the German proletarians” (!). Thus, the KAPD unconditionally defended this attempt at a mass insurrection at the Third Congress of the Communist International, and in one of his letters to Lenin, Gorter declared:

“The German
proletariat’s 1921 March Action has proven which side is right: you, comrade Lenin, and the Executive Committee of the Third International; or the KAPD and the Dutch Marxists who supported the KAPD. The March Action has provided an answer and has demonstrated that
the leftists were correct.

“... The KAPD, which does not want to have anything to do with parliamentarism or the old trade unions, but wants factory organizations, never needed a putschist tactic, which is always a consequence of a lack of internal cohesion.
The KAPD does not have to suffer from this lack of internal cohesion, because it only admits communists as members; because, for the KAPD, it is quality that counts; because it does not have a leadership politics, but a class politics; because it does not want a party
dictatorship, but a class dictatorship. This is why the question of a putsch cannot even be posed within the KAPD. The KAPD did not pursue a putschist tactic in the March Action. Its tactic is based upon the fact that neither a party nor a party’s leadership can make the decision to start a revolution or a
major insurrectionary movement, but that only the historical situation itself, that is, the masses’ will to fight, must constitute the basis for such decisions. The KAPD’s tactic is meant to strengthen the proletariat by developing its consciousness and extending its
revolutionary power while constructing effective combat organizations. This, of course, can only be done within the struggle itself, without ever shirking the fight imposed by the enemy or spontaneously arising from the masses.”
In May, the KAPD sent a delegation to Moscow to inform the Bolsheviks and the Communist International of its positions and to try to see if it would be possible to form a left-wing fraction in the International. This delegation consisted of Meyer (pseudonym: Bergmann), a metal worker from Leipzig who had participated in the battles at Leuna in March, Jan Appel
(pseudonym: Hempel), Schwab (Sachs) and Reichenbach (Seeman), the permanent representative of the party on the Executive Committee of the International. The Congress took place between June 22 and July 12, 1921: it was a dialogue of the deaf at every level, and the KAPD delegates were threatened with expulsion if their party did not join the VKPD. For
this reason, even before the “Report on the Third Congress of the Communist International” was read by the delegation at the session of the Central Committee of the KAPD held on July 31, 1921, the Central Committee declared its support for breaking with the Communist International and for the formation of a new International:
“... the KAPD must definitively separate itself from the Third International, because the latter has become an element of Russian State policy and must consequently adapt to the transformation underway in the character of the Russian government. After the Third Congress, the Third
International has openly shown itself to be an enemy of the proletarian world revolution, insofar as it has excluded the KAPD. But we cannot remain outside a proletarian communist international; the KAPD must, starting now, begin to lay the foundations of new, truly revolutionary
After having verified the existence of elements opposed to the Communist International in numerous countries, the KAPD engaged
in efforts to create a Fourth International, but the preparations for this project entailed the further decomposition of the Party. A majority tendency, which viewed this project as premature, was more concerned with the development of the KAPD in Germany itself and, with the eclipse of the movement after the March Action, proved to be amenable to
engaging in struggles for higher wages and better working conditions. The other tendency, very much in the minority, which included the majority of the Party’s intellectuals, including Gorter and the leadership of the Central Committee under Schröder, wanted to form a new International immediately and rejected any compromise concerning wage-based and economic
struggles in general. After an attempt to impose their positions on the Party by means of administrative-statutory maneuvers that centralized decision-making powers in Berlin, the minority was excluded at a session of the Central Committee in March 1922. The former leaders of the Party then moved to Essen and devoted most of their time to the KAI (the
Communist Workers International), founded in April 1922. Its membership was composed for the most part of left-wing groups from Holland, Russia and Bulgaria.

After the Third Congress of the Communist International, the KAPD, and then the KAI, joined the supporters of the unitary organization in their condemnation of
Bolshevism, but these organizations still proclaimed the need for a world revolutionary party distinct from the mass movements/organizations, a party that would play the role of a spiritual leadership:

"Recognizing that the objective preconditions for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the rule of the proletariat
currently exist, it places at the forefront of its activity the principle of the development of the class consciousness of the proletariat, that is, it wants to help the proletariat recognize that it is historically necessary to immediately do away with capitalism; for that same reason it
wants to awaken within the proletariat the effective will to carry out the proletarian revolution.”

“The KAI wishes to arouse a new spirit in the proletariat, the communist spirit, and so lead the revolution and lead it to victory.”
During this period, the current that supported unitary organization coalesced and assumed institutional forms; first as an opposition fraction within the AAUD, in which it had proposed its own orientation theses at the Fourth Conference of the AAUD (June 1921); later, it convened its own inaugural independent conference at which it assumed the name,
AAUD-E (E, for unitary) and adopted the definitive guidelines that its supporters had previously proposed for the AAUD. With thirteen economic districts and several tens of thousands of members, this current’s theoretical texts were published in *Die Aktion*. In opposition to the KAPD, it called for “the unitary political and economic organization of the
revolutionary proletariat”:

“The most urgent tasks of the AAUD are: a) the destruction of the trade unions and the political parties, the principle obstacles standing in the way of the unification of the proletarian class and the further progress of the social revolution, which can be the affair
of neither the party nor the trade unions; b) achieving the unity of the revolutionary proletariat in the factories, the cells of production and the foundations of the society of the future. The form assumed by this unity is the Factory Organization; c) the development of the self-consciousness and
the solidarity of the workers; d) the preparation of all measures which will be needed for the work of political and economic construction.”

With the decline of the real movement, a decline exacerbated by a brutal wave of repression, splits would occur in rapid succession and
the organizations of the German left would become a multitude of sects, a trend which affected the currents that wanted to preserve the Party form as well as the supporters of the unitary organization. As Paul Mattick said in his text, “Otto Rühle and the German Labour Movement”:

“Neither of the two groups could prove its
theory. History bypassed them both; they were arguing in a vacuum. Neither the Communist Workers’ Party nor the two General Labour Unions overcame their status of being ‘ultra-left’ sects. Their internal problems became quite artificial, for there was actually no difference between the
Communist Workers’ Party and the General Labour Union. Despite their theories, Rühle’s followers did not function in the factories either. Both unions indulged in the same activities. Hence all theoretical divergences had no practical meaning.

“These organisations –
remnants of the proletarian attempt to play a role in the upheavals of 1918 – attempted to apply their experiences within a development which was consistently moving in the opposite direction from that in which these experiences originated…. 
“… After 1923 the German ‘ultra-left’ movement ceased to be a serious political factor in the German labour movement. Its last attempt to force the trend of development in its direction was dissipated in the short-lived activity in March 1921 under the popular leadership of Max Hoelz. Its most militant
members, being forced into illegality, introduced methods of conspiracy and expropriation into the movement, thereby hastening its disintegration.

Although organisationally the ‘ultra-left’ groups continued to exist up to the beginning of Hitler’s dictatorship,
their functions were restricted to that of discussion clubs trying to understand their own failures and that of the German revolution.”

3. From the “ultra-left” concept of the Party to Councilism: the trajectory of Anton Pannekoek

With an article entitled, “Principles and Tactics”—
published under the pseudonym of K. Horner, as always—published in *Proletarier*, nos. 7 and 8, 1927, Anton Pannekoek returned to political activity after several years in retirement. Although he had previously supported ideas similar to those of Rühle, in this article he affirmed the need for a Party of the KAPD type, that is, one that did not try to substitute itself for the
working class but assumed responsibility for the “spiritual leadership” of the mass movement:

“… It is not the party that makes the revolution, but the class as a whole. Hence, the party has a completely different function from that ascribed to it in the old Social Democratic
conception. It cannot absorb in itself the whole of the class and act for the class; on the contrary, it can only be the avant-garde of the class and remain true to its spiritual orientation. In their places of work, the communists are the ones who see farthest, who have the clearest ideas, and who are the most devoted to the
cause; that is why they are able to step forward at any time, to propose the best solutions, to size up the situation, to disperse the fears of the hesitant, and to deflect anything liable to set the movement on a wrong course. The Party also plays this role in connection with general delegate assemblies charged
with taking major decisions, inasmuch as it points out the right road to them and presents a program of action. Again, during both the growth period and the period of rapid development, it is the party that spreads among the masses the slogans needed to show the way, to clarify the situation, and to avoid
mistakes.

“All action invariably demands a spiritual battle of the masses aimed at achieving lucidity—a battle in which opposing parties and tendencies meet and clash; and the Communist Party should wage this battle for the workers under the eyes of the workers.
In this way, then, the party becomes, at each stage of the class struggle, a primordial organ, as it were, the soul of the revolution….”

(Bricianer, *Pannekoek and the Workers Councils*)

Faced with a situation in which the movement is in
decline, however, this party can only be a “nucleus” of elite militants, that is, militants who defend revolutionary principles by refusing to adapt to circumstances:

“... the party’s power to attract does not reside in the party itself, but in its principles. And when the workers do not
want to listen—in other words, when conditions are such that no challenge of a revolutionary kind presents itself with any urgency—other principles predominate. In these circumstances, it is useless for the party to try to prevail at any and all costs, for this would signify that it had sacrificed its
principles to secure an accommodation with things as they are. Nor does it serve any good to compromise with principles in order to make them appear acceptable to a large number of people; what matters for the future is not the number of adherents who find the principles acceptable, but the communists
who understand them and who make them deeply and personally their own.”

(Ibid.)

It was due to his participation in the GIC (Group of International Communists of Holland)\(^73\) that Pannekoek would evolve towards a position that was critical of the function and form of the
Party. For this group no longer engaged in polemics concerning the organizational means to provoke the revolution, but instead devoted itself to understanding the lessons of the previous period, adopting an orientation towards a project of theoretical elaboration, propaganda and information. In contact with the AAUD-
Berlin since 1927 (whose theses at its Seventh Conference no longer mentioned the need for a party separate from the Unionen), it encouraged the latter to merge with the remnants of the AAU-E. This led to the founding of the KAUD (Communist Workers Union of Germany) at the end of 1931, which would publish the bulletin, *Rätekorrespondenz* (the
journal of the GIC in German translation). It totally rejected any idea of the party, even of the KAPD type, which would lay claim to being the rallying point of the process of self-organization.

The GIC, however, did persist in holding a “vanguardist” position on the plane of consciousness: the mission of the “working
groups” that it wanted to form was defined as serving as “general organs of thought” for the working class. It is this concept of a “communist laboratory organization” (the term “Party” would still occasionally be used in subsequent texts!) which Pannekoek would elaborate in an article entitled “Party and Working Class” which was published in
“We are only at the very earliest stages of a new workers movement. The old movement was embodied in parties, and today belief in the party constitutes the most powerful check on the working class’ capacity for action.
That is why we are not trying to create a new party. This is so, not because our numbers are small—a party of any kind begins with a few people—but because, in our day, a party cannot be other than an organization aimed at directing and dominating the proletariat. To this type of organization we
oppose the principle that the working class can effectively come into its own and prevail only by taking its destiny into its own hands. The workers are not to adopt the slogans of any group whatsoever, not even our own groups; they are to think, decide and act for themselves. Therefore, in this
transitional period, the natural organs of education and enlightenment are, in our view, work groups, study and discussion circles, which have formed of their own accord and are seeking their own way.

“This view directly contradicts the traditional ideas about
the role of the party as an essential educational organ of the proletariat. Hence it is resisted in many quarters where, however, there is no further desire to have dealings either with the Socialist Party or the Communist Party….”

(Bricianer, *Pannekoek and the Workers Councils*)
The GIC was in contact with the small American group of the Chicago IWW, which was led by Paul Mattick, a former member of the KAPD. This contact would be maintained by way of articles in *Rätekorrespondenz* and in journals like *International Council Correspondence*, and then *Living Marxism* and *New Essays*, published in the
United States. Pannekoek wrote numerous articles for these publications, as did Otto Rühle and Karl Korsch, who criticized Bolshevism and its theoretical underpinnings. All these theoreticians were situated at the time on a terrain that could be called “councilist”, and Pannekoek would conclude his evolution with the publication, after the
Second World War, of the voluminous work that he had written between 1942 and 1947: *The Workers Councils*. He placed the essential and almost exclusive emphasis on the “principles of organization of the proletariat as a whole”.

In 1939, however, Paul Mattick was still attempting to define the role of
communist minorities in relation to the working class. In an article entitled, “Council Communism”\textsuperscript{79}, he discussed the function of such groups in the following way:

“The Groups do not claim to be acting for the workers, but consider themselves as those members of the
working class who have, for one reason or another, recognised evolutionary trends towards capitalism’s downfall, and who attempt to co-ordinate the present activities of the workers to that end. They know that they are no more than propaganda groups, able only to suggest necessary courses of
action, but unable to perform them in the ‘interest of the class’. This the class has to do itself. The present functions of the Groups, though related to the perspectives of the future, attempt to base themselves entirely on the present needs of the workers. On all occasions, they try to foster self-
initiative and self-action of the workers. The Groups participate wherever possible in any action of the working population, not proposing a separate programme, but adopting the programme of those workers and endeavouring to increase the direct participation of those
In practice, however, the failure of councilism would give rise to groups that were content with being either laboratory-sects (discussion circles and theoretical work) or informal minority groups of activists (simple organization of tasks). Their activities were limited to producing journals circulated...
among very small circles of readers and following in the wake of mass movements that, for the most part, never advanced beyond making wage-related and other economic demands on the system.

Beyond the rejection of the function and the form of the Party, councilism did not make any contributions to the clarification of the question
of revolutionary organization. It gradually declined into nostalgic reminiscences of the magical powers of the workers councils.

On Organization

The following articles constitute a first draft of texts intended to be published in the Third Part of the book, On Organization, now being
1. The Evolution of the

The overall plan of the texts that will be included in this book when it is completed is as follows:

The First Part of this book is scheduled to be published, in the form of a pamphlet, in the first quarter of 1981.

Prepared by Pour une Intervention Communiste.
Concept of “the Party” since Marx

- The “Marxist” Concept
- The Social Democratic Concept
- The Leninist and Related Concepts
- The Ultra-Left Concept

2. The Parties face the test of the facts from 1848 to 1914
World Revolutions and Counterrevolutions


3. The Current Prospects for Organization
The Role of the Organization of Revolutionaries

Its Formation

The Functions of the Organization and Militant Commitment

The Test of the Facts after the Second World War

4. Appendices
The Functions of the Organization and Militant Commitment

We must advance beyond the sterile debate between "democratic centralism" and "organic centralism", or between "centralism" and "federalism", for the internal functions of an organization of revolutionaries cannot be defined by expressions that
have only represented, ever since their origins (i.e., the First International), nothing but practices that are incompatible with the communist perspective. The only reality imposed by this process is the reconciliation of the necessary degree of centralization of tasks and decisions with the expression of tendencies.

1. Rejection of democratic
centralism and organic centralism:

Democratic centralism has been nothing but a caricature of the democratic functioning of an organization. Its reality has always been the submission of the rank and file to the center, with the minority expressing its positions in congresses, when it could, and immediately afterwards returning to its
subordinate position. In fact, what must be challenged, beyond the term, “democratic centralism”, is what it has concealed and still conceals in the organizations that proclaim it: the separation between the diverse cells of the organization, a separation modeled on the capitalist division of labor. This mode of functioning was the prevailing reality in both the Second and Third
Internationals. It is profoundly linked with a political content that does not openly break with the capitalist terrain.

As for organic centralism, it is based on the concept of the “Communist Program” that is typical of the Bordiguist current. The life of the organization is similar to that of a beehive. The Program replaces the Queen. From
this Program, all the principles and tactics are derived which the troops implement. Thus, splits are unavoidable when a minority strays from the Program, or, conversely, when the majority goes astray, deviation is inevitable. The existence of a certain degree of democratic functioning then becomes, in the best case scenario, a remedy to solve the problem, or, in the
worst case scenario, a betrayal of intangible principles, since only a minority of individuals, or even one individual, is capable of knowing what is consistent with the Program and what is contrary to it.

More generally, the cult of “centralism” has never been, in the organizations that practice it, anything but a
means to dissimulate the counterrevolutionary content of their positions and to force their militants to fall into line. In this respect, it is intimately bound up with the more general concepts concerning the Party form. Insofar as the Party is called upon, at first, to seize power, and then to administer the State, it needs to drill its troops, and for this purpose it needs the political control
over its militants that only centralism is capable of providing.

2. Rejection of federalism:

Federalism, preached by the anarchists and certain “ultra-leftists”, leads, along with the abandonment of all political rigor, to a type of functioning that would leave even the most fanatical centralists with no grounds
Corresponding to the confirmed leaders of the centralists, whether they are elected or self-proclaimed, the federalists have their own concealed leaders, among whom every variety of careerist and adventurer may be found.

The absence of mandatory political positions for the
organization as well as the inconsistency of relations between tendencies, leads to a generalized lack of responsibility that creates an environment in which the most clever individuals (the few individuals who control the press and contacts with external groups) are allowed to make all the decisions.

As for those who plunge into
the realm of anti-organizational logic, they bury themselves in “non-group groups” and other “fantasy-groups”, and cut themselves off from any possibility of attaining to solid theoretical positions and a concerted and responsible revolutionary intervention.

This can only lead in the end to a retreat to “rank and file-
ism” and “partial struggles”, which leads to opportunism and frontism in all of its forms, or else simply to the disappearance of the group.

Generally speaking, experience has shown that “centralism” (democratic or organic) and “federalism” both end up producing the same opportunities for the development of leadership cliques and substitutionism.
(concealed or openly proclaimed in the person of a Central Committee or a General Secretary) on the part of intellectuals and/or “theoreticians”. They are therefore types of functioning that contradict the aspirations of a communist organization. Hence the need for the “permanent expression of tendencies and the
centralization of decisions”. We must now proceed beyond these concepts.

3. Centralization and the expression of tendencies:

Today, prior to the development of revolutionary reactions to the crisis that are sufficiently meaningful within the working class, it is inappropriate to disseminate organizational “recipes”
(statutes, etc.) that are the equivalent, on the level of the “organization”, to the role played by the “Program” on the level of principles. However, this recognition of the limitations of contemporary revolutionary groups by no means implies the absence of militant commitment and organizational responsibility. Very much to the contrary, the fact of being able to
perform the tasks of a revolutionary organization in the future is prepared for today. With this in mind, some broad outlines may be traced:

a) The expression of tendencies that, as inevitable products of the complexity of the revolutionary process, are participants in the effort of political clarification within the organization, even if they
are sometimes revealed to be hindrances. The tendency must be conceived politically, within the context of the organization, and not in terms of individualist reflection. Divergences with respect to concrete perspectives and situations can arise, but their existence must be reconcilable with the platform of the organization. The positions of principle contained in the Platform do
not constitute a Program and therefore can be debated, criticized or challenged if it is considered that the movement of the proletariat and new situations render their supersession necessary. These positions do not cease to constitute the basis for theoretical and practical unity of all the militants as long as their supersession is not judged to be necessary.
A tendency can demand that its disagreements be made public if it considers this to be politically necessary.

Every concept relating to the right of tendencies implies that the latter is a permanent right. It is therefore inseparable from the rejection of “Congresses” of the kind convened by Parties, the sole moment in the life of these organizations when
tendencies can effectively express themselves.

In the case of serious disagreements, which jeopardize the theoretical-practical unity of the organization, the tendency can become a fraction (with its own organizational base and propaganda) if the analysis of the concrete conditions calls for immediate perspectives of
action that the majority of the organization does not want to implement, and imposes upon the tendency the duty to transmit its analyses directly to the rest of the organization and to the proletariat at large. Then it becomes a distinct fraction of an organization to which it still belongs. The existence of a fraction, which conceals a serious crisis, logically concludes either in the
overcoming of the crisis, or in an organizational split.

b) The organization is neither a simple “organization of tasks” of intervention, nor is it a simple sum of the political consciousnesses of its members (or of those who are considered to be the most advanced!). While the relative coherence of these individual consciousnesses finds its principal expression
in a political platform, it also implies a maximal effort to prevent specialization by means of practical measures such as the rotation of tasks.

Likewise, if the responsibility for certain activities can be delegated, for a certain period of time, to one or more militants (a commission), it is always under the control of the collective. It is especially
necessary to reject any division between theoretical and practical tasks, between “decision-making” and “execution”, etc. Any structure that would purport to be established above the organized collective must also be rejected: central or executive committees, political bureaus, etc., which exclusively pertain to the domain of the counterrevolution. This
implies a veritable centralization of decision-making, that is, decisions must be made by the majority after a debate among all the militants. The harmonization of centralization and the expression of tendencies must take the form of the broadest dissemination possible, both within the proletariat as well as within the organization, of the
debates and resolutions approved by the organization, as well as the resolutions that are not approved.

c) Militant commitment, the clear consciousness of the need for and the willingness to undertake political intervention, has nothing to do with leftist hyper-activism or spontaneist dilletantism. It is bound up with the understanding of a social
process that is situated once and for all on a historical scale. It implies:

- That each militant is committed to participate, to the full extent of his abilities, in all the activities of the organization, both theoretical and practical. This participation only
constitutes a minimum, which is conducive to the conscious conduct of the militant in a natural way and to initiatives, proposals and the search for increasingly more distinct political clarification;

That each militant defends, wherever possible, the
collectively elaborated positions of the organization;

That each militant does not implicate the organization independently of the decisions collectively made by the militants as a whole.

In addition to the formal needs defined above, it is
above all thanks to the level of commitment of each militant that organizational responsibility can be realized. For no rule, not even the most thoroughly debated and carefully elaborated, will ever be able to replace revolutionary passion, which is the only thing that can establish a new coherence, subject to the test of the pressure of the system, between the individual and
the collective, between the militant and the organization.

“Obviously, if in an organization a handful of people are allowed to do all the work and assume all the responsibilities, if the activities of this small group are tolerated without anyone else lending a hand or trying to do a better
job, then this ‘handful of people’ will end up substituting their own will for that of the collective, even contrary to their own intentions. If in an organization all the members do not concern themselves with thinking, do not want to understand, do not want to discuss what they do not
understand, do not exercise each and every one of their critical faculties, and allow a handful of people to assume responsibility for thinking for everyone else, then this ‘handful of people’ will be the leaders, the thinking and directive bosses.”

(Malatesta,
The test of the facts after the Second World War

It is clear that the uprising of May ’68 and the struggles that broke out afterwards on an international scale (Italy,
Spain, Belgium, Poland, England…) influenced the will for clarification on the part of revolutionaries concerning the problem of organization and concerning the very possibilities of such clarification. The multiplication of groups that established themselves on the “councilist terrain” might seem like a fertile field for such a project. Unfortunately, the weight of the ideas of the
past on the brains of the living was generally more decisive than the aptitude for carrying out a radical critique of those ideas. This is why a brief return to the past is necessary in order to understand the harm that some of these ideas are still capable of inflicting. For this purpose, we shall limit ourselves to a brief review of the French groups, since the same currents are found
elsewhere, except for a few local peculiarities. Some gaps might appear, whether due to our lack of attentiveness, or else due to the difficulty of obtaining certain post-war texts (for example, we lack an analysis of the positions of the Union of Internationalist Communists). We must nonetheless point out, however, that the reader will not find here a historical
study of these groups, since such an undertaking is beyond the scope of our project. We shall limit ourselves to a broad delineation of the positions of the major contemporary currents on the question of organization and we shall try to discern the influence that they might have.

1. A journey to the land of the Thread of History
Any attempt to find a strict relationship between the groups of the pre-war and post-war periods and those that appeared after 1968 belongs to the domain of pure fantasy.

Among the militants of the groups of the pre-war period (Union Communiste, Bilan...), at least among those who were not
demoralized or liquidated, politically or physically, some would be found in the French Fraction of the Communist Left (FFGC, which published *L’Étincelle*—The Spark—and then *L’Internationaliste*), from which the Communist Left of France would split in 1945 (GCF, which published *Internationalisme*). Militants who came from
these two “wombs” would later be found in Socialisme ou Barbarie, etc. The same initial “relationship” would give birth to both the ultra-Leninism of the International Communist Party (Programme Communiste) as well as the workerism of Informations et Correspondance Ouvrières!

We shall therefore be content with extracting the contributions, both positive
and negative, of the main currents that existed prior to 1968, without looking for any pseudo-continuity between them.

1.1 The “Communist Left”

In the difficult post-war period after the “liberation”, we find positions that broke with the counterrevolution in both *L’Internationaliste* (FFGC) as well as in
Internationalisme (GCF): anti-trade unionism, anti-parliamentarism, the analysis of capitalist decadence, etc. This theoretical clarification would be accompanied by a practical will to action that would take shape in the intervention of these tendencies during the Renault Strike in 1947. One may observe, with respect to these events, the efforts of
L’Internationaliste to foment the autonomous organization of the proletariat: a call for the formation of workers groups outside of and against the trade unions, a radical critique of those who sought to “rehabilitate the CGT”, and other “revolutionary syndicalists”.... With respect to the question of the forms and functions of the organization of revolutionaries, however,
both the FFGC as well as the GCF were still totally attached to the party-centered views of the old workers movement. Their disagreements could ultimately be summed up in the question of whether “the Party” should be formed immediately or later. In fact, while the GCF criticized the voluntarist attempt on the part of the FFGC to form a party in the middle of the
counterrevolution, it was the untimeliness of that attempt that was criticized, rather than its underlying principle. The inability of these two groups to engage in a revolutionary breakthrough on this question would be confirmed by their miserable ends: *L’Internationaliste*, after having merged with the PCI of Italy, would then, under pressure from Bordiga, undergo a
counterrevolutionary involution that would lead it to turn its back on all its previous experiences, while *Internationalisme* would analyze the Korean War as the opening salvo of the Third World War, and would dissolve in order to put the "cadres of the proletariat" out of harm’s way!

1.2 *The rebel sons of the...*
It was from the Trotskyist International that a large proportion of the militants who would later influence the “new wave” of the ultra-left of the 1960s originated.

After the war, it was primarily the group, Fomento Obrero Revolucionario, which split from the Spanish section of the Fourth
International (Bolshevik-Leninists, not to be confused with the POUM, which was never acknowledged by Trotsky), and which had the merit of having supported the insurrectionists of May 1937 alongside The Friends of Durruti. The group exercised a certain degree of influence in France, above all thanks to the presence in its ranks of the poet, Benjamin Peret. Its political support was
comparable to that of the two “left” currents. If its positions were notable with respect to the trade unions and the nature of the USSR, the group was more or less nugatory with respect to the question of organization, and it never really cut the umbilical cord of Leninism. In fact, this group continued to proclaim its descent, not only from the “three
Internationals”, but also from the Trotskyist Fourth International, which it merely accused of having “openly renounced the revolutionary mission that was the reason for its founding” (“Pour un second manifeste communiste”, p. 58).

It was also from the Fourth International that the group Socialisme ou Barbarie split
in 1948, although some of its members were also former militants of *L’Internationaliste* and *Internationalisme*. At first, the group for the most part questioned the “working class” character of the Russian State (based on positions that were less clear than the positions previously held by the FOR) and therefore the unconditional defense of Russia.
It is difficult to explain the theses of Socialism or Barbarism on organization, on account of, on the one hand, the evolution of the group since its birth in the PCI until its disappearance in 1965, and, on the other hand, the group’s internal disagreements, sometimes important ones, on this question, which span the spectrum from neo-Leninist
positions to the denial of the need for a party, and this was true from the very first years of the journal. While many of the members of Socialism or Barbarism thought that a new revolutionary organization was necessary, one whose task is not to lead the struggle but to help the workers in their autonomous struggles, by way of analysis and information, evidently
this position was not shared by all the members of the group. The critique of the old parties was in fact often limited to the “bureaucratic phenomenon”, without succumbing, however, to the Trotskyist view that the problem was one of “bad leaders”:

“We discovered in these organizations (the French organizations—
Note added by *Jeune Taupe*) something different from bad leaders whose errors had to be corrected or whose betrayals had to be denounced; we discovered that they participated in the system of exploitation as forms of the regimentation of labor power.”
This did not, however, prevent the survival of substitutionist tendencies in Socialism or Barbarism. These tendencies are especially transparent in the texts of Chalieu-Cardan-Castoriadis. Thus, in his correspondence with A.
Pannekoek, he writes: “... what can it (a minority vanguard—Note added by Jeune Taupe) do if, representing 45% of the councils, it learns that some neo-Stalinist party prepares to take power for the future? Will it not have to try to seize power immediately?” Why should we be surprised, then, by Pannekoek’s assessment of Socialism or Barbarism: “By his
revolutionary fervor Trotsky captivated all the dissidents that Stalinism had thrown out of the Communist Parties, and in inoculating them with the Bolshevik virus it rendered them almost incapable of understanding the great new tasks of the proletarian revolution.”  

The internal contradictions of the group, concerning, among other things, the question of
organization, as well as its increasing confusion, would necessarily lead to various splits before its final dissolution.

In 1958, the councilist wing of the group resigned from Socialism or Barbarism in order to join ILO (Informations et Liaisons Ouvrières). Like C. Lefort, they thought that all parties are artificial bodies, “that is,
manufactured outside of the proletariat”, and they advocated attempts to establish links between “the multiple nuclei of militants who freely organize their own activity”. In 1960, ILO changed its name to ICO (Informations et Correspondances Ouvrières). This “group” was characterized from the very start by an attitude that obviated any possibility of
revolutionary intervention. Although it wanted to attempt to publicize the spontaneous struggles of the workers, ICO abstained from all organized intervention, and those who contributed to its newsletter were content to share information, and eventually to intervene individually in their workplaces. The consequences of this concept would rapidly become clear
during and after 1968.

In 1959, Pouvoir Ouvrier split from Socialism or Barbarism. While this tendency, which would later participate in the *Cahiers de Mai*, in the Gauche Marxiste and to a certain extent in *Combat pour l’Autonomie Ouvrière*, represented at the time a healthy tendency compared to the modernist vagaries of a Cardan, it was
still very traditional when it came to the question of the party.

1.3 The Situationist International

Concerned above all with the critique of art at the time it was formed in 1957, the SI is of interest essentially in the few years preceding 1968 (after the exclusion of the “artists”). During this period,
the SI maintained a very Marxist position on the question of organization, conceiving of a theoretical party that represents the highest level of revolutionary consciousness (it was, so to speak, the “Debord Party” instead of the “Marx Party”). The theoretical analysis of this question would in fact not be carried out until quite late in the SI’s history, in the “Minimum Definition of
Revolutionary Organizations” (*SI*, no. 11), adopted by the Seventh Conference of the SI—which would subsequently become one of the Bibles of councilism after May ’68—and also in “Preliminaries on Councils and Councilist Organization” (*SI*, no. 12). In the former text, one finds a general view that is very close to that of Otto Rühle and the AAU-E: its general
perspective is correct (“... the only purpose of a revolutionary organization is the abolition of all existing classes in a way that does not bring about a new division of society, we consider an organization to be revolutionary if it consistently and effectively works toward the international realization of the absolute power of the workers councils, as
prefigured in the experience of the proletarian revolutions of this century....”), but is nonetheless confused with respect to the difference between the organization of revolutionaries and the first stepping stones towards the autonomous organization of the class. This confusion is found, for example, in the demand that revolutionary groups include a “statutory” minimum number of
1.4 The “Critical Anarchists”

In the context of the splits that took place within traditional anarchism, that is, just before 1968, the group, Noir et Rouge, most notably, experienced the same difficulty breaking with the old movement as the Marxist groups. While it criticized workers.
and rejected the cynical maneuvers and the organizational fetishism of the Anarchist Federation, it did not make the connection between these bureaucratic operations and the federalist concept to which these comrades remained faithful: “We must seek a practical flexible revolutionary, non-exclusive organization, in which the autonomy of the groups and the pooling of
efforts of a federalist type will be effectively practiced and really experienced, the formation of individuals and responsibility and collective control” (Noir et Rouge, No. 41, May 1968). They would therefore not understand that the absence of responsibility and collective control is not the product of the misapplication of federalism, but, very much to the contrary, the result of its
consistent application.

The test of the facts after the Second World War (continued)

It is a commonplace to say that all the political apparatuses were left behind by the eruption of May ’68. In fact, the same thing happened to the mini-apparatuses of the ultra-left … or what remained of them!
2. 1968 and after

Some of the more intelligent members of the post-war groups ended up, after some delay, in a Latin Quarter that was hardly eager for their precious advice. Their “contributions” rarely went beyond the level of a more or less folkloric minor history. Then you saw people who would later claim to have
been the only ones to “understand May” vying for the recognition of the situationists or seeking out the company of D. Cohn-Bendit.

Generally speaking, the ultra-left groups would play a very minor role in 1968, even if some elements influenced by them might have been able for their part to influence the “ideological” content of the
movement. You need only read the texts of that era to notice these limitations (see, for example, the leaflet of the SI-CMDO distributed on May 22, reproduced below, with its call for “workers’ control” and its rather naive self-management ideology):

FOR THE POWER OF THE WORKERS COUNCILS
In the space of ten days workers have occupied hundreds of factories, a spontaneous general strike has brought the country to a standstill, and de facto committees have taken over many state-owned buildings. This situation — which cannot last, but must either extend itself or disappear (through
repression or defeatist negotiations) — is sweeping aside all the old ideas and confirming all the radical hypotheses on the return of the revolutionary proletarian movement. The fact that the whole movement was actually triggered five months ago by a half-dozen revolutionaries of the
“Enragés” group reveals even better how much the objective conditions were already present. The French example is already having repercussions in other countries, reviving the internationalism that is inseparable from the revolutions of our century.
The fundamental struggle is now between the mass of workers — who do not have direct means of expressing themselves — and the leftist political and labor-union bureaucracies which (even if merely on the basis of the 14% of the active population that is unionized) control the factory
gates and the right to negotiate in the name of the occupiers. These bureaucracies are not workers’ organizations that have degenerated and betrayed the workers; they are a mechanism for integrating the workers into capitalist society. In the present crisis they are the main protection of this
shaken capitalism.

The de Gaulle regime may negotiate — essentially (even if only indirectly) with the PCF-CGT — for the demobilization of the workers in exchange for some economic benefits; after which the radical currents would be repressed. Or the “Left” may come to
power and pursue the same policies, though from a weaker position. Or an armed repression may be attempted. Or, finally, the workers may take the upper hand by speaking for themselves and becoming conscious of goals as radical as the forms of struggle they have already put into practice. Such a
process would lead to the formation of workers councils, making decisions democratically at the rank-and-file level, federating with each other by means of delegates revocable at any moment, and becoming the sole deliberative and executive power over the entire country.
How could the continuation of the present situation lead to such a prospect? Within a few days, perhaps, the necessity of starting certain sectors of the economy back up again under workers’ control could lay the bases for this new power, a power which everything is
already pushing to burst through the constraints of the unions and parties. The railroads and printshops would have to be put back into operation for the needs of the workers’ struggle. New de facto authorities would have to requisition and distribute food. If money became
devalued or unavailable it might have to be replaced by vouchers backed by those new authorities. It is through such a practical process that the consciousness of the deepest aspirations of the proletariat can impose itself — the class consciousness that lays hold on history and brings
about the workers’ power over all aspects of their own lives.

Paris, 22 May 1968
COUNCIL FOR MAINTAINING THE OCCUPATIONS

Faced with the demands of the movement, any serious attempt to clarify the problem of organization was then beyond the capacity of
the weak revolutionary minority, as was any contribution to the self-organization of the working class against the parties and the trade unions. Within this framework, the most interesting aspect was the intervention of communist elements (GLAT, Old Mole…) in the Worker- Student Action Committees of Censier and the Inter-Enterprise Committee that
included the Action Committees or Base Committees of Rhône-Poulenc in Vitry.

With the eclipse of the movement (especially in France), and the resulting disappearance of the Action Committees, the proliferation of confusionist politicians of all kinds (who found their preferred field of activity in
leftism) imposed the need for theoretical clarification on revolutionaries, especially with regard to the question of organization. As it turned out, confronted by the sense of isolation that prevailed during this period of intense struggle, most of the surviving groups chose to associate with the ICO, although this did not necessarily mean that they all adopted a concept of the
organization of revolutionaries in a process that would include theoretical clarification and practical collaboration. The few contributions from this period include those of the group, Revolution Internationale (which emerged from the Student Action Committee of Toulouse), which elaborated a theory of a properly revolutionary organization,
although rejecting the denomination, “Party”, along with the contributions of GLAT (one of the few groups that existed prior to 1968 that “stood the test”). The critique of the “non-existence of the ICO” that accompanied the ebb of the post-May unitary euphoria would lead various currents to split from that group.
2.1 The organization of tasks, or the head and the feet

According to this conception there is no real political basis for unification (a platform), and therefore strictly technical (or “military”) problems will gradually overshadow political problems. Thus, apart from routine activities that take place in a mechanical fashion, the organization, or
what it does, is perceived “externally”; it is a “thing” that you can participate in now and then. This conception, which is based on the separation between theory and intervention, is the “activist” counterpart of the ICO-type conceptions that are only manifested by way of analysis or information. The organization finally assumes the appearance of “a copy
machine, with a head and feet”. This situation prevailed in certain groups after 1968 (Old Mole, Le Mouvement Communiste…) to various degrees. If the failure of this conception is obvious now, we must point out that its proponents were among the only people who engaged in revolutionary intervention in the late 1960s and early 1970s.
Moreover, their intervention was accompanied by radical critiques of the “Leninist theory of the party” that was “logically derived from Lenin’s conception of theory and its relation to the spontaneous movement of the class”. “Thus, any theory that ceases to be the theory of the real movement of history, and therefore in our era the theory of the development of capitalist society, and of the
class struggle of the workers against Capital, degenerates *ipso facto* into an ideology and expresses interests that are opposed, or at least alien, to the proletariat…. this analysis is the touchstone that will permit the discovery of the gold in revolutionary theory amidst the dross of the various ideological commodities offered for mass consumption.”"
similar view was also expressed by the group, FOR, discussed above.

However, we must add to the debit side of the ledger of this current the fact that it is often distinguished by notable tendencies towards programmatism, thus revealing its difficulties in really breaking with Bordiguism and its concept.
of the “Class Party”. Its influence is often found mixed with other influences (the situationists, for example) in groups (?) like The Friends of Four Million Young Workers, La Guerre Sociale….

2.2 The organization of theoreticians or “the skeletal framework of the future party”
This concept might seem, at first glance, to have presented the advantage of not turning its back on the necessary theoretical clarification and homogenization of the organization. In fact, behind it lies the dissimulated ideology of the “organization-laboratory” or “organization-memory”, which proposes—outside of any real struggle—the
synthesis of proletarian experiences as its objective. This idealist view was typical of the group that was formed by the merger of Revolution Internationale, *Cahiers de Comunisme de Conseils* and the Councilist Organization, which rapidly resulted in the disappearance of the initial contributions mentioned above (not even taking into account the re-introduction of the Party in the unification
platform of 1972, and all of its counterrevolutionary consequences), and then succumbed in the end to a variation of ultra-left-wing leftism.

3. The evolution of Pour une Intervention Communiste (1974-1978)

From the above reflections one will understand that the inability of the ultra-left to
formulate a profound and lasting revolutionary concept of organization after 1968 was intimately connected with its view of the content and limits of its contribution to class struggles, or, in other words, to the intervention of revolutionaries. This explains why it was above all as a reaction to this shortcoming with respect to intervention that PIC (Pour une Intervention Communiste)
was founded in January 1974. Also, by making the connection between these two questions, PIC would develop a “strategy of intervention” around two major axes: the contribution to the constitution of core groups of revolutionary workers; and the organization of revolutionary campaigns. This willingness to engage in the development of
autonomous poles of intervention and clarification within the proletariat already represented a practical break with all the “Party-builders”, as well as with the various coteries of encyclopedists who were so avidly engaged in producing long-winded discourses on integral communism. Above all, however, due to the increasingly more obvious impossibility of any work in
common with these different types of sects, it became apparent that PIC’s project was based on urgently needed political positions: Party-building and the “Programming” of communism mean rejecting the process of maturation of the consciousness that is immanent to the proletariat and situating the basis of this consciousness outside of the proletariat. This realization
did not imply the cultivation of any kind of monastic spirit, but, very much to the contrary, a growing intransigence with respect to matters pertaining to relations between different political fractions, an intransigence based on:

- seriousness in debate, excluding all use of counterrevolutionary
methods (lies, slander...);

- the need for enhanced clarification concerning the concept of workers autonomy and the role of the organization of revolutionaries within the context of that concept.
If this would lead us to break with tendencies that were openly situated on the capitalist terrain, PIC, which did not claim to be the exclusive possessor of all truth, never rejected the possibility of debate with other groups, nor did it rule out the possibility of engaging in joint actions. Thus, the first attempts in this direction were made with
respect to the campaign in support of the class struggles in Portugal in 1974-1975, \textsuperscript{100} then in our appeal to Union Ouvrier, \textsuperscript{101} and later, on the occasion of contacts we had made and discussions we had carried on with a certain number of “Autonomous Workers Groups”. \textsuperscript{102}

The process of clarification would be favored by the fact
that we came into contact with certain practical realities.

Without going into details, one may cite by way of example:

- The freezing of relations with the Parisian militants of Union Ouvrier, who felt obliged to await the authorization of
their leadership in Bordeaux before they could make any commitments to engage in urgently needed actions … a typical illustration of the centralist mode of operation;

- the lack of seriousness and political coherence on the part of the Libertarian
Communist Organization. This group, after having undergone a series of breaks with its original leftism, which made it possible to engage in limited practical activity with it, would nonetheless return to the arms of its first love. Far
from responding critically to the critiques we formulated, which might have led to a constructive debate, the OCL preferred to once again wallow in the cesspool of decomposing leftism, and in the ecological niche of anti-repression
fronts with the neo-Stalinists of the OCT....;

- the attitude of the political fractions present at the founding of the “Autonomous Workers Groups”: first condemned by Revolution Internationale, which later softened its stance when it
looked like there might be some good fishing among the ranks of the AWG for recruits; the attempt by Combat for Workers Autonomy to federate with them from above.

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These diverse experiences, in
addition to the everyday interventions of the militants of PIC and the subsequent reflection on these interventions, allowed a process of gradual clarification to take place within the group.

It can be observed that, originally, PIC’s platform did not contain any particular statement about organization, but rather a “traditional”
denunciation of substitutionism.  

A year would pass before the text, “Clarification on Communist Intervention”, criticized both the elitism and the academicism of the Programmatist organizations, as well as the ideas of the anti-organization currents, which were two sides of the same coin. It concluded as
follows: “What distinguishes us from leftism and from the counterrevolution in general is, first of all, the positions that guide our interventions, and, secondly, it is these positions that distinguish, within the class, our mode of intervention from all the modes of intervention of the counterrevolution.” It is most important to note, among the positions that guided the group’s intervention, an
essential beginning of an effort to theoretically analyze the possibilities of the “autonomous workers groups”, outlining the essential characteristics of the group’s subsequent development.

The question of the tasks and the functioning of the organization was once again addressed several months later in “Clarifications on
Organization”. After a critique of the “Mass Party” in its different manifestations, the “newest” part of the text concerned the question of the organization of revolutionaries. Along with the rejection of democratic and organic centralism, and the advocacy of the need for the centralization and expression of tendencies, points that
were more extensively developed later, \textsuperscript{108} the text also contains the concept of an organization that is still defined as a party. This must be considered in the light of what was said about “the tasks and functions of the organization of revolutionaries”. These tasks and functions are what “Marx was talking about in the Manifesto: the organization
of the revolutionaries is ‘the section of the working-class parties of every country … [that has] the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement’, and therefore, it is a product of the workers movement.” The questioning of this “Marxist principle” would only take place gradually, in connection with
the group’s practical activities. The theme of organization would once again take center stage in 1977, in “Clarifications on Workers Autonomy”, which placed particular emphasis on the complementary relation between groups of communist workers (or autonomous workers groups) and groups of revolutionaries.
and, therefore, the possibility of the two categories overlapping. The idea of the party is not rejected here, but put into perspective, into context: “in order to be rehabilitated, the word ‘Party’ will have to take on a meaning that is totally alien to that of the ‘Mass Party’ cultivated by social democracy and Leninism.” This project of redefinition resulted, as the process of
clarification proceeded, in an increasingly more rigorous questioning of the concept itself, as the critique directed against the group, Communist Combat, which was published in issue No. 23 of *Jeune Taupe* (November-December 1978), would reveal: “... this group defines most precisely the role that it attributes to the party and reflects on the question of
whether consciousness is brought from the outside by a party, or if it is born from the social movement itself!” For, in the former case, the formula concerning the councils is superfluous, because it is the party-consciousness that must exercise power; in the latter case, the party is useless because, no matter how “noble” its intentions may be, it can only become an
instrument of exploitation, that is, the weapon of the State capitalist bourgeoisie against the social movement.

“The aim of the Communist Party—which is called world revolution—is to bring to power, by means of the fighting force of the workers, a stratum of leaders who institute planned production by
This position by no means implies the rejection of the need for an organization of revolutionaries, but rather the need to ensure that the latter...
fully performs its role of contributing to the movement; to play this role in its entirety, but nothing more than this.

The interaction between the organizational conceptions and the bases of communist intervention was verified on the occasion of the movements at Longwy and Denain in 1979.
Only the action of revolutionary minorities who play a contextualized, non-absolute role in relation to the autonomous movement of the working class, without, however, succumbing to a total denial of this role, can make it possible to contribute to ongoing struggles, and without falling prey to the characteristic attitudes of the ultra-left—leftist triumphalism, or disdain for
During that same period, our relations with other political fractions caused us to engage once more in a process of clarification. In 1978 we were compelled to resume the debate between international groups or associations that advocated workers autonomy. Then, after having alerted the revolutionaries of the
profound nature of the crisis with respect to the responsibilities they faced, as well as having noted the appearance of many new groups, PIC set in motion a project of coordinated intervention with other revolutionaries in relation to the pamphlet, “Derrière le chantage à la 3e guerre mondiale, le renforcement de l’exploitation capitaliste!” [Behind the Blackmail of
World War Three, the Reinforcement of Capitalist Exploitation!]. On the basis of the process thus set in motion, an inter-group clarification debate was initiated. Rather than going into the details of these meetings, it seems more interesting to us to try to render a provisional balance sheet of these efforts, defining the role that we
attribute to this kind of confrontation:

First of all, we must specify the reasons that led PIC to propose such a debate. We never tried to hide the fact that we situate ourselves on a perspective of the desirability of an organization of communists. Not simply because unity makes for strength, but because we do not believe
that there is a center, a group that is the bearer of the truth, around which we must gravitate. An organization of revolutionaries is the product of multiple enrichments, of different contributions to the collective. This is not eclecticism, but the simple realization of the complexity of the process of the maturation of revolutionary consciousness.
We do not, however, believe that such an organization is possible in the short term. It can only be the product of a prolonged effort of clarification, not excluding joint actions; to the contrary. While some “re-adaptations” have taken place over the last few months (participation of the comrades from the group formerly known as the Kronstadt Commune in the activities of PIC, as well as
the participation of comrades who were formerly members of Communist Action and Critical Bulletin in the activities of Tribune), it is not possible to speak, in connection with these facts, of a real organization of revolutionaries. Although we advocate this basic perspective, we cannot allow ourselves to be deceived. The state of the existing groups shows the limits of the
immediate possibilities. For example:

- Le Frondeur was not characterized, from its inception, by an unwillingness to engage in a serious debate with respect to its positions and perspectives. But its roller-coaster evolution (materialist stage,
hyper-enthusiastic stage, new “materialist” stage...), which is particularly evident among these comrades, although this does not necessarily define them, nonetheless constitutes a barrier to collective clarification.

Tribune has assumed
a cautious position with respect to “confrontations between certain groups that are programmatically heterogeneous and the very obligatory relations with the proletariat” (letter dated January 26, 1981, published in the International Discussion Bulletin,
No. 3). Without denying the seriousness of the political conduct of these comrades, we can only wish that their evolution would lead them to concede increasing importance to confrontations within the current that is fighting for the autonomy of the
working class.

- The importance of our disagreements with the elements that publish the journal *Guerre Sociale* has been expressed much more clearly than one would suppose from merely reading Guerre Sociale’s public texts. This led us to undertake a
critique of the Leninist-Bordiguist vices that riddle their positions, which will be published in at some future date.

At the present time, we are not open to merging into a larger organization regardless of the conditions. After seven years of existence, PIC represents, in our view, a certain
contribution that we are not prepared to renounce amidst the euphoria for unity. It is not a matter of preserving our small group only for ourselves, or claiming that we do not make mistakes, but we reject any return to the past that could only result in a general regression with respect to principles as well as numerically. We inscribe ourselves within the perspective of an
organizational project that represents qualitative and quantitative progress in relation to our current practice.

The importance that we attribute to inter-group debate is not contrary to PIC’s reason for existence: intervention united with clarification. All these aspects form a whole and must be pursued in concert.
Thus, just as there is no question of our abandoning our practice of intervention in order to devote ourselves exclusively to debate, this has no meaning unless we actually have set ourselves practical tasks today and have real prospects of being able to intervene on a larger scale and more effectively in the future.

On the revolutionary
solidarity of GARI with the MIL

On March 2, 1974, Salvador Puig Antich, a former member of the MIL (the Iberian Liberation Movement), which disbanded in 1973, was executed by garrote. Having emerged with the resumption of workers and social struggles in Spain, the groups that would go on to constitute the
MIL distributed revolutionary texts and supported radical workers struggles. In order to make this support as effective as possible, they decided to carry out expropriations to obtain money for striking workers. These actions led to arrest and imprisonment for members of the MIL, including Puig Antich, who was executed by the Franco regime.
The street that had been taken by assault when the Burgos trials took place three years earlier was now empty. Puig Antich was a radical revolutionary, too anarchist for the left and the extreme left, and too communist for the anarchist movement.

The attempts to support the efforts of Puig Antich and his comrades made by the
minuscule revolutionary movement (see *Jeune Taupe*, No. 1, February 1974) only revealed its powerlessness. One of the manifestations of this powerlessness was the creation and activities of GARI in 1974. Seven years later, the members of GARI are being tried in court for their acts of revolutionary solidarity. Whether or not one agrees with the actions and methods of GARI, one
cannot help but think that the powerlessness of the solidarity of revolutionaries is also on trial. At the very moment when one of the most important proletarian mass movements of the post-war era is now unfolding before our very eyes, this example of the powerlessness of the solidarity of revolutionaries is food for thought.
Bibliography on the workers councils movement


workers-councils.


Paul Mattick, “Otto Rühle and the German Labour Movement”, in *Anti-...*

Denis Authier/Jean Barrot (Gilles Dauvé), La Gauche Communiste en Allemagne 1918-1921, Payot, 1976, 388 p. [An English translation entitled, The Communist Left in Germany: 1918-1921, is
available online at: https://www.marxists.org/subject/germany-1918-23/dauve-authier/.


*Documentos de la Revolución mundial—I—Democracia de Trabajadores o dictadura de Partido*, introduction by


Collectif Junius [Junius Collective]

[American Translator’s Note: All of the books listed in the above bibliography by the “Junius Collective” were originally cited in French editions, except for Documentos de la Revolución mundial. I added the English language citations.]
“parti” depuis Marx (Éditions Spartacus, 1982, 128 p.), with the permission of Les Amis de Spartacus (8, impasse Crozatier 75012 Paris).
Notes

[←1]

All text in [brackets], unless otherwise indicated, has been added by the American translator; text in parentheses in the numerous passages quoted from the works of other authors was often inserted by Pour
une Intervention Communiste—the comments and clarifications added by PIC are almost always obvious in their respective contexts, when they are not specifically attributed—including the abundant exclamation points (!)—American translator’s note.
An English translation of Rühle’s text is available online as of August 2017 at: https://www.marxists.org [American translator’s note].
Many of the texts cited in this essay by Pour une Intervention Communiste may be found in an English translation of *La gauche communiste en Allemagne, 1918-1921* [The Communist Left in Germany: 1918-1921], by Gilles Dauvé and Denis Authier, available online at the “Libcom”
website as of August 2017:
https://libcom.org/library/left-germany-1918-1921
[American translator’s note].
Available online (as of August 2017) at the website of *La Bataille socialiste*: https://bataillesocialiste.wordpress.com/2015/12/14/de-marx-au-bolchevisme-partis-et-conseils-rubel-1962/. The above passage from Rubel was translated from Emilio Madrid Expósito’s Spanish translation [American translator’s
note].
A revelation concerning the goals of the anarchists in the IWA … by an anarchist!:
“We sought, by way of conscious action, to impose upon the workers movement the leadership that seemed best to us, against those who believed in the miracle of spontaneity and in the virtues of the
Those of us who, in the International, were designated by the name of Bakuninists and were members of the Alliance, fought tooth and nail against Marx and the Marxists because they were trying to make their own program prevail in the International; but, regardless of the
honesty of the methods employed, concerning which it is now useless to insist, we did just what they were doing, that is, we were trying to use the International in order to achieve our own party goals” (E. Malatesta, *Volontà*, 1914).
See also the two texts that follow Kautsky’s essay in the book cited above: P. Guillaume’s “Ideologie et lutte de classes” [Ideology and Class Struggle], and J. Barrot’s “Le renégat Kautsky et son disciple Lénine” [The ‘Renegade’ Kautsky and His Disciple, Lenin] [An English translation of
“Ideology and Class Struggle” may be found online at: https://libcom.org/library/class-struggle-pierre-guillaume, and an English translation of Dauvé/Barrot’s text may be found online at: https://libcom.org/files/The%20Renegade%20Kautsky%20and%20his%20Disciple%20Lenin.pdf.
I was unable to locate a corresponding passage in the existing English translations of this letter to Kugelmann dated February 23, 1865. Translated from the Spanish translation of PIC’s text—Note of the American translator.
Marx corresponded with Lassalle for several years, and Lassalle visited Marx in London. In order to clarify their relations with the founder of the ADAV, Engels wanted to publish this correspondence. It was Franz Mehring who fulfilled this plan when he published *Briefe von*
Ferdinand Lassalle an Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels: 1849 bis 1862 [Ferdinand Lassalle’s Correspondence with Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: 1849-1862] (1902). See the recent work entitled, Correspondance K. Marx - F. Lassalle, 1848-1864, ed. Sonya Dayan-Herzbrun,
See our addendum on the organizational concepts of the anarchist current, “Note on Anarchism”, immediately following this section on the “Social Democratic” concept of the Party.
See Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Programmes socialistes (Gotha, Erfurt, Le Havre)* [Socialist Programs (Gotha, Erfurt, Le Havre)], with a Preface by Bracke, Editions Spartacus, No. 42, Series B. [In English, see Karl Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Program” (1875), at:
J. Ph. Becker organized the German section of the International when the IWA was founded and was later opposed to the Eisenachers with respect to the problem of the Party leadership (not to be confused with the Bernhard Becker mentioned above as a successor of Lassalle).
See the “Note on Anarchism”, below. And see also the text, *Le socialisme en danger* [Socialism in Danger], F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, with an introduction by J. Y. Bériou, Payot, Collection Critique du Politique, 1975, 280 p.
See Guy Sabatier, Traité de Brest-Litovsk, 1918: Coup d’arrêt à la Révolution [The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, 1918: Putting the Brakes on the Revolution], Spartacus, No. 77, Series B; and also Les racines d'octobre 17 [The Roots of October 1917], Spartacus, No. 50, Series A [An English
translation of Sabatier’s book on the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk is available online at: https://libcom.org/history/treaty-brest-litovsk-curbing-revolution-guy-sabatier].
Camille Huysmans, originally from Flanders, was the official secretary of the International Socialist Bureau from 1905 to 1922.
See, concerning the reason for Lenin’s planned trip to Italy, the PIC pamphlet, “Les Racines d’Octobre 17” [The Roots of October 1917] [The above passage was translated from the Spanish translation, except for the excerpt from Lenin’s letter at the end. Text in brackets in the letter
was added by the editor of the version of the letter found online at:

https://www.marxists.org
We have borrowed the title of this section from a text by Jean Barrot [Gilles Dauvé] that was published as the appendix to Karl Kautsky’s “Les Trois Sources du Marxisme” [The Three Sources of Marxism] (Spartacus, Series B, No. 79) [For an English translation of Barrot/Dauvé’s text, see
The first text of the appendix of the new edition of Kautsky’s “The Three Sources of Marxism” contains an interesting study of Marx’s methodology: “Ideology and Class Struggle”, by Pierre Guillaume (see note 6 above).
Marx and Engels never published this work, which remained in manuscript form, and therefore unknown, until 1933. Lenin was unaware of its existence … but this does not mean that had he read it, it would have turned him into a revolutionary!
Lenin shamelessly used those who had begun to engage in a process of theoretical rupture with the Social Democracy long before 1914, during a time when he still had faith in the ISB, as we pointed out above; later, he denounced them when circumstances had changed, that is, when the Bolshevik Party was
in power: see "Left-Wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder, a book published in 1920 in which Lenin criticizes the left communist currents, and first of all the German-Dutch Left that included Pannekoek and Gorter, who wrote an "Open Letter to Comrade Lenin" (Spartacus, Series B, No. 109). And see, also,
the section below on the “‘Ultra-Left’ Concept of the Party” [An English translation of Gorter’s “Open Letter to Comrade Lenin” is available online as of August 2017 at: https://www.marxists.org/letter/].
treaty-brest-litovsk-curbing-revolution-guy-sabatier].
See the [French] edition published by Belfond
[for an English translation, see:
https://www.marxists.org]
See the edition published by Spartacus, Series B, No. 31 [in English: https://www.marxists.org]
Furthermore, Trotsky dedicated *Our Political Tasks* to Axelrod, whom he referred to as “my dear teacher, Pavel Borisovich Axelrod”.
These passages from Trotsky’s text, “Our Political Tasks”, were omitted from all the English translations that I was able to consult on the Internet. I therefore translated them from the Spanish translation [American translator’s note].
Trotsky would further elaborate his criticisms of the Mensheviks in his review of a book by one of the leading Menshevik theoreticians, F. A. Tcherevanin, or Tscherewanin [Fedor Andreevich Lipkin], *The Proletariat and the Russian Revolution* (1907). See the critical
text included in Trotsky’s book, 1905 (Minuit, pp. 364-374) [Tcherevanin’s book was originally published in German under the title, *Das Proletariat und die russische Revolution* (Stuttgart: Verlag Dietz, 1908); Trotsky’s critical review of the book is reproduced as Chapter 24 of the English
language edition of 1905 published by Vintage, which is available online at:
https://www.marxists.org
An allusion to the two definitions of the Party in the statutes of the RSDWP, which triggered the split between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks at the Second Congress in London in 1903.
“Balance Sheet and Prospects” was published in an anthology entitled, *Our Revolution* (1906) and was also published in the newspaper of the Polish Left (SDKPIL) in 1909 [An English translation of this essay is available online at the Marxists.org website as of August 2017, under]
the title, “Prospects of a labor dictatorship”:
https://www.marxists.org
In fact, Trotsky adapted to his own purposes this concept that was first elaborated by Parvus, with whom he collaborated beginning in the autumn of 1904, since Parvus had himself adopted a position “above the fractions” that was similar to his own.

Parvus, whose real name
was A. L. Helphand, was a Russian Jew living in Germany who was a contributor to *Neue Zeit* and *Iskra*, which featured his long series of articles entitled, “Russia and the Revolution”. In his subsequent career he moved from the left to the right wing of the Social Democracy, eventually becoming a
political advisor of Ebert, the leader of the German Party and President of the Weimar Republic.
It can be discerned, judging by this formula, how Trotsky, in *Our Political Tasks*, despite its positive features, was totally immersed in the Marxist ideology in the form that it was introduced in Russia, on the German model.
We borrow the title of this subsection from a book by Willy Huhn entitled, *Trotsky, le Stalin manqué* [original title: *Trotzki, der gescheiterte Stalin*] (1952), slated for publication by Spartacus in the future. Daniel Saint-James, who translated Huhn’s book into French, also wrote
an afterword for the same book entitled, “Ni Dieu ni César ni Tribun” [Neither God, nor Caesar, nor Tribune].
The dictatorship of capital can only repress the real tendency to communism that, going beyond economic demands (as at Kronstadt), seeks to destroy the State and extend the process of the proletarian revolution.
See Trotsky’s Preface to the First Edition (1921) of the book by Talès, *La Commune de 1871*. He writes, for example: “If the centralized party of revolutionary action had been found at the head of the proletariat of France in September 1870, the whole history of France and with it the whole history of
humanity would have taken another direction.... We can thus thumb the whole history of the Commune, page by page, and we will find in it one single lesson: a strong party leadership is needed.” This Preface was reproduced in an edition published by Spartacus, Series B, No. 38 [an English
translation entitled, “Lessons of the Paris Commune”, is available online at:
https://www.marxists.org
The image of a Bordiga who made an independent contribution, distinct from the existence of the PCI after the Second World War, has its source in the attitude he adopted after 1926: he had no contact with the current that laid claim to his legacy, the Italian Fraction formed in
Pantin in 1927, until 1944.
Barrot specifies Bordiga’s post-1950 “contributions” in a footnote in the same book, on page 410: “The view of the communist movement as a social movement rather than a program; the concept of the proletariat that goes beyond the sociological notion of ‘the working class’; a grasp of the
dimension of the revolution that is simultaneously a collective, class revolution, and a human revolution.”
This struggle against electoralism was at the time connected with a denunciation of “frontism”, that is, the tactic consisting of forming fronts with other political tendencies in order to win more seats in the government representative bodies.
These articles have been reprinted in issue No. 7 (Series I) of the journal, *Invariance* (July-September 1969).
While Bordiga was in Moscow, the Italian socialist deputy Matteoti was assassinated. Unlike the leadership of the PCI, he called upon the communist deputies to remain in the legislature in order to pursue the tasks of “revolutionary parliamentarism” and issue an appeal for
armed struggle against fascism (!). As one can see, Bordiga, following in the footsteps of Lenin, did not hesitate to make the necessary compromises (the founding of the PCI, loyal opposition within the Communist International), or even to justify the tactical modifications occasioned by
circumstances. The ways of Invariance are mysterious indeed.
In his “Letter to Karl Korsch” (October 28, 1926), for example, who asked Bordiga to take the initiative in drafting the basic position statement for an international left opposition, Bordiga responded: “I don’t go along your view that we should make an international declaration...
and neither do I believe it to be a practical possibility” (see *Programme Communiste*, No. 68, 1975) [in English: http://www.quinterna.org]
With reference to the republication of the texts of *Bilan* (see the book by J. Barrot published by 10/18 cited above) and Union Communiste (see *Chronique de la Révolution Espagnole* [Chronicles of the Spanish Revolution], with an introduction by Chazé, Spartacus, Series
B, No. 110), the response of PIC to Guerre Sociale has comprehensively addressed this question. See issue no. 33 of Jeune Taupe.
See the text, “The Mass Movement and the ‘Vanguard’”, published in *L’Internationale*, No. 31, the journal of L’Union Communiste (October 3, 1937). This text will be published in the appendix of the completed edition of this work by PIC on the question of organization.
The text entitled, “Sur le role des élites prolétariennes dans la revolution de classe” [On the Role of Proletarian Elites in the Class Revolution], originally published in *L’Ouvrier Communiste*, No. 7-8 (March 1930), may be found in issue No. 35 of *Jeune Taupe*. It, too, will be featured
in the appendix of PIC’s complete work on the question of organization.
With regard to the post-World War Two era, see: the article, “Sur le regroupement des révolutionnaires: lettres de rupture avec la Bordiguisme (1949)” [On revolutionary organization: letters announcing the author’s break with Bordiguism] (Lastérade to Chazé), in Jeune Taupe, No. 18;
and also the text, “L’épreuve des faits après la 2ème guerre mondiale” [The Test of the Facts after the Second World War], published in Jeune Taupe, No. 35, which will also be included in the appendix of our planned book on organization.
The first split was instigated by Damen, who formed the Internationalist Communist Party in 1952, which still publishes the newspaper, *Battaglia Comunista*; this split was followed by another split that led to the formation of another Internationalist
Communist Party in 1964, which still publishes the newspaper, *Rivoluzione Comunista*. By the way, according to J. Camatte, it was this second split that caused the original Party to change its name to the International Communist Party (see, in France, the newspaper, *Le Prolétaire* and the
journal, *Programme Communiste*).
For example: certain elements of its critical analyses of parliamentarism, democracy, workers control (self-management), and the commodity basis of capitalist society.
See the edition published by Spartacus, Series B, No. 56, an anthology of texts edited by Lucien Laurat, *Marxisme contre dictature* [Marxism against Dictatorship] [in English: https://www.marxists.org/rsd/].
Luxemburg is referring to the proposed statutes for the organization of the Russian Party, the RSDWP.
This article is included in the anthology cited above, published by Spartacus, under the title, “Masse et chefs” [Masses and Leaders]; see note 47 above [Original title: “Geknickte Hoffnungen”, Neue-Zeit, 1903-1904, Bd. I, No. 2; published in French translation under the
For a history of the Polish Left, see the last part of the pamphlet, “Les racines d’Octobre 17” [The Roots of October 1917], Spartacus, Series A, No. 50, 1978.
These texts were published by Spartacus under the title, “L'expérience belge de grève générale” [The General Strike: The Belgian Experience], Series C, No. 5, 1969 [both of the passages quoted immediately above were translated from the Spanish translation].
This pamphlet was written by Rosa Luxemburg in Finland, where she took refuge after her release from prison (August 1906), and where she engaged in discussions with Lenin, Zinoviev and Bogdanov. The text was published by Spartacus, Series B, No. 55 [in English:
https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1906/mass-strike/].
See “La brochure de Junius (La crise de la social-démocratie)” [The Junius Pamphlet, or The Crisis of Social Democracy], La Taupe, Brussels, 1970. One may also refer to a critical introduction to this text, with extensive quotations, in “Rosa Luxemburg and Her Doctrine”, Cahiers
Spartacus, Series B, No. 80 [in English, “The Junius Pamphlet” is available online at: https://www.marxists.org
See the Spartacus edition, Series A, No. 4 [in English: https://www.marxists.org/revolution/].
The text by Henriette Roland-Holst is reproduced in part in *The Communist Left in Germany, 1918-1921*, by Denis Authier and Jean Barrot, Payot, pp. 315-320. The entire text of the theses of the KAPD will be published as an appendix to the complete edition of the present work on
Organization; it has already been published in issue No. 8 of Series I of the journal, *Invariance* (cited above) [in English, the book by Authier and Barrot/Dauvé is available online at: https://www.marxists.org/1918-23/dauve-authier/index.htm. The KAPD text is also available online at:}
This “Appeal” was published in *La Gauche allemande. Textes du KAPD, de l’AAUD, de l’AAUE et de la KAI (1920-1922)* [The German Left: Texts of the KAPD, the AAUD, the AAUD-E and the KAI (1920-1922)], supplement to issue No. 2 of the journal, *Invariance* (Vol. V,
Series 2, 1973) [many of the texts featured in this book are available in English translation at: https://www.marxists.org/1918-23/dauve-authier/].
This text, along with the texts quoted below, can be found in the book edited by Serge Bricianer, *Pannekoek and the Workers Councils* [English translation available online at: https://libcom.org/library/workers-councils].
See, for example, the book, *Lutte de classe et nation* [Class Struggle and Nation] (originally published in 1912, a critique of the “autonomist” theses of the Austro-Marxists), UGE, col. 10/18, No. 1135 [in English: https://www.marxists.org
See *The Communist Left in Germany, 1918-1921*, by Authier and Barrot.
This text by Otto Rühle will appear in the appendix to the complete edition of this book, after the Theses of the KAPD. It was published in the supplement to issue No. 2, Series II, of the journal, *Invariance* [in English: https://www.marxists.org]
[↩-61]

Thesis 9 of the Program of the AAU adopted at the Third Conference held on December 12-14, 1920 [in English: https://www.marxists.org/1918-23/dauve-authier/04.htm]. Joint actions with the KAPD were effectively carried out, especially in August 1920 with the sabotage of arms deliveries to
Poland, which was then supporting the white armies against the Bolshevik government.
This text was published in the journal, *Invariance*, No. 7, Series I, July-September 1969, pp. 51-80. It can also be found in Bricianer’s book, *Pannekoek and the Workers Councils*. 
See “Response to Lenin”, Spartacus, Series B, No. 109, with an introduction and notes by Serge Bricianer. [an English translation of Bricianer’s essay on Gorter’s text is available online at the website of “Libcom”: https://libcom.org/library/open-letter-details-serge-bricianer].
Gorter’s “Open Letter” was published in serial form by the Berlin newspaper of the KAPD, the Kommunistische Arbeiter Zeitung (August-September 1920), and then in the form of a pamphlet (November 1920). [Gorter’s “Open Letter…” is available in English translation at: https://www.marxists.org]
letter/].
Because of their familiarity with the Bolsheviks within the RSDWP before 1914, the Spartacists who came from the Polish left (the SDKPIL), especially Rosa Luxemburg and Leo Jogisches, always maintained a critical attitude toward them. The IKD, however,
which constituted the majority of the KPD, and then of the KAPD, harbored many illusions about the Bolsheviks, undoubtedly due to their collaboration with them in the framework of the Zimmerwald Left (Vorbote). The current associated with the IKD would even occasionally publish apologetic texts concerning the “Soviet”
power in Russia.
Not having received any reports from a delegation consisting of Jan Appel and Franz Jung which had previously been sent to Moscow to present the Theses of the KAPD, the party decided to send Otto Rühle, and then August Merges, the former president of the “Socialist Republic of
Braunschweig” (late 1918 to early 1919).
The product of the merger of the KPD with the “Independents” that took place in late 1920.
“The Lessons of the March Action”, 1921, Gorter’s last letter to Lenin. This text was published in issue No. 9/10 of *l’Ouvrier Communiste* (monthly journal of the Groupes ouvriers communistes [Communist Workers Groups]), May 1930. Included in the appendix of the book by Authier-
See “The Communist Workers International”, Herman Gorter (1923), published in issue No. 5, Series II, of the journal, Invariance [in English: https://www.marxists.org]
See “Guidelines for the AAU-E”, extracts from the journal *Die Aktion*, no. 41/42 (1921), published in *The German Left...*, pp. 110-111 [in English: https://www.marxists.org/1918-23/dauve-authier/06.htm].
This text by Paul Mattick was published as an afterword to “Brown Fascism, Red Fascism”, written by Otto Rühle in 1939; Spartacus, Series B, No. 63 [in English: https://www.marxists.org/paul/1945/otto-ruhle.htm].
Concerning the history of this group, see the “Brief History of the Council Communists in Holland”, published in issue No. 30 of Informations Correspondance Ouvrières (May 6, 1959)

[I could not confirm the citation provided by this footnote, which appears to be garbled—]
American translator’s note].
See, for example, “Le mouvement des Conseils ouvriers en Allemagne” (1938) [The Council Movement in Germany], by H. Canne Meijer, published as a supplement to issue No. 101 of Informations Correspondance Ouvrières (February 1971) [in English, “The Origins of the
Movement for Workers’ Councils in Germany”, at: https://www.marxists.org/left-wing/GIC/1938/workers-councils.htm].
IWW: Industrial Workers of the World. A “revolutionary syndicalist” movement founded in 1905 that proclaimed its independence from all parties and political groups. The theoreticians of unionism in Hamburg were influenced by the theories of the IWW
(Wolffheim had spent several years as a member of the IWW in California). After emigrating to the United States, Paul Mattick joined the IWW in 1926.
Karl Korsch made considerable contributions on the theoretical plane, since his critique of Marxism was focused on the political roots that had contributed to the development of the counterrevolution: see, especially, *Marxisme et philosophie* (Minuit), *Marxisme et contre-*
révolution dans la première moitié du XXe siècle (Seuil) and *L’Anti-Kautsky* (Champ Libre). On the organization plane, however, his reflections on the Party concept contributed nothing original in relation to those of the ultra-left current. On the other hand, his career as a “militant” had been very
different, for he had been a member of the USPD, and then of the KPD: he had served as Minister of Justice in Thuringia (for a few weeks, in October 1923, during the ephemeral “Workers Republic”), and was subsequently a deputy in the Reichstag (1924-1928), and editor of the theoretical journal of the KPD (Die
Internationale; eine Zeitschrift für Praxis und Theorie des Marxismus, 1924-1925). After founding the “discussion notebooks of the left” under the title, Kommunistische Politik, he was excluded from the KPD, along with Ernst Schwarz, on May 3, 1926. They went on to found the group, Entschiedene Linke
[The Resolute Left], which would merge with the KAPD-Berlin in 1927, while Korsch maintained relations with the left wing of the KPD, the Maslow-Fischer group, and with the Italian left fraction under Bordiga. After 1928, he pursued his activities outside of any organized group, and emigrated to the United
States in 1936.
See *La contre-révolution bureaucratique*, an anthology of essays in the 10/18 series, No. 760, UGE.
Bélibaste, 1974. Translated by the ICO collective [in English: https://www.marxists.org/councils.htm].
[←79]
Published in *The Social Frontier*, No. 45 (May 1939), and included in the book, *Integration Capitaliste et Rupture Ouvrier*, EDI [in English: https://www.marxists.org/paul/1939/council-communism.htm].
This is how, in 1952, the International Communist Party of Italy (the Bordiguist Party) completely reversed its position on the trade unions as a result of Bordiga’s exhortations, without any kind of discussion:

“... we must categorically reject any
perspective that would consider reforming the trade unions, and any tactic that would involve the ‘conquest’ of their central or local offices, or any participation in the leadership of their internal commissions and trade union institutions in general. The working class, over the course of its revolutionary assault,
must destroy the trade union as one of the most palpable mechanisms of the class rule of capitalism.”

(Declaration of the Executive Committee of the Internationalist Communist Party, Battaglia Comunista, No. 19, June 3-10, 1948).

“… From the moment
when, in any given trade union organization, the ascertainable numerical relation between the members of the party and its sympathizers, on the one hand, and the trade union members, on the other, is favorable, and if even the most remote possibility exists in this institution, virtual or statutory, of autonomous class
activity, the party will undertake to penetrate and will try to conquer the leadership of this institution.” (Basic Orientations for Organization, Bordiga, 1952.) [The Internationalist Communist Party split into two organizations of the same name in 1952; the Internationalist
Communist Party that Bordiga supported changed its name soon after the split to the International Communist Party—American translator’s note].
“The theoretical prohibition is expressed, on the organizational level, by the presence of a bureaucracy, on the scale of the federation or the scale of the individual groups. Legality never conceals anything but an established power. This ‘legal cover’ has been discovered as well as the
instrument of a concealed power when the latter has been attacked by an ‘illegal’ truth…. This leads to the paradox, within an ‘anarchist’ movement, of a federation of little bosses in which anyone who feels inclined to exercise authority within the framework of a de facto bureaucracy, has free rein to develop
this inclination. These little bosses have their own faithful followers. Recruitment in an anarchist milieu is very different: there are those who do not stick around, and those whose authoritarian individualist nature, exasperated by a mismanaged anarchism, very soon ‘by chance’ finds the raw material
for exercising authority. First, their faithful followers (bureaucracy on the scale of individual groups), and then little bosses (bureaucracy on the scale of the federation). The time frame for this process is all the more brief when it is just a matter of sitting in a chair.” (“Prolegomena to a First Manifesto for
an Anarchist International”, Libertarian Group of Ménilmontant, May 1967).
“The newspaper ... is the guarantee of the equilibrium desired by the founding Congress of the Anarchist Federation. Therefore, it must preserve its character of representing the three currents of thought of the Movement. It therefore calls for a measured
proportionality that only the most astute militants are capable of implementing. Furthermore, it requires practical work and writing skills that only competent individuals are capable of mastering. Therefore, its mechanism must be handled with the utmost care....
“Anarchy consists precisely in selecting tasks for the militants that they are capable of performing, on the condition that these tasks are established equally for all.

“Putting up posters, distributing leaflets, writing articles or making speeches are tasks of equal value.
“From the moment when competition no longer exists, is when each individual does what he or she is most capable of doing by his or her nature….

“In truth, man, due to his biological characteristics, is suited for certain tasks that are not appropriate for
others, and anarchy consists precisely in finding a place for him in the collective that will allow him to develop his capacities to the maximum....

“But what is it that causes some young people who come to our groups, as soon as they arrive, to demand the right to ‘superior’
positions, and ‘superior’ functions?” (Maurice Joyeux, *L’Idra di Lerna* [The Hydra of Lerna], 1967).
“The organization’s development in this direction will increasingly demote to a secondary level the conflict between what are known as centralism and federalism. From the AAUD’s point of view, the polemic over these two principles, these two forms of organization, will
become a dispute of empty words. Obviously, these two terms must be understood according to the meanings they have possessed until now, and not according to a new meaning foisted upon them.

“By centralism we understand the form which, through the will
of a minority, bridles and enslaves the masses. For the AAUD, it is a demon which must be extirpated. It is antisocial.

“Federalism is the opponent of centralism, but an opponent operating on the basis of the same economic system. It is the sovereignty, the
stubborn obstinacy of the individual (or the workshop, or the region, or the nation) understood on its own terms. It is equally antisocial and must be fought just as vigorously.

“These two forms progressively evolved over centuries past. Federalism was
victorious in the Middle Ages, while centralism prevailed during the period of advanced capitalism.

“Sympathy for federalism is based simply on the fact that, by seeing it as the negation of centralism, one assumes that it will bring freedom and paradise. This desire for
federalism leads to a caricature of autonomy (the right to self-determination). So it is thought that when one attributes autonomy in all domains to each region, to each place (one might also say, to each person), one is acting in a social and a proletarian way. In fact, this accomplishes nothing except to
abolish the empire so as to replace it with a number of small principalities. Petty kinglets (local bosses) arise everywhere who themselves assume rule over a fraction of the membership in a centralized manner, as if it was their own private property: from this, fragmentation and general collapse ensues.
“Centralism and federalism are both bourgeois forms of expression. Centralism is more typically big bourgeois, while federalism is more petit-bourgeois. Both are anti-proletarian and stand in the way of the purification of the class struggle” (From the “Guidelines of the
AAUD. Theses
Presented at the Third
Conference of the
AAUD”, December
1920 [in English, see
“Extracts from the
Guidelines of the
AAUD”, at:
https://libcom.org/history/
guidelines-aaud)].
See the “Platform” of Pour une Intervention Communiste.
Concerning the regroupment of revolutionaries, see *Jeune Taupe*, No. 18.
Internationalisme, No. 22 (devoted to the Renault Strike), republished by the collective formerly known as Old Mole, “Après la grève Renault: une grande expérience dont il faut tirer les leçons” [After the Renault Strike. A Major Experience Whose Lessons We Must
“All the documents that one can expect from the PCI of Italy have no other goal than to prove the untouchability of the Party’s views; all the judgments about the workers movements, all the perspectives and programs have only one axis, the party; where the party is, that is where socialism and the
“Our own perspective is not to await any progress from that side, or any clarifications of the problems that everyone is posing, even if sometimes their way of posing them is condemned. The Bordiguists would prefer to engage in retrograde revisionism.
or to deny the past of their own movement.”
(P. Lastérade, “Letter Announcing My Break with Bordiguism” (1949), *Jeune Taupe*, No. 18.)
“More than ever before, ‘The crisis of humanity is a crisis of revolutionary leadership’, as Leon Trotsky said.” “Pour un second manifeste communiste”, op. cit., p. 9.
See, in particular: “Le parti révolutionnaire” [The Revolutionary Party] (Socialism or Barbarism, no. 2, 1949); Pierre Chalieu, “La direction prolétarienne” [Proletarian Leadership] (Socialism or Barbarism, no. 10, 1952); Montal (Lefort), “Le prolétariat et le problème de la direction
Proletariat and Organization] (Socialism or Barbarism, nos. 27-28, 1959).
See the correspondence between A. Pannekoek and P. Chalieu, in *Cahiers de Comunisme de Conseils*, no. 8 (May 1971), with an introduction by Cajo Brendel [in English: https://www.marxists.org/ou-barbarisme.htm].
René Riesel,
“Préliminaires sur les conseils et l’organisation conseilliste”
[Preliminaries on Councils and Councilist Organization],
Internationale Situationniste No. 12, No. 12, p. 64 [in English, see “Preliminaries on
See “Actualité de Mai 68” [The Facts about May ‘68] (Jeune Taupe, Nos. 20 and 21).
Although this rejection seems to have displayed, at least in part, a tactical aspect of adaptation to the councilist wave of the epoch, other texts show that if the theoreticians of this group had certainly read Pannekoek, they read him through the spectacles of a Lenin. Thus, in Revolution
Internationale’s critique of GLAT: “On the other hand, if we consider that the essential task of the revolutionary organization is to favor the attainment of consciousness of the proletariat, we think that the organization will be called upon to play a decisive role at the moment of armed attack against the bourgeois
State: it should especially be imperative for the revolutionaries to pay close attention to the choice of the moment when this attack must be launched and to the solution of the various tactical problems that it will entail, even if it is evident that their assessment of the situation will have to be
submitted for the approval of the proletarian institutions of dual power in order for them to be practically realized….”

“If the term, ‘leadership-oriented’ seems debatable to us this is because we think that the revolutionary organization will exercise a certain kind
of leadership of an ideological kind (even if it is rejected)…. Their approval (the approval of the workers councils —Note added by Jeune Taupe) of the proposals presented by the revolutionary organization will therefore allow the latter to constitute a ‘spiritual leadership of the class’, even if it does not
possess any means of coercion to impose its views.”

From an article published in *Lutte de Classe*, November 1970.
Pierre Guillaume, “Ideology and Class Struggle”, published as an appendix to Karl Kautsky’s *The Three Sources of Marxism* (Spartacus). In the same book, the text by Jean Barrot, “The ‘Renegade’ Kautsky and his Disciple Lenin”, although interesting, once again at least
partly reintroduces through the window the Bolshevism that had previously been shown the door.
“In short, in the absence of correct revolutionary inspiration, no matter how far they might otherwise proceed, the working class councils or institutions of power are nothing but an important episode in the class struggle, but one that is circumscribed by capitalism or once again dragged back to
capitalism, as was the case in Spain and even Russia, in another way. By its very nature, the existence of the councils and, for that reason, their experience, cannot be prolonged for very long without attaining the principal revolutionary objective: to tear up capitalism by its roots. The relation class/revolutionary
theory (in its active aspect, councils/party) is not an artificial graft of two factors with different origins, but the dialectical manifestation, the unity of the duality of a single historical process of becoming.... Of the two terms of the dialectical unity, councils/party (proletariat/revolutionary theory in its most
general form), one is perishable, while the other will be rejuvenated and diversified in content and in quantity, to the extent that it extends and deepens the knowledge of humanity, as an antithetic term that is complementary to the external world.”

(“Revolutionary Class, Political Organization,
Dictatorship of the Proletariat”, FOR).
See the modifications made to the platform between Nos. 1 and 7 of Jeune Taupe, and also “Mise au point sur l’intervention communiste” [A Clarification on the Question of Communist Intervention] (Jeune Taupe, no. 4, January 1975).
See, for example, the correspondence with RI and CPAO in *Jeune Taupe*, no. 21.
See: “Circulaire-Appel à tous les groupes, organisations, éléments du courant communiste” [Circular-Appel to All the Groups, Organizations and Individuals of the Communist Current] (Jeune Taupe, No. 3); “À propos du Portugal” [On Portugal] (Jeune Taupe, No. 4); and the
pamphlet, “Chili hier, Portugal aujourd’hui…” [Chile Yesterday, Portugal Today…].
Jeune Taupe, No. 5.
See the texts of some of these groups, published in *Jeune Taupe*, Nos. 12-16, 18-19, and 27.
“C’est au pied de la Grande Muraille que l’on voit le Franc-Maçon” [At the Base of the Great Wall is Where You Will See Franc-Maçon] (Jeune Taupe, no. 29).
Jeune Taupe, No. 1.
See “Mise au point sur l’intervention communiste” (Jeune Taupe, No. 4).
See “Mise au point sur l’organisation”, *Jeune Taupe*, No. 6, July 1975.
“Dossier sur l’organisation”, *Jeune Taupe*, No. 35.
See the section entitled, “The Organization of the Revolutionaries”, in “Mise au point sur l’autonomie ouvrière” [Clarifications on Workers Autonomy], *Jeune Taupe*, No. 17 (October 1977).
“Réunion annuelle de Bilan et Perspectives” [The Annual Meeting of Bilan et Perspectives], *Jeune Taupe*, No. 22 (August 1978).
Concerning our intervention in this struggle, see *Jeune Taupe*, Nos. 25 and 26.
See the *International Discussion Bulletin*, Nos. 1 and 2.
See *Jeune Taupe*, Nos. 30 and 32.