

# Platform of the Committee of Intesa 1925

The start of the  
Italian Left's fight  
against Stalinism as  
Fascism increased its grip

## *The Communist Workers Organisation ...*

was founded in 1975 and joined with the Internationalist Communist Party (Italy) to form the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party in 1983. The Internationalist Communist Party was the only significant organisation to emerge in the Second World War (1943) condemning both sides as imperialist. It is the most significant organisation produced by the internationalist communist left which fought the degeneration of the Comintern in the 1920s as well as the process of "bolshevisation" (i.e. Stalinism) imposed on the individual communist parties. In 2009, in recognition of the new elements that had joined the founding groups, the IBRP became the Internationalist Communist Tendency.

We are for the revolutionary party but we are not that Party. Nor are we the only basis for that party which will emerge from the workers' struggles of the future. Our aim is to be part of that process by participating in all the struggles of the class that we can with the aim of linking the immediate struggle of the class with its long term historic programme — communism.

The Internationalist Communist Tendency now includes il Partito Comunista Internazionale (Italy) which produces *Battaglia Comunista* (a monthly paper) and *Prometeo* (a quarterly theoretical journal); Groupe Internationaliste Ouvrier/Internationalist Workers Group (Canada/USA) which produces *Notes Internationalistes/Internationalist Notes* (quarterly); Gruppe Internationaler Socialistinnen (Germany) which produces *Socialismus oder Barbarei* (quarterly) and *Bilan et Perspectives* (France) which produces a quarterly journal of the same name.

In Britain the CWO publishes a quarterly magazine, *Revolutionary Perspectives* as well as *Aurora*, an agitational broadsheet for distribution at significant times and events.

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For some time now the platform of the committee of Intesa has been out of print. Since we believe it is the only version available in English we are reprinting our original pamphlet which also explains the background and significance of the committee of Intesa in the story of the Italian Left. Even now that story is little known in the English speaking political world, including the communist left, and deserves to be better understood. With this in mind, we intend that this reprint be followed up by more documents (some previously published, others newly translated) indicating the political experience and historical lessons which are by no means limited to Italy and which help to shape today's Internationalist Communist Tendency, successor to the IBRP (International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party).

*CWO 2011*

## ***Preface***

Italy 1925 was a far cry from the Red Two Years of 1919-20. The capitalist counter-offensive against the working class was in full swing. Having survived the first major crisis of his regime, Mussolini was now embarked on the process of establishing the 'corporate state'. The bosses, especially the big industrialists, increased their trust in him as they enjoyed the fruits of victory and a period of relative economic stability. On the other side of the class divide the Italian proletariat was on the retreat and facing a constant drop in living standards. In a way which is familiar to us today real wages were falling against a steady increase in the price of everyday necessities. Outside and, increasingly, inside the workplace Fascist terror held sway, aided and abetted by the bosses. By October the 'right to strike' had been officially abolished and instead workers' interests were to be exclusively represented by the Fascist trades unions.<sup>1</sup> Here the workers lost out in two ways. First, the last remnants of shop floor democracy, the internal commissions were abolished. As late as May 1925 Communists were still being elected to these in the Fiat factories. In addition the original Fascist sop to the workers that wages would now automatically rise with the cost of living was quietly dropped in the face of the hard bargain driven by Confindustria's economic 'realism'. (This, after all, was why they were supporting Mussolini.) As for the Communist Party (PCd'I), it was already having to operate semi-secretly with its press censored and its members subject to arrest and beatings by the Fascist armed gangs. In the autumn there was a further clampdown (after an attempt to assassinate Mussolini) with over a thousand arrests of communists. By the time of the Party's 3rd Congress (January 1926) the situation inside Italy was so dangerous that it had to be held in France (Lyons). Many of the delegates were arrested when they re-entered Italy and in any case by the end of the year, with the so-called Exceptional Laws, thousands more communists were arrested as the dictatorship became total. Of the 4,671 people condemned by Mussolini's special Tribunals 4,030 were communists. They were sentenced to imprisonment (a total of 23,000 years) or internal exile to remote areas. The Party which had started off in 1921 with 40,000 members plus a Youth

Section of thousands was now completely fragmented and reduced to less than a sixth of that. Its ranks would soon be even further diminished as thousands more went into exile abroad.

It has to be said, however, that the Communist Party of 1926 was not the same Party as had been founded five years previously, and not just in numerical terms. What was happening in Italy was part of a Europe-wide reaction by the capitalist class and symptomatic of a wider defeat of the European revolutionary movement which had followed the Russian Revolution and brought an end to World War One. Perhaps the most tragic aspect of that defeat — and certainly the most difficult aspect to understand for those who were living through it — was the increasing degeneration of the Communist Parties who had joined the IIIrd International. First and foremost of course was the Russian party itself, the only party to have led the working class to a successful assault on the bourgeois state and which naturally enjoyed enormous influence and prestige amongst communists and the working class in general outside Russia. In fact the IIIrd International (which first met in Moscow in 1919) owed its existence to the Russian Revolution. It was testimony to the Bolsheviks' commitment to revolutionary internationalism and what Lenin had been calling for ever since 1915. By the same token, however, when the Party which had been the inspiration to workers throughout the world found itself left high and dry, clinging on to state power and having to survive in a capitalist world with no immediate prospect of support from a revolution anywhere else in Europe, its overriding influence inside the International became the source of opportunism and eventually counter-revolution itself.

By the time the Communist Party of Italy had given itself a separate political identity (January 1921) not only had the Italian working class movement suffered a serious reversal but the politically more advanced German revolutionary movement had experienced a severe defeat, as had the Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919. Right from the outset the Bolshevik leadership had understood that the Russian Revolution could not survive in isolation: break it they must. But how? With the benefit of historical hindsight we can see that it was already too late for the Russian proletariat and that the Bolshevik Party itself was to be transformed into the vehicle of the state capitalist counter-revolution. Yet even as this process got underway inside Russia (and 1921 was the year of the crushing of the

Kronstadt mutiny, the Introduction of NEP, and the first attempt to ban factions inside the Bolshevik Party) there was no sudden betrayal inside the International. Instead there were increasingly erratic and contradictory shifts in policy which in the early years of the International's degeneration cannot be laid only at the door of the Russian Party. Desperate acts of revolutionary adventurism (in Germany with the March Action of 1921 and again in October 1923) alternated with directives to form united fronts and "workers' governments" with the same social democratic parties from which the platform of the International had stated it was "an essential condition of victory in this struggle that the proletariat makes a break" (March, 1919). As the counter-revolution gathered pace inside Russia and opposition voices were less and less tolerated inside the Bolshevik Party the Russian dominated Executive of the International (ECCI) developed a parallel intolerance of dissent inside the International itself.

The leadership of the young Italian Party found itself in a strange position. It is an irony of history that the PCd'I — which had split with the Social Democrats above all else over the need for more than verbal commitment to the International and its cause — found itself almost immediately disagreeing with the policies that were basically being formulated by the Russian leaders from the perspective of their own isolation. In fact it had been the need to insist that adherence to the International must be taken seriously in practice that had inspired Amadeo Bordiga to propose the last of the 21 conditions for admission to the International at its IIInd Congress in 1920.<sup>2</sup> Bordiga had gone on to become the unchallenged leader of the PCd'I, that is inside Italy. Despite having been sent to explain the united front tactic to dubious French CP leaders in December 1921, he very quickly came to be regarded as too 'inflexible' by the Russian leaders in the Comintern. This has nothing to do with Bordiga's supposed sectarianism and everything to do with a refusal to blindly follow every twist and turn in the ECCI's increasingly opportunist framing of the united front tactic. Despite the mythology, Bordiga was not dogmatically opposed to workers from different parties and trades unions ignoring their differences and coming together in struggle. It was in this sense, i.e. in the sense of a 'united front from below' that he explained the tactic to the French party leaders in December 1921. At this meeting Bordiga implicitly rejected "*the way the Germans are applying the united front*" but it was precisely this way — the way of the 'workers' government' slogan — that

the ECCI went on to redefine the "*united proletarian front*" it had called for in January 1922. What the ECCI had in mind, of course, were electoral alliances and power sharing by Communist Parties with Social Democrats, just as the German Party was to go on to do in Saxony in 1923. This outright reversal of the 1919 Platform of the International was anathema to the Italian Party and their delegation at the first Enlarged ECCI meeting in February voted against it. (With Terracini arguing against a rapprochement with the Social Democratic Parties.) The rejection of such an interpretation by the Italian Party was shown by the acceptance of the theses on tactics (drafted by Bordiga and Terracini) by an overwhelming majority at its Second Congress in Rome in March 1922. In future the Rome Theses<sup>3</sup> would be the yardstick for the Italian Left to develop its resistance to the degeneration of the Comintern. Meanwhile, intense pressure from the highest of the Russian leadership in the ECCI was being applied on the Italians to tow the Comintern line. What was intended for Italy was not only acceptance of the 'workers' government' slogan but fusion with the bulk of the PSI. (Once it was suitably shorn of its most blatant anti-communist right wing and Comintern emissaries were already working inside the PSI for that.)

The Italian Communists were in a no-win situation. They had learnt from their experience in the PSI that mere formal adhesion to the International by a Party that as a whole had no sympathy with the cause of international revolution and which expected to 'go its own way' was tantamount to sabotage. One of the founding principles of the PCd'I was that each constituent party of the International was not so much an autonomous body but a section of an international party which should comply with its decisions, just as the local federations of the individual parties would do in relation to their 'national' leaderships. Yet here they were, little over a year since the formation of the Communist Party, in conflict with the leadership of the International — and precisely over the issue of re-amalgamating with the PSI from which they had taken so long to split. In June 1922 Bordiga, Gramsci, Ambrogi (for the PCd'I majority) and Graziadei (for the small right-wing minority who were being supported and encouraged by the Comintern) were summoned to Moscow for what proved over the years to be the first of several special sessions of the ECCI on 'The Italian Question'. The outcome of this was a resolution by the Presidium converting the Rome Theses from a Congress resolution to a mere "*opinion*



expressed during the preparatory work" for the next Congress on which occasion "The Executive requests that ... the Communist Party of Italy adopts a position on the question of general tactics in perfect accord with the tactical line of the Communist International".<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the majority found themselves accepting the workers' government slogan "out of discipline" though Bordiga continued to maintain that the only real meaning the term could have was the dictatorship of the proletariat. In any case, it is clear from the 'Declaration by the PCd'I Majority' that there was no intention of using the slogan as an intermediary step towards some sort of democratic coalition. The ECCI even criticised the Italian Party for not participating in the *Alleanza del Lavoro*, or Labour Alliance, proposed by the leaders of some of the main unions and which had explicitly excluded the Communist Party's trades union committee. The PCd'I had already criticised such a narrow alliance as no way to achieve a united front of the working class but the ECCI was already assuming deliberate sectarianism on the part of the Italian Party. Despite these concessions the Russian leaders were clearly not happy with what they saw as the result of Bordiga's leadership. For a start the question of fusion with the PSI had had to be shelved. Already Gramsci, who at this point still could not envisage a Communist Party in Italy without the leadership of Bordiga, was being pressed by Zinoviev, Trotsky and Bukharin to break with Bordiga's stance. He remained in Russia after the ECCI session.

It was a similar story at the Fourth Comintern Congress at the end of 1922. This time the question of fusion with the PSI was put on the line. Whilst the Congress announced that Communists were ready to negotiate with Social Democratic leaders and the Amsterdam International<sup>5</sup> immediate unification of the Communist and Socialist Parties in Italy was demanded. Apart from the two right-wing delegates who sided with the Comintern the majority of the PCd'I delegates still held to the Action Programme drawn up by the PCd'I for the Congress. Here any kind of organisational fusion with the PSI, including Serrati's Third Internationalist tendency (*terzini*) was once again rejected. Instead the document repeated the PCd'I's invitation to individual PSIers sympathetic to the International to enter into its ranks. By the end of the Congress, however, the delegation had been persuaded to nominate its delegates to the commission on the 'Italian Question'. It had taken an ultimatum signed by Lenin (from his sick bed), Trotsky, Zinoviev, Radek and Bukharin. Ultimately the Comintern's plans for an amalgamated

party in Italy along the lines of the KPD/USPD merger in Germany would be thwarted by opposition from inside the PSI itself.

In the meantime, however, the manoeuvres to change the whole shape and direction of the Party in Italy continued. The goal of somehow replacing or counterbalancing the weight of Bordiga on the Italian Executive was considerably eased by the situation inside Italy. While members of the Italian delegation were on their way to Moscow for the Comintern Congress Mussolini's *squadristi* had been marching on Rome. One of the first victims of the new regime was Bordiga who, along with other Communists, was arrested and imprisoned in February 1923.

Although it is true that nobody on the Left really understood the nature of Fascism (nor on the Right, for that matter, and certainly not Mussolini himself), the broad framework of Bordiga's perspective just before his arrest remains valid for revolutionaries today. Unlike the Comintern Executive, Bordiga and the Italian Left had not forgotten the role of Noske and Scheidemann, social democrats and republicans, in the suppression of the revolution in Germany and argued that:

*The real error would be to see the use of brutal police measures as belonging to a policy 'of the Right' in the bourgeois sense. If we confused these two we would be putting ourselves, without realising it, on the same ground as our opponents who think that the democratic regime is an effective guarantee of the rights and liberties of its citizens. We would have lost sight of the class and repressive nature of the state. ... we don't see in fascism and in the counter-offensive of the bourgeoisie a change of course in the policy of the Italian state, but the natural continuation of the method applied before and after the War. We don't believe in the antithesis between democracy and fascism any more than we believe in the antithesis between democracy and militarism. ('Social and Political Relations in Italy' in *Rassegna Comunista* 30.9.22)*

He was right. Just as surely as Noske had been the bloodhound of the German Revolution and invited the *freikorps* to pummel the revolutionary working class so Giolitti, Italy's pre-War elder statesman and liberal democrat had given free reign to the fascist armed bands. Fascism was not some sort of unnatural excrescence on the capitalist state but the weapon

taken up by the bourgeois class as a whole to defeat the working class. Just before he set off for Russia and the Fourth Congress Bordiga wrote about the significance of the March on Rome which he described as:

*... the legalisation of a state of affairs which is now endemic to the regime and accepted by all groups of the Italian bourgeoisie ... the successive attacks by capital, continuously halted by the partial defensive counter-attacks of the proletariat have culminated in the present situation which has brought the bourgeoisie back to the strong position it had before the War. ... it is impossible to draw a perspective for the near future from this state of affairs, unless it is the certainty of a ferocious reaction emanating from the organs of the State and supported by the perfected para-military (squadrista) organisation. (From 'Mussolini Governs Italy' in *Rassegna Comunista* 31.10.22.)*

The scenario painted by Gramsci was totally different. Whereas Bordiga recognised that the whole capitalist class were responsible for fascism Gramsci saw it as a manifestation of the combined interests of the supposedly "*pre-bourgeois*" feudal order in the South and the "*reactionary components of the bourgeoisie*" in general. Already the way was open for his theorisation of the need for the bourgeois revolution to be completed in Italy; for the possibility of an alliance between 'progressive' bourgeois forces and the proletariat; for a 'workers' government' which may not be the dictatorship of the proletariat but a democratic republican interlude of unspecified content and duration before the proletariat could aim to take power alone. This was the sort of flexible approach more suited to the Comintern of 1923.

The imprisonment of Bordiga and other prominent PCd'I members between January and February that year gave the opportunity for the Comintern to intervene directly and install its own choice of leadership. This step was eased by Bordiga's tactic of having the Italian EC resign *en masse* in protest against being told to implement fusion with the PSI. (In a letter to the Comintern which received no formal response.) When the Italian delegation arrived in Moscow for the 3rd Enlarged Executive meeting they were all set to refuse to reassume their posts of responsibility on the EC so long as the international continued with its insistence on fusion with the

PSI. The International did insist but all except one of the old EC members (Bruno Fortichiari) returned having accepted posts on the new, so-called 'mixed' EC which now included four new members: Togliatti (already acting as spokesman for the Party), Scoccimarro, Tasca (who had been the only voice of opposition, from a Right-wing standpoint, to the Rome Theses) and Vota. Now the ECCI had a more manageable situation in Italy. Although the newly constituted EC was by no means an obedient poodle there were now important figures ready to be persuaded of the Comintern line, especially when reinforced by arguments from Gramsci who was moved to Vienna in November in order to be able to keep in closer touch with Togliatti et. al.

*In fact the International was aware that it could count only on Gramsci for the initial drastic reorientation of the PCd'I in the direction it wanted. For more than a year and a half the Russian Executive of the Comintern had been able to study him and work on him. At the beginning of '24 Gramsci had graduated to the point where he was representing the International for the EC of the Italian party, even though he played no formal part. ('The Ideological Course of the Counter-Revolution in Italy' Part 3, *Battaglia Comunista* Year XL no.14, Sept/Oct. 1982)*

Formal or otherwise, Gramsci's role in undermining the resistance of the PCd'I to the Comintern's opportunism was crucial. Even before he returned to Italy one of his first moves was to persuade the new Executive not to sign Bordiga's *Manifesto to All the Comrades* nor to publish it as a document for discussion. (The rest of the EC, including Togliatti, had been prepared to do that.) Bordiga's document focuses on the crisis in the Party created, not "from internal disagreements, but from divergences between the Italian party and the Communist International" which "touch upon the very basis of the constitution of the party". The manifesto was an attempt to get the whole issue of the united front aired — from what should be meant by a 'workers' government' to the political implications of an organisational fusion with the old Maximalists of the Socialist Party. After his release from prison (October 1923) Bordiga found that nobody on the EC was prepared to support him. Even so, when Gramsci returned to Italy the Como conference (May 1924) must have revealed to him just how much work he needed to do to shape the PCd'I into the Comintern's mould.

Although the upper echelons of the Party — the EC and the Central Committee (CC) — now technically belonged to the 'Centrist majority' (thanks to Moscow's intervention) the overwhelming majority of the federal secretaries, who were much closer to the grassroots, were with the 'Bordigist Left' as was the Youth Section. Gramsci promptly set out to change the political balance of the body of the Party. Now arguing that the Livorno split had been *"too far to the left"*, he began with the incorporation of the *terzini* (since the PSI as a whole was no longer prepared to fuse). They numbered about 2,000 and were admitted en bloc in September 1924. Second, in keeping with the call for "Bolshevisation" of the Communist Parties at the Vth Congress, he aimed to radically change the way the Party was organised so that the leadership would have much more control over the base.

However, before this organisational upheaval could get underway the kidnap and assassination by high-up fascists of Giacomo Matteotti, a PSU (Unitary Socialist Party) deputy who had denounced electoral corruption in Parliament, triggered off a crisis for the whole regime. This blatant murder led to a public outcry and the first spontaneous street demonstrations for years. The Fascists were divided and Mussolini was forced to get rid of some of the more 'extremist' figures such as Rossi and Marinelli. For a time support from Salandra's Liberals hung in the balance as the industrialists took fright at the blatant lawlessness of Fascists in the Matteotti affair. For a short while too it looked as though the King might demand Mussolini's resignation. Meanwhile the opposition parties in Parliament chose to protest in a way they had been discussing before Matteotti's disappearance, by leaving the Chamber altogether — the so-called Aventine secession. The PCd'I deputies were instructed by the EC to join them. This was Gramsci's idea of a united front: not a united front of the proletariat for a counter-offensive on its own account but a cross-class union of 'democratic' elements in Parliament. It was in keeping with his view that:

*...today is the hour of the democratic opposition, and I think it is necessary to let them proceed and even help them. What is necessary, first of all is a "bourgeois revolution", which will then allow the development of working class politics. (L'Ordine Nuovo 1.4.24)*

In a report to the Central Committee Gramsci described the crisis as a "*moral*" one which had led to the "creation of a State within the state: and anti-fascist government against the fascist government". The report went on to say that the parliamentary opposition remained the "*fulcrum of the popular antifascist movement*". Gramsci might have been leading the Catholic Popular Party for all this had to do with the political agenda of the working class. Thus, while the handful of Communist Party deputies joined the Aventine opposition committees, reports were coming in from the regions that the working class was restless and ready to act. Information like this was discounted as Left-wing recklessness by the Party Centre which was now almost completely out of touch with the base.

It was, however, in touch with Moscow and the International whose Vth Congress had just presented a revised interpretation of the 'united front' whereby the social democratic parties were now regarded as "*social fascists*". Gramsci's policy of joining the Aventine secession was duly criticised and in an erratic attempt to follow the Comintern line the Party leadership launched the totally inappropriate slogan of "*Workers' and Peasants' Committees*" without any preparation at the grassroots. Heaping confusion upon confusion and under instructions from the Comintern, Gramsci tried to rectify his Aventine 'mistake' by veering back to bourgeois politicking and directed the PCd'I deputies to call for the Aventine secession to be turned into a permanent "anti-parliament". In the pages of *L'Unita* a confused platform for Communists was outlined: disarming of the black shirts and the downfall of the government, the arming of the proletariat and a workers' and peasants' government, plus a non-payment of taxes campaign. Not surprisingly the other Aventine secessionist parties refused. (They were not even thinking in terms of a parliament without fascists, simply fair elections and coalition government.) After this refusal the Party leadership changed tack yet again and sent in Luigi Repossi alone to use the Chamber as a platform by reading out a speech condemning Fascism (for which he was roughed up). This was accompanied by yet another tactical turn-round: that of using the Communist deputies, who still legally had parliamentary immunity from arrest, to go and speak "to the masses" at factory gates and street corners. This new turn to the masses was too little too late and only exposed Communist Party militants to Fascist attacks. Moreover, it was during this shift in tactics that class conscious workers in Italy were further disoriented and demoralised by the sight of the Russian

Ambassador holding a banquet for Mussolini and other high-up Fascists. By November 1924 trade treaties and official recognition by other capitalist states were more important for the Soviet Union than what was happening to the international working class.

In short, the behaviour of the PCd'I leadership during the Matteotti crisis was a fiasco. There undoubtedly had been an opportunity for a revival of the working class movement, an opportunity which could only have been exploited by relating to the material situation (rapid inflation and increased cost of living) of the class and the growing anger which became evident once the strength of the regime appeared vulnerable. As it was, PCd'I membership increased from around 12,000 just before the Matteotti affair (June 1924) to about 25,000 by the autumn.<sup>6</sup> In terms of a consistent programme, however, the Party leadership had nothing to offer. As Onorato Damen, one of the unfortunate PCd'I deputies 'of the Left' who had had to carry out the tortuous twists and turns of Gramscian tactics, put it in early 1926:

*Nobody on the Left has ever thought of reproving the Centrale for not having — made the revolution. On the other hand, this is not the way to pose the problem and we repeat: between the insurrection and the political manoeuvre that was carried out the Centrale could and should have developed an independent party activity which would have permitted the two political groupings who are really at odds with each other (the conservative bourgeoisie and the revolutionary proletariat) to be clearly demarcated. This would have opened the possibility of a polarisation between these two single politico-economic entities of modern society, those forces which are active and operating in the country and which have been pushed into action and exasperated to the maximum by the Matteotti affair.*

*Instead we've followed the tortuous tactics of the Centrale which has been particularly good at dividing the bourgeoisie into species and sub-species, into good, less good, and wicked, thus reducing the Marxist method of investigation to a model example of a page of — natural history ...*

*For us it is an indisputable fact, as it should be for all non-degenerate Marxists, that in a really serious situation, where its very existence as a ruling and privileged class is threatened, the*

*bourgeoisie plays on differences in order to maintain its existence. ... In this specific case the fascist bourgeoisie, seeing the serious danger of intervention by the proletariat in the struggle, manoeuvred itself sideways. Its own petty bourgeois elements thus ended up standing on a new political platform (parliamentary secession, the Aventino), impudently acting out a democratic masquerade and throwing out the sop of the 'moral question'. This was even before the proletarian masses could have found their political bearings behind a clear slogan and precise political line drawn by the revolutionary Party of the class. But there was no slogan launched, no political line indicated, because the Party Centrale did not believe in, or rather did not see the necessity of intervention by the third factor — the proletariat. Instead of a class initiative it preferred to sit and criticise on the opposition committees and work to unfreeze the situation.*

*Thus, at the most propitious moment and armed with such an agenda, the Party directed its troops, not to the struggle, but to their deployment on the very comfortable ground offered by the bourgeoisie. And for us this is opportunism; an opportunism not dissimilar from that of the Maximalist Party. (From 'After Matteotti' in L'Unita January 1926, reprinted in Onorato Damen, Gramsci tra Marxismo e Idealismo, edizioni Prometeo, Milan 1988.)*

By 1926 it was pretty safe for the Party leadership to allow this sort of criticism to be published in the PCd'I press. (Indeed for the past six months almost nothing else had got past the censor for the membership to read of Party life besides accounts of internal differences.) This was supposed to give the appearance of a healthy and open debate before the next Party Congress. The reality was rather different. After the Matteotti affair the leadership had concentrated its efforts on undermining the Left as the major political current inside the Party. Force of argument had been a minor factor in persuading militants to change their views. The key factor was the wholesale reorganisation carried out by the Centre, a reorganisation which involved comrades being threatened, dismissed from their party posts and manoeuvres to stifle debate which amounted to a veritable Stalinist purge.

Bordiga himself was one of the first to feel its effects. In October 1924 he had been elected Secretary of the Naples federation. During the winter,



however, he was removed from office by the Central Executive on the grounds that he was too well known to the police to be able to carry out his duties. The same thing happened in Milan where Bruno Fortichiari was elected Secretary but was then replaced by someone else in March 1925. It was the same story throughout Italy, in all the strongholds of the Left: Turin, Rome, Trieste, Aquila, Cosenza, Alessandria, Novara, Biella, Cremona, Pavia, Foggia ....

All this was conducted under the auspices of the Comintern which, at its Fifth Congress in June 1924, had called for the 'bolshevisation' its constituent parties.<sup>7</sup> We understand today that 'bolshevisation' meant that the Communist Parties should model themselves not on the Bolshevik Party of 1917 but on the Russian Party as it was being shaped by the counter-revolution, now ratcheted up a notch after the death of Lenin. For communist militants at the time who wanted to maintain the revolutionary identity of their Party the term did not necessarily have such a pejorative connotation. In any case, it was against the background of 'bolshevisation' and in the run-up to the 3rd Party Congress that a core of militants from the Left decided that Bordiga's tactic of leaving the Party's central organs in the hands of the 'Centrists' had been a recipe for disaster.

The political character of the Party was being undermined by organisational measures without any political debate whatsoever. Moreover as the Party had to operate increasingly underground it was becoming more difficult to hold debates, especially as it was now adopting a cell structure in line with the 'bolshevisation' directives. In the Spring of 1925 a small group of comrades from the Left, including Onorato Damen, Bruno Fortichiari and Luigi Repposi resolved to form the Comitato d'Intesa ('Committee of Agreement') with the intention of trying to make sure there was a full debate on what was going on, both nationally and internationally, before the next Party Congress:

*What can a Congress which is aiming at bolshevisation be worth if it is attended by delegates from the various federations where there has been no previous discussion, of a serious and informed nature, with the recognised representatives of the various currents about the "fundamental problems of national life on which basis the general programme of the party must be drawn"?"* (Letter from the Committee of Intesa in response to a statement by the Party

Executive, 1.6.25 and published in *L'Unita* of 26.5.25. See Appendix for complete text.)

Although Bordiga added his signature to the Platform and sent an open letter to the EC supporting the Committee after it was formed he had not initiated it. As Damen explains, "*Bordiga, stripped of authority by the Party Centre, had practically excluded himself from active political life and did not assume any responsibilities, not even in the orbit of his own current.*" (op.cit. p.103). Thus, despite the propaganda from the Party Centre — which made out that basically this manifestation of opposition was Bordiga's doing and without him it would be nothing — Bordiga was not roaming up and down the length and breadth of Italy to build up a fraction as he had in 1918. Significantly, the opposition which was inevitably associated with his name had to go to him. Its first 'all-Italy' meeting, therefore, was in Naples. It attracted "*the most qualified representatives of the party's organisational apparatus*" (Damen) — indicating that the main body of the Party was still with the Left. Gramsci had a quick remedy to alter that:

*Few people know that soon afterwards Gramsci summoned the party functionaries who had participated in the Naples meeting and presented them with the typical administrative dilemma — either you defend and support the policies of the Party which pays you or you will be dismissed.*

And the consequence of this?

*...the shameful capitulation of them all, we say all, as if the militancy of a revolutionary in his class party had in an instant been turned into a commodity to haggle over. (Damen op.cit. p.111.)*

This efficacious practice was accompanied by a no less worthy method of reducing the influence of the Left as outlined in a "highly confidential" circular of the Executive to the local federations that has been unearthed by the PCI historian:

*The national Committee of the Left fraction uses itinerant comrades to establish its own links with the various federations. Amongst them are some who are still Party members — Girone, Damen, etc. In the*

*event of the arrival of any of these elements at your party office (sede) or in the case of their meeting your own members who are travelling around, you need to procure the help of comrades in the locality to go immediately to search their persons and their living accomodation. All the fractionist material which is found on them must be sent to us (circulars, addresses, letters, etc.). Naturally, in carrying out this work of party policing, you must declare to those involved that you are following the precise and binding instructions of the E.C. (Dated June 4th 1925. Quoted by Spriano from the Communist Party Archives op.cit. p.455)*

On top of all this the Committee was subjected to the full weight of Comintern disapproval which demanded its instant dissolution or the expulsion of those involved. The comrades complied after getting an assurance that all those who had been dismissed from their posts would be reinstated and that there would be a full debate before the next Congress. We leave it for our readers themselves to ponder on how far these conditions were fulfilled and how far the 90.8% the vote for Gramsci's theses at the Lyons Congress reflected the opinion of the party membership as a whole.

This, then, is something of the background to the *Platform of the Committee of Intesa* which, on the occasion of its Seventieth Anniversary, we are publishing in English for the first time. It is not an earth-shattering document and it can only be understood in the context of the degeneration of the Communist International and in terms of what was happening inside Italy itself. At the same time, though, the whole experience which impelled the comrades to form the Committee can help us to understand that degeneration and hopefully to learn from it. For, out of this initial 'sound of alarm' from the tendency which has come down to us as the Italian Left, there are a whole host of significant issues which future revolutionaries will have to be clear about. (Not least the question of what sort of political organisation is possible and appropriate for the working class today.) The Committee of Intesa was short-lived but not so the struggle of the Left to resist and, in doing so, to understand the process of degeneration and the counter-revolution. Although Bordiga succumbed to passivity (after ably speaking out against what was happening to the International at the Enlarged Executive meeting of 1926 before he was arrested later that year)

the Italian Left continued to exist, first as a fraction inside and outside Mussolini's Italy and then, after 1935 and the 7th Comintern Congress (which declared the popular front and *"the final and irrevocable victory of socialism in the land of the Soviets"*) as a political entity opposed to Stalinism and all that this stood for in its own right. In 1943 one of the founders of the Committee of Intesa, Onorato Damen, now helped to initiate the formation of the Internationalist Communist Party (PCInt.) which fought against the revival of the Stalinist PCI on the back of the partisan movement. Today the PCInt works with the CWO in the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party for a revival of the international movement of the working class.

**CWO 1995**

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<sup>1</sup> In a deal known as the Vidoni Palace Pact signed between the Confederation of Industrial Employers (Confindustria) and Rossoni for the Fascist government on 2nd October 1925.

<sup>2</sup> This reads: *"Those members of the party who reject in principle the conditions and theses put forward by the Communist International are to be expelled from the party. The same applies in particular to delegates to the extraordinary congresses."*

<sup>3</sup> Translated and published by the CWO in *Revolutionary Perspectives 22*.

<sup>4</sup> From the PCd'I report originally published in *L'Ordine Nuovo* 1.7.22. See Appendix B.

<sup>5</sup> The revived version of the old Social Democratic International Federation of Trades Unions, based in Amsterdam, known also as the Yellow International, in contrast to the Red.

<sup>6</sup> According to Paolo Spriano, the Communist Party historian, 70-75% of that 25,000 membership were industrial workers; 20-25% peasants or agricultural workers and 50% artisans. *Storia del Partito Comunista Italiano* Volume I, p.414.

<sup>7</sup> Bordiga was present at this Congress which now turned to the left after the stupidity of expecting the Social Democrats in the Saxon and Thuringian 'workers' governments' to support an attempted communist insurrection. (In a muddled and contradictory speech Zinoviev now said that *"the workers and peasant government slogan is nothing other than a method of agitation, of propaganda and mobilisation of the masses ... a pseudonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat"*.) Bordiga voiced serious reservations about how the Comintern reached its positions, arguing that it was consistency, not an ad hoc left turn that

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was needed. (*"At the present conjuncture it is not a deviation to the Left that we are calling for but the general rectification of the International".*.) However, although he mooted the possibility of the decision-making bodies of Comintern being moved outside of Russia he also withdrew the theses on tactics he had initially presented in opposition to Zinoviev's, in recognition of the fact that the Comintern now appeared to be moving closer to the position of the Italian Left. Bordiga also accepted Zinoviev's offer of a 'vice-presidency' at this Congress — with the concession that he could stay in Italy if he so desired. Bordiga was clearly trying to ensure he could continue using the Comintern meeting as an international platform.

## The Platform of the Committee of Intesa

### **A. Party and Mass**

It is mistaken to think that in every situation expedients and tactical manoeuvres can widen the Party base since relations between the party and the masses depend in large part on the objective situation.

The disagreement between the left and other currents stems from our view that changes in the objective situation should neither affect the party's fundamental programme nor its tactics and *modus operandi*. For us the party's influence over the masses depends on a sharpening revolutionary situation and the extent to which it has remained true to its revolutionary task, firmly maintaining its organisational postulates and tactics. The other currents apparently consider the problem of conquering the "masses" as a problem of will. However, little by little they are adapting themselves to circumstances and are essentially lapsing into opportunism. They are deforming the very nature and function of the party to the point where it is incapable of conquering the masses and unfit for its supreme task.

One of the points set against our tactical concerns is that we in our turn alienate ourselves from the masses, neglecting them out of principle, and ignoring the real situation for the pleasure of maintaining our intransigence intact. But this is only the appearance. In reality we are the only ones who are taking account of concrete circumstances in the revolutionary sense because we are incorporating the work of the moment into the general action plan of the party so that it develops with the dialectical unfolding of the situation.

### **B. The Party's Organisational Practice**

The party is the body which unifies the outbursts of individuals and groups provoked by the class struggle. As such, party organisations must be able to put themselves above particular categories and synthesise the various elements emanating from the

disparate categories of the proletariat, the peasantry, deserters from the bourgeois class, etc.

For the other tendencies the model form of party organisation is the cell. They think this has already resolved the revolutionary problem of tactics by the fact that it means having the organisational base of the party in the factory, that is amongst the workers. We should remember that this is precisely the form adopted by counter-revolutionary organisations (unions, Labour Party) where the division of the working class into professional groups results in a loss of vision of the class' final goal. It is therefore mistaken to believe that organisation on a territorial basis is appropriate for electoralist parties, while the cell system is the cornerstone of a correct revolutionary tactic.

In the West it is simply not enough to go back to Russian organisational experience. Neither is it useful because in Russia from 1905 to 1917 capitalism was just beginning whilst the Tsarist terror was well developed and in full reign. Hence the party's organisational apparatus, comprising factory groups and the ranks or' functionaries (professional revolutionaries), responded to the objective conditions of capitalism's initial development and likewise to the concentration of the proletariat in a few industrial centres where it was necessary for the masses to take union action though they still lacked strong enough bodies for this. On the other hand counter-revolutionary deviations were avoided because the work of the cells even when it was for immediate demands posed the general problem of revolution since not only were peaceful and partial victories impossible but the very rigour of Tsarist reaction ensured that only a certain sort of leader was selected. Ultimately the Tsarist police left a lot more room for activity inside the factories than outside. However, in countries where there is not the same sort of exceptional situation as in Russia from 1905 to 1917, the cell system easily lends itself to the dictatorship of bureaucratic officialdom whose counter-revolutionary deviations are brilliantly demonstrated by the experience of the social democratic parties.

For us the cell system equals a federative system which is the negation of Communist Party and by 'centralisation' we mean the maximum strengthening of the revolutionary energies of the periphery<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 'Periphery' here is used in the sense of the grassroots or party rank and file. Conventionally this was used in distinction to the PCd'I's central executive bodies.

as coordinated and reflected in the executive apparatus.

Similarly, the question of discipline should be posed in terms of channelling and utilising emerging elements which the organisation must be able to harmonise together. In such cases new experiences become the patrimony of the party which is interpreting and assimilating them, not a discovery of a few officials imposed on an inert party with explanations which have more than once proved mistaken. Disciplinary sanctions are for the suppression of isolated instances, not for a general clamp down on the whole party. They must therefore be reserved for use against single aberrations.

The appearance and development of fractions indicates a general malaise inside the party. Fractions are a symptom of the failure of key party functions to meet the party's wider purpose. They are being identified as the root of the trouble and are being fought against in order to get rid of it but disciplinary powers are not being used to resolve the situation, even if this would necessarily be formal and provisional.

In general the Left is clear that the only yardstick for eliminating the conditions which give life to fractions is to guarantee a firm but conscious discipline. In fact we have always been opposed to organisational manoeuvres, double party organisations (fusions, fractions in other parties, etc., etc.) because they break the rational continuity of party development and undermine the very rules of the party's existence and operation amongst which is principally that of discipline.

### ***C. Tactical Problems***

**F**or the united front and Workers' Government we refer in general to the criticisms of the left and in particular the theses on tactics put forward by the Left at the IVth World Congress which were published in *Lo Stato Operaio* in the first half of 1924 in preparation for the Party's national conference.

The others talk of the united front mainly as a manoeuvre to unmask the non-communist parties. By contrast, we insist on the well-known conception of the Left by which the party, by posing economic and political demands that are common to the whole working class, encourages a tendency to struggle inside the class and attempts to gain the sole leadership of it and not hybrid coalitions with other parties.



On the 'Workers' Government', we reaffirm that this is a synonym for the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat' and that it is a so-called agitational slogan. We are against formulating slogans which do not have any real meaning. On the other hand, if what is meant is something different from the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat' we oppose it all the more fiercely since this is a sign of the most dangerous parliamentary divergences, if not the direct denial of the elementary principles of revolutionary marxism.

We are equally averse to the policy of open letters and proposals to other parties all of which would have the revolutionary struggle reduced to a manoeuvre amongst leaders. With the inertia of the masses as an alibi, they divert the struggle from the real target, ignore its difficulties and reduce it to a sterile and ridiculous tactic.

#### ***D. Union Questions***

**W**e reaffirm our acceptance of the theses of the II<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the Communist International. Our opposition to splitting with the unions is the necessity for the party to have a permanent network inside the trades unions which will be transformed into a leading union body when the situation inevitably drives the masses towards us. However, we are not in favour of the present manoeuvres to fuse the two trades union Internationals: Since the International had already resolved the problem of the necessity to concentrate the strength of communist trade unions into a single centre by creating the Red Trade Union International (as opposed to a trade union section of the CI) we do not see the revolutionary reasoning behind such a radical revision of tactic. Since we repeat, Amsterdam operates as an agency of the bourgeoisie, as has also been shown recently over the Dawes Plan. Since, still under the pretext of strengthening the Amsterdam left — a physiological necessity for preserving the activity and life of the International itself — the Red Trade Union International is being effectively liquidated. Nevertheless, although we are opposed to the organisational fusion of the two Internationals, we are in favour of united front action over concrete issues taken up by both Internationals which emanate from below.

#### ***E. The National and Agrarian Questions***

**W**e reaffirm our full approval of the theses put forward by Lenin at the II<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the Communist International, despite having some reservations on the practical application of them in many cases.

### ***F. The Trotsky Question***

**W**e reject the way the question is being posed by the CI and by our Party Centrale. The question raised in the preface of 1917 applies to the behaviour of the various groups of the Russian Communist Party in October 1917 and to the CI's criteria for formulating policy, above all during events in Germany and Bulgaria, and not to problems of the permanent revolution, the role of the peasantry, etc. etc. The first point of supreme revolutionary importance has been side stepped and the Trotsky question cunningly created as we are reminded of his old disagreement with Lenin and his conduct over these questions before 1917, all of which Trotsky has repudiated and not only in words. The Left is with Lenin's position on the above-mentioned questions, while logically we are delighted by the fact that a revolutionary leader like Trotsky has made important criticisms and taken up a polemical stance with the Italian Left.

For the framing of the Trotsky question and an exhaustive treatment of it we refer to the article by Amadeo Bordiga which ought to be published in the party press.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> With the publication of Trotsky's *'Lessons of October'* in November 1924 (as a preface to his book, *1917*) the power struggle within the Russian Party spilled over into the Comintern. Its argument that revolutionary leaders had to be able to judge when a situation was revolutionary (like Lenin in 1917 but not like Zinoviev in Germany in 1923) was Trotsky making a bid to undermine the current leadership and get back into a real position of power. (Zinoviev was leading the Comintern when it followed up the election of a 'workers' government' in Saxony and Thuringia — i.e. a few communists had joined mainly social democratic local governments — with the failed attempt to provoke an insurrection, the so-called German October, in 1923.) Since Trotsky had endorsed all the twists and turns of the united front policies of the Comintern his criticism is not very convincing but it provoked Stalin and Zinoviev to step up their campaign against him. In December Stalin attacked Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, counterposing it with the notion of socialism in one country and 'Trotskyism' was incarnated as the antithesis of 'Leninism'. Initially, though, this was not the main focus of the debate on the 'Trotsky Question' in the International where the controversy tended to hinge round the role of Trotsky prior to his joining the Bolsheviks in 1917. This was what Bordiga focuses on in the article mentioned where he says that Trotsky's present arguments are not being answered and that "*Trotsky must be judged by what he says and what he writes*". The article was originally written in

### G. The New Tactic

The tactic followed by the CI in the German presidential elections (proposal to support Braun) as well as that announced by the German Party, which has provoked the formation of a left tendency inside the German Communist Party (Rosenberg and a quarter of the party), and in the second ballot of the administrative elections in France (Clichy tactic), is further incontrovertible confirmation of the theoretical positions of the left and our judgement of the so-called left turn at the Vth Congress.<sup>3</sup> The Left undertakes to defend the Leninist principle that social democracy is the left-wing of the bourgeoisie not the right-wing of the proletariat. The latter leads to compromises of the most dangerous counter-revolutionary and opportunist kind, that is of electoralism.

The idea that the Communist Parties can agitate for the formation of bourgeois governments of this or that tendency must be denied energetically. This is despite the fact that it is sometimes true that under a social democratic government the party's freedom of action is wider.

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February 1925 but was suppressed until it eventually appeared in *L'Unita* in July alongside the text of a speech Scoccimarro had made at the 5th Enlarged Executive meeting of the Comintern in April (which Bordiga refused to attend). Here Scoccimarro argued there was an "ideological affinity" between Bordiga and Trotskyism and basically gave the back-up for the Commission on the Italian Question to pronounce that: "*The National Congress of the PCd'I will have to say whether it approves the policy applied by the Parry Central Committee in accordance with the Communist International after the Vth congress, but at the same time, will also have to choose between Leninism and the tactic of Bordiga.*" Henceforward the heresy of 'Bordigism' would be quite cynically equated with that of 'Trotskyism' by the Comintern and the Italian Party leadership as part of the campaign to undermine the influence of the Left. It was not so easy however, this was just the start of a process to exterminate all trace of what the PCd'I had been at its foundation. As late as 1938 the Central Committee of the Italian party was demanding that "The Bordigo-Trotskyists must be pitilessly removed and without delay. They must be publicly denounced as enemy agents in a way which will make the masses reject them like the plague. Conciliatory elements who resist breaking off relations with these enemies must be expelled from the party." (Quoted in P. Robotti and G. Germanetto, *Trent' anni di lotte dei comunisti italiani*, Rome 1952.)

<sup>3</sup> See footnote 6 of the Preface

The bourgeoisie regulates the fundamental questions of power according to its class needs and thus puts its trust in the government which best represents its own defence. For example, the Italian experience teaches that the democratism of the Nitti Government was essentially the best the bourgeoisie could have to defend it, and it was thus that much more reactionary.

#### ***H. Assessment of the Communist Party of Italy's Previous Activity***

**W**e refer to the theses, motions and articles of the Left for the national conference in May 1924 and published in *Lo Stato Operaio* at the time.

The Left reaffirms the soundness of the path the Central leadership showed the party at the Livorno and Rome Congresses and freely followed up until the general strike of August 1922.

The results of the subsequent policy followed at the behest of the International and those entrusted with the new central leadership — nominated by the Enlarged Executive of June '23 and confirmed at the Vth Congress — have confirmed our opinions and criticisms.

The tactic towards the Maximalist Party led to the difficult fusion with the small Third Internationalist fraction (*terzina*), out of all proportion with the total forces involved and which on balance shows that it would have been more useful to have assimilated them as individual members as proposed by the Left.

The Maximalist Party took advantage of this tactic to slow down its own dissolution under the gaze of the revolutionary masses. This has been all the more effective in so far as today there are signs of a flirtation with a new left of the party itself.

For a variety of reasons the present Central leadership is not up to its leadership tasks. It is always hesitating to act and when it does improvisation is the substitute for a clear and firm directive. Artificial attempts to balance the fleeting opinions of heterogeneous groups are typical. Thus, in place of convincing initiatives and the firm party management necessary for revolutionary work there is recourse to a sterile and mechanical application of disciplinary procedures.

During the Matteotti crisis the party hesitated and stepped back because it did not know how to exploit the favourable situation. This would certainly not have allowed the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, but

the party could have advanced on to a better position for the autonomous struggle of the working class. During the decisive days it was a gross blunder to join up with the opposition parties and to participate in their parliamentary committee. The distinctive position of the party, the clear contrast between it and the moral and constitutional prejudices of the Aventine secessionists was only realised reluctantly and too late by the Centrale.

As for the subsequent parliamentary tactic, the Centrale was pushed back onto the proper path only by decisive pressure from the periphery and the left. For the same reasons it had chosen to participate in the elections, only making the mistake of substituting the unhappy formula 'proletarian unity' for 'Communist Party' on the electoral list. However, another error was committed with the proposal for the mini-Parliament of the opposition parties. It should have been acting to develop the political autonomy of the proletariat against the bourgeois groups as these were successively unmasked — not by the Communist Party's tactic or its various testing-outs — but by the living experience of recent years. It should also have been emphasising the anti-pacifist, anti-constitutional, anti-democratic, class aspects of any intervention by the third, proletarian factor.

The whole criticism of the opposition, and as often as not the criticism of fascism as well, has been inadequate and shows it owes little to communist ideology.

The party press and the language used in all its publicity have not lived up to the expectations of the masses. The party has been inadequate to its revolutionary task and unable to cope with the situations it has come up against. The link between principles and action has been relaxed and once again the effect of the artificial hegemony of a group, the *ordinovista*, is being felt. The recent origins of this group's political positions are outside of Marxism and have never been rectified by a correct position that went beyond the struggles of the Turin proletariat. Thus there are now many obstacles making the path to revolution more difficult: Instead of the theory and practice of revolutionary class consciousness there is an idealist view of revolution, or an individualist, liberal, literary approach. This latter path cannot be regained by maintaining an orthodoxy towards the Communist International which only involves formal allegiance to its deliberations, nothing more than an occasional and incidental defence that demands nothing substantial or systematic.

The shortcomings of this approach are demonstrated by the abuse

of sterile, incomprehensible slogans which fall into the void. For ever anticipating new organisational and "constitutional" forms for the working class to improvise for itself, such slogans would have the class turned into the subject of so-called "campaigns" that disperse and fracture the activity of the party. A slogan is something which is born out of the real relations of social and political forces in struggle. It can only be based on an organisational formula if it relates to organisations which are already well-known to the masses; which have already been historically put to the test in other countries. This preliminary criticism holds for all the proposals about forming Worker and Peasant Committees, Factory Councils, Agitation Committees, etc., etc. These are not to be rejected out of hand but it should be asked, "What exactly are the functions of such organs in relation to the precise needs of the masses as they are roused by events?". Any idea of replacing existing organs should be rejected, as should any idea of coalitions with other political parties. Given the absence of more vibrant and consistent policy guidelines for the party, all these campaigns serve not to shift and conquer the masses, but only to weary and disillusion them.

In the metalworkers' strike the party let an opportunity slip.<sup>4</sup> Without threatening trade union unity, it could and should have spoken directly to the proletariat even to the point of assuming and claiming responsibility for the leadership of the struggle. From what evidence there is of other political groupings, this would have been limited to Italy — and certainly not in order to conquer power but as a sign of a more important step in the revival of the proletariat.

All the defects in initiative and activity of the Party Centrale towards the outside world are reflected in the excessive amount of work and interventions it has to carry out inside the party. From the time of the Vth Congress the Left has taken on the task of working on all fronts of the party from its various workposts but without participating in the central political leadership, a place reserved for those who are convinced champions of the tactic of the International. We are doing so faithfully, out of loyalty, and not because the Centrale is superior to the periphery. This situation has been denounced by the Centrale which wanted to open an offensive against the Left but disguises its desire to eliminate any influence the Left has over comrades by inviting them to collaborate with the Central leadership.

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<sup>4</sup> In late 1924 there were signs of mounting working class unrest with sporadic strikes of metalworkers and others. such as textile workers, especially in Milan.

With the latest circulars, with the unjustified removal of comrades of the Left from local bodies, with the thousand, hardly reputable, methods of internal work which can be defined not as a dictatorship but as *giolittismo*, **the Centrale has ceased to function as a Party Centre in order to function as a fraction Committee**, and it deserves to be considered as such.

### ***1. The Communist Party's Task in Italy***

**O**n the basis of its already-established opinions on general questions, its criticisms of the path currently being taken by the party, and of the action programmes presented at the IVth and Vth Congresses of the International, the Left intends to present a complete programme of party work. The Left is ready to work obediently with the party whatever the programme decided on at the Congress or even imposed — quite legitimately — by the International against the majority of the Italian Congress. The Left would take over inside the party once it was a matter of realising its programme as a whole and when there was a good prospect for its future development. In any event the Left refuses to consider the questions posed by the leading bodies as the central ones, just as it systematically rejects any personalization of the issue and its reduction to a matter of support or otherwise for individual comrades.

The question of the composition of the Central leadership is subordinate to that of the future programme of action. This in turn is born out of the evaluation of past experience and out of the general question of method. The debate must not be shifted away from this ground by manoeuvres to surprise the comrades who at the moment are being kept in the dark and who, in the vast majority of cases, are only left with the one safe assumption — that the party is badly led and that a remedy must be found for its mistakes and deficiencies.

Thus the Left firmly believes that a satisfactory solution to the question of the Italian Party is impossible without a solution to international questions. Further, it maintains that the latter are already so serious that, without questioning the right of the International to regulate the affairs of individual parties, a temporary empirical solution to relations between Party and International devised on the basis of compromises between groups and, worse, between individuals, must be recognised as insufficient.

## Declaration by the Members of the Committee of Intesa

**W**hilst intervening in the situation which has arisen inside our party the Presidium of the International has commanded us, on pain of expulsion, to dissolve the Committee of Intesa which it views as the core of a faction within the party.

Even while it announces full liberty to debate in the run-up to the Congress, the Presidium says nothing about the formal accusation of factionalism and sectarianism we have made against the Central leadership of the Italian Party and has made no direct declarations or taken any other measure to eliminate the real cause of the Party's crisis.

This does not surprise us because we have to sadly say that this is another typical application of the methods of leadership of the International which we have already fought and will continue to fight. Simply supporting the viewpoint and actions of the comrades who are part of the leading international organs in Congresses and debates is to claim that every error and every fault in the struggle against the bourgeois adversary has been rectified. Every deficiency, even the most scandalous, is transformed into a hallmark of pure Bolshevik and Leninist revolutionism. Because we are opposed to various points of their policy, the splintering tactics of the Italian central leadership are being concealed by the leaders of the International.

The measures demanded to resolve the party's difficult situation and the internal tensions which have arisen as a result of the unfair campaign organised by the Central leadership against the Committee of Intesa are being reduced to the mechanical formula of a discipline which does not convince and which does not deserve respect. The grave problem of tendencies and factions in the party is a historical consequence of the political tactics adopted by the Centrale and only confirms what we are saying. At the same time this is a symptom of the failure to give any serious consideration to the situation whilst pretending that it can be overcome by intimidations and threats, by subjecting individual comrades to the usual sort of disciplinary pressures and letting them believe that the whole of the party's future development depends on their personal conduct.



According to this method — anti-marxist in substance and sterile in its results — we could, like so many of the treacherous and opportunist elements who manoeuvre on the margins of our glorious International, start negotiating and forming pacts with the central leadership; we could set down conditions and in turn make our own threats and reach a compromise by the same sort of transactions produced by despicable bourgeois parliamentarism. For sometime now these more or less laborious and difficult agreements with more or less influential big shots and 'political men' have concealed and protracted the serious problems which have arisen in the way the International operates, inevitably exacerbating them and making them more difficult to solve. In our turn we too could threaten to split or to form a new party in the event of expulsions. This so-called communist 'policy' would be a measure of how much redress we could achieve — the more harm we could demonstrate ourselves capable of doing to the party and to the International the more satisfied we might become.

However, we will not act in such a manner. What we mean by discipline is something infinitely different. Just as we have not hesitated to give up the party leadership so the repeated provocations of the Centrale do not move us to construct a dissident little party (*partitino*) for the satisfaction of a group of sacked leaders. Despite the material constraints we do not forget that above all we are members of the communist party and the International. With a will of iron we are determined to remain so and will never give in to overtures but ceaselessly criticise the kind of methods which we believe are against the interests and the future of our cause.

In the face of a possible breach with the party and following a directive which we consider to be unjust and dangerous for the party, we who are accused of factionalism and splitting tactics will sacrifice our opinions to party unity. This will demonstrate how we of the Italian Left are perhaps the only ones for whom discipline is a serious and non-negotiable matter.

We re-endorse all previous examples of our way of thinking and all our actions. We deny that the Committee of Intesa was a manoeuvre designed to split the party and to build a faction inside it. Again, we protest at the campaign mounted on this basis without giving us the right of defence and which has scandalously deceived the party.

Nevertheless, since the Presidium believes that imposing the dissolution of the Committee of Intesa upon us will be a step towards removing factionalism, even though we think the contrary, we will obey. At the same time, however, we leave the Presidium with the entire responsibility for what happens inside the party and for any demonstrations which arise in

response to the way the Centrale has administered internal Party life, demonstrations which the Committee of Intesa was directing and disciplining in a way that was useful for the party and for its future prospects. We believe that the much boasted crushing of the Committee of Intesa will only foment the factionalism that we did not desire and that the party will come with ours despite its vendettas. It is true that we have been confidently assured that all the disciplinary measures taken against comrades belonging to the Committee of Intesa — amongst which are the expulsion of comrade Girone<sup>5</sup> and a whole series of removals from posts — will be annulled and that there will be absolute freedom of discussion for the Congress. But freedom of discussion implies discussion with equal means and rights. If there was going to be a serious guarantee of this then the Centrale would have accepted the proposals we made at the time but there has been no further word of that. Federal congresses should not be held before there has been a debate in the press with published theses and motions of the various tendencies. Neither should a loyal representative of the Centrale be sent to the congresses themselves to put forward all the things which have recently been said in the press about the Left without a comrade who is equally familiar with the debate being able to counter this.

Nor should it be permitted to present in the party newspaper, that is in the paper of all the comrades, journalistic articles with declamatory headlines and more or less tendentious comments while we on our part are unable and certainly would not want to do likewise with the writings of other currents. But we are not haggling over these guarantees and even though we have no confidence that they will be granted we are giving up our work of trying to secure them by monitoring and checking, which was the only aim of the Committee of Intesa. The comrades should judge whether these demands were right and defend the party however they can from the employment of methods which we have been obliged to define as Giolittian, in that they tend to falsify the results of any consultations. With this last protest the Committee of Intesa is dissolved. We will desist from every attempt at liaison and distribution of our texts to Party members, as well as from holding meetings independently of those called by party bodies. It goes without saying that this is not to say we are renouncing the basic right of groups of comrades who regard themselves as on the Left to get together for the purely theoretical work of discussion and preparation for

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<sup>5</sup> Girone had been on the editorial board of *L'Unita* in early 1925. Spriano mentions him, along with Onorato Damen, as one of the itinerant speakers for the Left that the local secretaries should be on their guard against.

the conclusive theses which are destined to appear exclusively in the party press.

Despite the bitterness which has been added by the Centrale we feel obliged to carry the debate to the widest layers of the party and give the comrades a complete idea of the standpoint of the Left on all the various issues without personal insults and gossip. We hope that we will not have to continue indefinitely correcting inaccurate assertions about ourselves and reducing the debate on the Centrale's policies for the Italian situation to an unedifying account of its internal activity. However, if we have to keep on with this, we hope that the boycott of our letters of amendment and protest (which has made us find an alternative way of protesting to the comrades than via the party press) will stop. We have already clearly refused any responsibility for the consequences of continuing to abuse these means of communication.

The comrades will judge our actions. We are not concerned with getting their superficial sympathy or support in order to accumulate votes for the congress but rather to carry the debate and the consciousness of the party a little beyond the sort of superficial attitudes and pettiness which are exploited when one wants to exert the least effort to get rid of the annoyance of seeing oneself discussed and criticised. If, on the other hand, the continuation of demagogic illusions and manufacture of confusion and bewilderment is preferred this can be done, but do not believe that anything stable will be established. The harm done to the party will remain but the position of groups and grouplets produced by artificial political scheming will not be saved. Such a tawdry scenario is destined to collapse very quickly leaving a clear way open to the dangers of opportunism and degeneration of the party. We would still conduct a relentless struggle against this, without any reservations or constraints, secure in the knowledge that the vast majority of Italian communists will rise as one man should the threat and danger become imminent, sweeping away the pathetic game of those who quibble and distract — not to divide the party but to lead it complete and intact on the way marked out for it.

*July 1925*

Signed by: *A. Bordiga, O. Damen, B. Fortichiari, F. Grossi, U. Girone, La Camera, M. Lanfranchi, M. Manfredi, O. Perrone, L. Repossi, C. Venegoni.*

## ***Glossary of Italian political terms***

### **Aventino**

A form of protest by opposition parties in Parliament, demonstrated by their leaving the Chamber. Named after the 4th century BC incident in Ancient Rome when the plebs withdrew to the Aventine Hill after rejecting patrician-dominated rule from the Palatine Hill. The Aventino after Matteotti's kidnap and murder lasted from June 1924 to the end of January 1925 although the PCd'I, under Pressure from the Comintern to return, sent Luigi Repposi back into the Chamber in November to read out an indictment of the regime.

### **Comitato d'intesa**

Literally an alliance or agreement committee, in other words an organisation of like-minded people.

### **giolittismo**

After Giovanni Giolitti (1842-1928), predominant pre-War political figure. Renowned for his political craft and guile, he first became Prime Minister in 1892 and altogether held office five times as Prime Minister and twice as Minister of the Interior. The term *giolittismo* derives from its namesake's expertise in the practice of political transformism (*trasformismo*) or the undermining of the programmatic identity of the three major political parties, the Liberal, Catholic and Socialist Parties. By the use of government Patronage and bribes which fed personal and/or local interests at the same time as encouraging the Catholics and Socialists to join the constitutional fold the net effect was a situation of factional interest blocs which were manipulated by Giolitti to maintain the political status quo. This was successful during the period of Italy's 'industrial revolution' from 1896 to 1914. As far as the Socialists were concerned he was so satisfied with the success of his policy of incorporating them into the parliamentary system that he declared Marxism had been abandoned by the Socialists and put into the attic. Hence the adoption of the name *La Soffitta (The Attic)* by the revived intransigent socialists within the PSI in 1912. Although he had instigated the Libyan War in 1911 when the 1st World War broke out he retired from office only to return in June 1920 as the saviour of Italian capital in the face of mass working class upsurge. In typical fashion he negotiated a scheme (which was never

implemented) for joint union/management control to end the factory occupations in September that year thus signalling the defeat of the Italian workers' movement of the *Biennio Rosso* (Two Red Years). The final act of *giolittismo* was the electoral deal which allowed Mussolini's Fascists 35 seats in the Italian Parliament in 1921 (after their derisory failure in 1919).

### **Massimalismo and Maximalist Party**

The Italian Socialist Party (PSI) which, in keeping with Social Democratic tradition, maintained a distinction between the maximum programme (socialism) and the minimum programme (interim reforms). The acceptance of the necessity for capitalism to be overthrown by revolutionary means was never binding on the membership. Thus, although the PSI took an official stand of neutrality during the 1st World War and under Serratti's leadership gave formal adherence to the Communist International when it was formed in 1919, in practice its leadership feared the idea of revolution and avoided like the plague any responsibility for co-ordinating and leading a concerted political assault by the Italian working class during the 'Red Two Years' of 1919-20. After the Communist split in 1921 the PSI further fractured when it expelled the Turatian right-wing who would have no truck with the International. (They formed the Unitary Socialist Party, and Giacomo Matteotti was one of its leaders.) This was partly due to the machinations of the Comintern which was trying to impel the majority of the PSI (which still sent delegates to the International) to re-fuse with the Communist Party. However, in January 1923 a committee against fusion (led by Nenni) was set up inside the PSI and the Comintern's plan never materialised.

### **ordinovista**

A term (implying a fraction) used to refer to the Gramscian Party leadership after 1923 which was dominated by people who had been members of the 1919-20 *L'Ordine Nuovo* group inside the PSI. (Gramsci, Togliatti, Tasca, Terracini et.al.) They produced a paper (*The New Order*) which became the mouthpiece of the Turin workers' movement and their take-over of the factories through factory councils. Ordinovism is typically associated with the thinking of Gramsci at this time. This emphasised the workplace and factory councils as the embryo of the 'workers' state' which he thought could be built up inside capitalism and underestimated the importance of a political struggle to overthrow the existing state. The group broke up during the Spring of 1920 and its members joined the communist fraction established by Bordiga prior to the

Livorno split in 1921. *L'Ordine Nuovo* became a newspaper of the PCd'I.

### **PCd'I**

Communist Party of Italy, the name adopted for the Communist Party at Livorno in 1921, symbolising its self-conception as a section of the Communist International (i.e. of the world party of the proletariat). By contrast the PCI or Italian Communist Party, the name taken by Togliatti's "new" party in 1943 is symptomatic of the nationalist approach of the Stalinists.

### **terzini**

Members of the minority fraction inside the PSI, associated with Serratti who led the Party after Mussolini's expulsion, and others like Fabrizio Maffi. So-called because they wanted the Party to remain in the Third International and accepted the Comintern's overtures of fusion with the Communist Party (against the wishes of the Communist Party Executive they were offered leadership posts in the PCd'I). In the event fusion with this fraction, numbering about 2,000, took place between August and September 1924.

## **Appendix A:**

### **Correspondence between the Committee of Intesa and the Party Executive**

#### ***To the EC of the Communist Party of Italy***

*1st June 1925*

Dear comrades

Among the deliberations of the Central committee's last meeting which were published in the party organ, *L'Unita*, on 26th May, are the preparations for an event of major importance inside the party, the congress. It is said that this will be held shortly, i.e. after a deep and thorough discussion which, however, is to be considered practically open however necessary it is for all the documents relating to the work of the last session of the Enlarged Executive Committee to be published beforehand.

It is superfluous to declare how genuinely the necessity for a serious and wide pre-congress debate is being felt. The situation inside the party — which you yourselves recognise is one of continuing ideological confusion — where, despite everything, fairly wide layers of the party are affected, demonstrates the complete urgency for this.

But, dear comrades, will there be this process of clarification in the interest of the party as a whole if comrades from the various currents of thought are in no position to actively participate and do not have equal conditions of debate, whether verbally or in the press?

In this regard, the responsible bodies will undoubtedly have taken account of the exceptional and precarious life of our press. Will a brief campaign of clarification actually be permitted, and up to what point? In our view the columns of the daily paper, *L'Unita*, should be opened for the discussion.

On the other hand, what can a congress which is aiming at bolshevisation be worth if is attended by delegates from the various federations where there has been no previous discussion, of a serious and informed nature, with the recognised representatives of the various currents about the *"fundamental problems of national life on which basis the general programme of the party must be drawn"*?

We believe there would be no value, at least if the links of formal discipline amongst the comrades are valued less than the links of so-called conviction.

The undersigned comrades who are sending you this are linked together by their identity of view and their critical appreciation of the most pressing

problems facing the party. They think that the various ideological confusions will only be overcome through unrestricted debate without any form of hindrance. Towards this aim they propose:

- a) that, given the lack of preparation of the mass of the party and the importance of the questions, the necessary amount of time is devoted to the discussion;
- b) that the provincial congresses are given the means to speak against the recognised comrades of the various tendencies.
- c) that the respective federal congresses nominate delegates for the party Congress; that in the case of other systems of nomination being used those eventually called to serve on committees be able to choose to sit with adherents of the various currents;
- d) that, finally, the right to name and to discipline the speakers who are voicing the opinions of this or that current be recognised.

It is obvious that the amount of work required to prepare for the congress requires active participation and discipline from everybody.

The undersigned comrades are therefore bringing to the attention of the comrades of the Executive Committee that a 'Committee of Intesa' has been constituted amongst the elements of the left.

Signed: ***Onarato Damen, Luigi Reossi, Mario Lanfranchi, Carlo Venegoni, Mario Manfredi, Bruno Fortichiari.***



## ***Against factional splintering for the unity of the Communist party of Italy (Section of the Communist International)***

### ***Communique of the Executive Committee***

For some time now the Executive Committee has been aware of a certain factional activity which has arisen inside the ranks of the Party on the part of some elements who are impervious to revolutionary consciousness and to international discipline and who like to define themselves as "left" or better still, as the "Italian Left". The EC knew about this, was monitoring and keeping watch: Once already — before the recent meeting of the Enlarged Executive of the International in Moscow — it has denounced to the party masses the situation which has come about as a consequence of the disguised factionalism of comrade Amadeo Bordiga after the Vth World Congress. At that time the mass of the party reacted energetically against the disintegrators but the warning was not comprehended by those to whom the bloody experience of these years of fascist reaction means nothing: They still believe in reviving the period of "1920"; they have retained the organisational conceptions of social democracy; they maintain that the working class and our party — which is the vanguard of the class and which is struggling daily against the government's fascism and the semi-fascism of the opposition parties — should let itself be distracted by their activity in order to follow them in their miserable and criminal factional and splitting manoeuvres against the International.

The documents which the EC believes are necessary to communicate to the mass of the party are themselves clear enough. A group has been formed inside the party which regards the period of preparation and discussion prior to the Congress as a kind of parenthesis in the revolutionary struggle:- disciplinary constraints should be loosened or directly abolished; the iron unity of the organisation should disintegrate into a whole series of factions according to whatever number of currents are discussing inside the party and in accordance with the likely presence of *agents provocateur* of the government who would be pleased to see them created. The Central Committee which represents this unity should be reduced to an administrative office which registers and catalogues the opinions, proposals and initiatives of the various committees of the various factions.

This mode of thought is a sequel to the deviations which have to be fought against with the greatest energy. If it turns into action, if it tries to become a concrete faction, if it develops into illegal and conspiratorial activity inside the party, then it becomes a crime against the party, against the proletariat, against the revolution. Whatever the reason, disruptions to the iron will of the party, to the absolute discipline and loyalty of all the membership to the responsible party bodies, cannot be tolerated. Does this mean that there is no freedom to discuss before the congress, that all the comrades are deprived of

the means and opportunity to express their opinions and contribute to the life and administration of their party? Certainly not. They can develop themselves through the debates inside the party and measure themselves against the currents of opinion which they will find in the federal Congresses and in the National Congress. What they cannot do is form organised factions which have open or secret committees to direct them, which work to permanently split the ranks of the party, which counterpose their directives to the directives of the CC and of the International, their discipline to the discipline of the party of the International, in order to create an irresponsible masonry against the Italian CC and against the International Executive.

The vast majority of party members have already understood that the iron unity of the organisation is a necessary presupposition for the existence of the party itself and for its revolutionary efficacy. They have already reacted and will react even more energetically against all the manoeuvres of the various groups and grouplets comprising irresponsible elements who are demoralised by the objective difficulty of the Italian situation and who have lost all sense of political direction, believing that everything can be resolved by extremist postures and phrases. That such is the situation in the party is demonstrated by the fact that all the factional documents have come into the hands of the Centrale, that the Centrale has been informed of the meetings which have been held in several cities, that numerous comrades — even though they claim to belong to the so-called 'Italian Left' — have recently refused to make common cause with the wreckers.

By far the majority of the party is with the EC for the most thorough struggle against whoever in 1925 wants to repeat the manoeuvres against the Communist International that were made by the maximalists in 1920 after the occupation of the factories and which at the Livorno split carried the majority of revolutionary workers outside the ranks of the Communist International.

Starting from these considerations the EC has unanimously concluded that the members of the Committee of Intesa, comrades Damen, Repossi, Lanfranchi, Venegoni, Fortichiari, are responsible for an attempt against the party which could be punished by their expulsion and has decided to refer them to the judgement of the next session of the Central Committee, in the meantime suspending them from all organisational work or responsibilities.

***The Executive Committee***

(undated)

## **Appendix B: The 'Italian Question' at the 2nd Congress of the Communist International**

***The Communist International and the tactics of the Communist Party of Italy at the meeting of the Enlarged Executive in Moscow of June, 1922.\****

### **RESOLUTION BY THE PRESIDUM ON THE ITALIAN PARTY**

The EC of the Communist International takes note of the declaration by the majority of the delegation from the Communist Party of Italy, according to which:

*The theses on tactics considered by the Rome Congress of the Communist Party of Italy do not amount to a decision about the Party's work, but only an opinion expressed during the preparatory work of the Congress.*

This opinion has got to be harmonised with the resolutions of the Communist International. The Communist Party of Italy is informed that the EC of the Communist International considers these theses to be erroneous. The Executive requests that at its next Congress the Communist Party of Italy adopts a position on the question of general tactics in perfect accord with the tactical line of the Communist International.

### **COMMUNIQUE FROM THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF ITALY**

At its meeting of 29th June the PCI central office had a complete report of the discussion in Moscow and the decisions reached between the Party delegation and the EC of the Communist International.

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\* Originally published in *L'Ordine Nuovo* 1.7.22. This translation is from the documentary collection in *Relazione del partito comunista d'Italia al IV congresso dell'Internazionale comunista novembre 1922*. Iskra, 1976 [Milan].

Whilst publishing the resolution voted through the mandate of the enlarged EC of the Presidium of the CI at the 12th June sitting, and also the summarised proceedings of the discussions, the PCI Centre takes note of the decisions and agreements as a whole and fully ratifies their acceptance by the Party's delegation.

Whilst noting with satisfaction that relations between the Party and the International have not given way to any kind of organisational or disciplinary conflict, that political policies and tactics have, and will always have, no meaning without the complete identity of ends and means in the struggle for the communist revolution; the central leadership fully guarantees to the International and to all Party comrades, above and beyond particular opinions formed on the basis of its own experience, that it will act unconditionally in compliance with the recent decisions taken in Moscow and with all subsequent directives of the International, in accordance with the solemn undertaking of the Rome Congress.

Whilst reminding all comrades of the serious situation at present facing the proletariat in Italy and the delicate tasks of the Party in view of this, the central leadership warns against the decisions of Moscow, which are taken in an executive capacity, giving way to internal discussions; and thus, as the central leadership responds according to its responsibilities by faithfully and immediately implementing them, it reminds all Party militants of the duty to maintain the strictest discipline, in the certainty that the party will proceed with the development of its tactic and in cementing its revolutionary work with that perfect solidarity and unity of movement which it has always shown and exemplified.

### **THE DISCUSSION AS IT IS DEALT WITH IN THE PCd'I CENTRAL COMMITTEE REPORT**

... At the beginning of June the Italian delegation was in Moscow. It was composed as follows: Bordiga, Gramsci, Ambrogi for the Party centre, Graziadei for the minority at the Rome Congress.

At the Presidium sitting of the 5th-6th June, at which our delegation was present, it was decided to put the Communist Party of Italy and its problems on the agenda for the plenary session. Our comrades asked that any such discussion be between the delegation and the Presidium and eventually it was agreed that a commission be nominated, and only after this had done its work would the argument be put to the enlarged E.C.

... The Commission on the Italian question came to be nominated in the shape of comrades: Zinoviev, Radek, Souvarine (France), Giordanov (Bulgaria), Kreibich (Czechoslovakia).

The Commission held two sittings, on the 9th and 11th June. The Italian delegation proposed dividing the issues into two parts: one on the Party's work

to date and the other on future tactics. In the first part, the delegates for the majority maintained and factually demonstrated that there was no organisational or disciplinary conflict between our Party and the International. In particular, the Congress (of Rome) and our united front tactic were discussed. It was easy to clarify the significance of the unanimous agenda which made the vote on the theses on tactics a preliminary motion. This meant that international discipline was maintained, and not only in a formal sense.

On the subject of the Alliance of labour, as was demonstrated by the February meeting between the political parties which we didn't attend but adhered to by letter, its aim is not to form an alliance of parties but only to induce each of the proletarian political parties to support the projected trades union Alliance. If the communists had intervened otherwise the basis of the Alliance would have been extended to the political organisations. The only difference this would have made is that it would have been less easy to form the trades union Alliance and easier for it to be exploited for opportunist ends. Thus, the Party's stance does not prevent major opportunities of speaking to the proletariat but rather secures a presence for it inside the local bodies and proletarian assemblies of the Alliance. This, despite the sabotage of our request for wider representation in proportion to the organisations belonging to the national Committee of the Alliance. The fact that the date of the meeting was before the resolution of the Enlarged EC on the united front eliminates any question of the Communist Party of Italy having violated discipline on this issue.

It was also clarified that there was no opposition to the implementation of international directives by our Party. The Party press has always supported the official Comintern directives on the question of the international united front and the Party has done everything possible to apply the decisions of the Berlin Conference against Socialist sabotage. If there has been debate on the united front, this has been internal and within the rubric of preparing for the congress. Not only has there never been an editorial criticising the Comintern tactic, but even in our internal debate we have always maintained that it is absurd to judge this tactic by the superficial criticism that it is an opportunist deviation and have rather sought the best way of reaching the common revolutionary goal.

The discussion revealed that it was impossible to state that there had been, on the part of the Italian Communist Party, acts of indiscipline or obstacles put in the way of the operation of international organisational links: a thing which comrade Zinoviev's speech rightly indicated would be very dangerous.

Moving on to discuss the tactic to adopt in future, it was established that even in the case of a difference of opinion, the dispensations of the International would be followed without any resistance on the part of the Italian Party and its majority ....

[After the report by the majority and that of Graziadei] comrade Zinoviev proposed that, given the satisfactory outcome of these discussions from which

the indisputable good will of the Italian comrades to conform to the discipline of the International had emerged, the question not be brought to the Enlarged Executive.

### THE 'CONFIDENTIAL RESOLUTION' OF THE ECCI<sup>\*</sup>

The EC of the CI considers it absolutely indispensable:

1. That the PCI immediately and categorically finishes with its hesitations on the question of the united front tactic. In no case can a distinction of principle be admitted between the united front in the field of the economic struggle and the united front in the field of the political struggle. All the attempts by the PCI to operate this artificial distinction only condemn this party to half measures and reveal its doctrinal impotence, making it easier for the reformists and Serratians to campaign against the PCI; paralysing the efforts of the communists to regroup the working masses around their party; and finally, weakening the position of the CI in its international campaign for the united front.

2. That in the shortest possible time the PCI launches the workers government slogan and campaigns for it most energetically in the press, in meetings, in relations with other parties, etc. The situation in Italy, the instability of the bourgeois government, the continuous parliamentary crises, the struggle of the deaf between the two tendencies in the PSI, the orgy of fascist violence, the ever-sharper offensive of capital, the incessant explosions of civil war, the passionate search for a way out which characterises the frame of mind of the mass of the proletariat, all this creates very favourable ground for the PCI to propagandise for the workers government. It goes without saying that this idea of the workers government must certainly not be considered as a parliamentary scheme, but as the revolutionary mobilisation of all the workers for the overthrow of bourgeois rule.

3. That the PCI takes the *initiative* in organising the united proletarian front against fascism. With this aim the PCI must boldly and explicitly propose

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\* At the end of the discussion, after the resolution of the Presidium, Zinoviev proposed a '*confidential resolution*', not to be published, which the majority (Ambrogi, Bordiga, Gramsci) accepted. At the same time, however, they asked that the declaration — here put alongside that of the minority (Graziadei) — be put in the report of the proceedings. (c.f. *Lo Stato Operaio* nos. 6 and 7, March 6th and 13th, 1924.)

the formation of local Workers' Committees throughout Italy, comprising both members of a political party and those with no party allegiance.

### **DECLARATION OF THE PCd'I MAJORITY**

The majority of the Italian Party affirms that the framework it has drawn for communist tactics in general and for the application of the united front in particular is a clear and precise where the distinction between the field of economic struggle and the field of political struggle cannot be found. Accordingly, the significance of the united front tactic is clearly political and aims to intensify the Party's influence in the political struggle.

The task which this presented to the Communist Party inside the movement as a whole was that of avoiding a coalition with other political parties as the basis for the common leadership of the proletarian struggle. This is not at all to deny the fundamentally political character of the struggle nor the importance of the task itself.

The majority of the Communist Party of Italy disputes that it has hesitated about implementing the united front tactic and that it has resorted to half measures. It has always followed a firm and clear plan with the single aim of exploiting the concrete situation as much as possible in the struggle against the socialists and all the other adversaries of the International. Obviously this is not to dispute that mistakes have been made nor the right of the CI to demand changes in the Italian Party's tactic, in accordance with the majority resolutions of its supreme organs and under their responsibility.

The majority of the Italian delegation also considers that the depiction of the Italian situation in the Zinoviev resolution could lead to an inaccurate view about the instability of the bourgeois government. Events on the parliamentary scene must not lead us to conclude that the Italian ruling class does not have a very solid state apparatus that is prepared for a formidable counterrevolutionary struggle, with the support of the irregular fascist bands. In addition, the danger from the combined policy of the reformists on the one hand and the Serrattians and other false revolutionary groups on the other must be given due emphasis. By Tolstoyan campaigns and defeatist criticisms of "red militarism" they are both impeding the revolutionary reorganisation of the proletarian vanguard and while the former aim to reach a compromise with the bourgeoisie, the latter are playing a demagogic game to cover their own treachery which diverts the proletariat from its real tasks in the struggle. It must be pointed out that the effect of all this could be to prepare proletarian action which leads to an unwelcome outcome whilst communists aspire to make any action a step towards raising the material and theoretical level of preparedness of the working class for the final revolutionary victory.

Given the present situation in Italy it is obvious that the moment for launching the workers' government slogan — from the point of view of the objective effects such as the realisation of the complete control of the movement as a whole by the Party — will have to correspond with a concrete turn-round in the situation. This turn-round may take the form of a general strike as a consequence of some particularly outrageous episode in the bourgeoisie's offensive; or else it may take the form of a National Congress of the Alliance of labour, as a consequence of the long campaign conducted by the Communist Party.

As for point 3, the majority of the Italian delegation declares that the initiative in question has already been undertaken for some time by the Italian Party. The local committees exist in the form of Alliance of labour committees, whose development will have to be monitored as part of the Communist Party's campaign which at the moment is reaching its *height*.

The present situation absolutely excludes the possibility of proposing new committees outside of the Alliance of labour. As far as the July 15th objective is concerned, the Italian Party, whilst ready to fully comply with it, reserves the right to present concrete proposals to the Executive Committee in the interest of the success of the revolutionary struggle — on the best time to launch the workers' government slogan, taking into account the conditions outlined above and the actual situation that the delegation finds on its return to Italy.

### **DECLARATION OF THE PCd'I MINORITY**

I have signed the resolution proposed by the majority of the Italian Communist Party because I think it's necessary that the public form of the decision should be as conciliatory as possible and should avoid internal polemics; because it is absolutely true that there has never been a conflict over discipline between the Communist Party and the Comintern; and because the proposed resolution contains an absolutely loyal commitment to develop the united front tactic in the sense desired by the Comintern, something which has always been supported by the minority of the Italian Communist Party.

In a second declaration comrade Graziadei stated:

For the reasons I have already explained, I have also signed the public resolution presented by the representatives of the Italian Communist Party. Naturally I cannot subscribe to the declaration made by those same representatives of the majority in the reserved part of the resolution. I must, therefore, declare that the observations of comrade Bordiga on the local committees which are already formed in Italy for the Alliance of labour are perfectly in line with the facts.



## **The Communist Workers Organisation ...**

was founded in 1975 and joined with the Internationalist Communist Party (Italy) to form the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party in 1983. The Internationalist Communist Party was the only significant organisation to emerge in the Second World War (1943) condemning both sides as imperialist. It is the most significant organisation produced by the internationalist communist left which fought the degeneration of the Comintern in the 1920s as well as the process of “bolshevisation” (i.e. Stalinism) imposed on the individual communist parties. In 2009, in recognition of the new elements that had joined the founding groups, the IBRP became the Internationalist Communist Tendency.

We are for the revolutionary party but we are not that Party. Nor are we the only basis for that party which will emerge from the workers’ struggles of the future. Our aim is to be part of that process by participating in all the struggles of the class that we can with the aim of linking the immediate struggle of the class with its long term historic programme — communism.

The Internationalist Communist Tendency now includes il Partito Comunista Internazionale (Italy) which produces *Battaglia Comunista* (a monthly paper) and *Prometeo* (a quarterly theoretical journal); Groupe Internationaliste Ouvrier/Internationalist Workers Group (Canada/USA) which produces *Notes Internationalistes/Internationalist Notes* (quarterly); Gruppe Internationaler Socialistinnen (Germany) which produces *Socialismus oder Barbarei* (quarterly) and *Bilan et Perspectives* (France) which produces a quarterly journal of the same name.

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