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TURIN 1920

Antonio Gramsci

**FACTORY COUNCILS
AND
GENERAL STRIKE**

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TURIN AND ITALY

Dated April 3rd, 1920

Published in the Piedmont edition of *Avanti!* just after the strike had started at FIAT and the lockout had been proclaimed. The employers have taken the offensive.

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Dated April 3rd, 1920

From *L'Ordine Nuovo*. An attack on the anarchists who were involved in the Turin Factory Council movement.

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Dated May 8th, 1920

From *L'Ordine Nuovo*. The general strike has ended in defeat, and now in the aftermath of repression Gramsci expresses bitterness at the role played by the Socialist Party and the Unions.

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Dated May 8th, 1920

From *L'Ordine Nuovo*. Developing the attack on the leaders of Italy's organised working class, and realising the inevitability of the strike's defeat. However, the Councils have not been destroyed, and Gramsci calls for a national co-ordination of the revolutionary movement.

TOWARDS A RENEWAL OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY

May 8th, 1920

From *L'Ordine Nuovo*. A paper delivered with the full support of the Turin section, to the National Council of the Socialist Party, meeting in Milan April 19th-20th. Gramsci's critique of the leadership of the Socialist Party, and his call that it should constitute itself as the true revolutionary party of the proletariat in Italy.

THE TURIN FACTORY COUNCILS

Published in *Communist International*, 1920

Reprinted in *L'Ordine Nuovo*, March 14th 1921. Report sent to the Executive Committee of the Communist International in July 1920. Gramsci's base report, giving a comprehensive history of the Turin movement, and laying the basis for the split with the Socialist Party in 1921.

Published by Moulinavert Press 1970

This edition republished by Unpopular Books, 1989

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introduction

The history of the Factory Council movement in Italy has barely yet been written. Gramsci's account here is necessarily partisan, and documentation for the part played by the anarchists and the syndicalists is virtually non-existent. However, there are accounts in John Cammet's biography of Gramsci, in Guerin's 'Anarchism', in Woodcock's 'Anarchism', and in New Left Review 51, from which the fifth translation in this pamphlet is taken.

The six articles translated here emerged from the wave of struggle that swept Italy immediately after the first world war, at a time when all over Europe the working class was fighting for power, and the peasants and workers in Russia had overthrown Tsarism.

Today, fifty years later, the revolutionary movement in Italy inevitably faces many of the same problems that faced the Turin movement in the 20's, and part of the responsibility for this must lie with the 'Ordinovisti' and Gramsci himself. He could not see the limitations inherent in the concept of Bolshevism, and went on to found a Communist Party which today invites the same critique from revolutionaries as that which Gramsci himself levelled at the Socialist Party.

The same considerations apply to Gramsci's attitude to the Factory Councils. The establishment of workers' councils is a necessary precondition of any revolution in the West as in the East. But the Councils are simultaneously the means whereby the old society will be destroyed and the ground on which the new will be formed. As such they cannot be made in the image of bourgeois society, where 'politics' remains a specialised activity apart. They cannot be limited to a purely economic role, any more than they can be confined to the realm of production alone: in other words the call 'power to the people' means that the Councils must recognise no power other than their own. They cannot be subordinated to any party; they must be built without hierarchy, with full equality of communication in all directions, and must imply their own withering away as workers' Councils, into a society in which work as lab-

to the people.

November 1970

Turin and Italy

These last few days Turin has been living out its Passion Week. Class struggle is becoming more extensive and more widespread; new battles are being undertaken that require other than the usual tactics, and whose outcome cannot yet be foreseen. On the one hand there is a persistent, lucid and full awareness of rights, and on the other a hardening inclination towards resistance. And the situation is becoming intense. This is how every worker feels it: with varying degrees of clarity they feel themselves living at a moment that could be decisive for their class, a moment in which all can be staked, everything risked, and perhaps everything lost. Never before has the real kind of participation needed in class action been so apparent as today: the effort to master a reality, not to be swept away by a mechanism that acts outside of us; the straining of every desire; the impatience in every mind. Never before, then, has one thing been as necessary as it is today: not to draw veils over our eyes, but to fix our gaze steadfastly on reality, and to keep open minds. When it might be a matter of risking absolutely everything, then in judgement and deliberation there must be the utmost caution.

In part the symptoms are plain to all: metal-workers, cobblers, tailors, State employees; in all ninety thousand workers are idle. Turin responds to the calls for production in a manner befitting a socialist city, responds by intensifying the struggle of the producers for their liberation. And of this ninety thousand, fifty thousand are fighting openly for this end, fifty thousand are

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Number the pages after all.

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P.15: Ignore date at bottom of page.

workers for whom this end is no longer mere words, no longer a doubtful dream to be battled out internally for their own self-clarification, for it to be moulded into a tangible and concrete form. No. It is something precise, it is an explicit programme of continuous action, a guide for everyday operations. The struggle is on for realisation, it is a struggle of will against will, of force against force. Are the thanks for this new situation due to the Factory Councils? In part yes, and in part it is the revolutionary and insurrectionary tradition of this city, that is alive in a new form, that has been embodied in a programme of action in which it has found consistency. It is against this spirit that, today, the guns are being got ready.

It is the government that is preparing them. But over and above them it is the industrialists. Indeed, it is symptomatic that it was directly to the central government that the industrialists turned requesting defence, over the heads of local political authorities. Their intention was plainly and explicitly one of attack. And today Turin is a beleaguered fortress: there is word of fifty thousand soldiers, and of artillery drawn up on the hillside. In the countryside reinforcements are waiting, and in the city armoured cars; machine guns have been set up on top of private houses, in the quarters that have the reputation of being most ready to revolt, on bridgeheads, near crossroads and near factories.

For this we thank the gentlemen industrialists, we thank them for having made obvious to all, as if there were still any need, the real terms of the balance of power. If there were still any among us who cherished illusions, if any of our workers were still capable of believing that to limit the horizon of revolution or insurrection to one fac-

tory or one city was still an option, if anyone found difficulty in completing the upward climb to the point where it becomes clear that power in the factory is only one element, itself connected with the power of the State, if such doubters, if such deluded people still existed, then they have been shown to be wrong. The struggle is on for control of the factories, and we see the active, and as yet insuperable, presence of the power of the State.

A general problem then, a problem that must be stated with all its ramifications. Today we are face to face with reality. Today a certain heart-searching is permissible. What has brought about this concentration of forces in Turin if not the fact that here the signal has been given for battle, or rather that battle has begun over a question the terms of which are such as to involve the interests of, to require the action of, the whole Italian proletariat? In our city in these past months there has accumulated a quantum of revolutionary energy which at all costs has tended to expand, seeking a way out. And its way out must not be, for now, a dangerous, perhaps fatal local tear-away action: it must be an increase in the intensity of preparatory work throughout the whole country, a diffusion of forces, a general acceleration of the process of development of the elements that must all come together in a shared task.

Today, in Turin, we have been tested. We shall see tomorrow whether it will be victory or defeat; but let one thing remain, one lesson, one spur to further action. The fight is not only in Turin, but in the whole of Italy, in the entire world, and anything that serves to make an intent more steadfast, a will more dogged, is a tool in the preparation, even if conquered at the price of sacrifices,

and freedom, and the control of production in the factory, and of financial operations.

of apparent losses. Even dashed hopes, even disappointments, even the rage in our minds when we go back into the factories, even this will be a weapon for our victory.

3rd April 1920.

an Address to the Anarchists

The Italian anarchists are very touchy, as well as arrogant: they have always been convinced of being the repository of revealed revolutionary truth; this conviction has become 'monstruous' since the Socialist Party, under the influence of the Russian Revolution and Bolshevik propaganda, has taken over certain fundamental points of Marxist doctrine, and is spreading them in a simple and popular way among the mass of workers and peasants. For a while now the Italian anarchists have been doing nothing but letting off steam with the satisfied observation:

"We have said it all along. We were right!"

without ever posing themselves these questions:

Why, if we have been right, have we not been followed by the majority of the Italian proletariat?

Why has the **majority of the Italian proletariat** always followed the Socialist Party and the Union bodies allied to the Socialist Party? (Why has the Italian proletariat always allowed itself to be 'fooled by the Socialist Party and by the Union bodies allied to the Socialist Party'.) The Italian anarchists could only answer these questions exhaustively after a great gesture of humility and contrition: only after having abandoned the anarchist point of view, the point of view of absolute truth, and after having recognised that they were wrong when..... they were right: only after recognising that absolute truth is not enough to bring the masses to action, to infuse the masses with revolutionary spirit, but that a determinate 'truth' is needed: after having recognised that for the purposes of human history, the only 'truth' is that which is embodied in action, which swells

present awareness with passion and drive, which is translated into profound movements and into real conquests on the part of the masses themselves. The Socialist Party has always been the party of the Italian working people: its mistakes and weaknesses are the mistakes and weaknesses of the Italian working people: the material conditions of Italian life have developed, as has the class-consciousness of the proletariat: the Socialist Party has acquired a greater political identity, has tried to win for itself a specific doctrine of its own. The anarchists have stood still, are continuing to stand still, hypnotised by the conviction of having been in the right, of being still in the right: the Socialist Party has changed itself together with the proletariat, has changed because the class consciousness of the proletariat has changed: in this movement lies the profound truth of the Marxist doctrine, which today has become its doctrine: in this movement is also contained the 'libertarian' characteristic of the Socialist Party which should not escape the notice of intelligent anarchists, and which should give them food for thought. The anarchists could, through reflection, reach the conclusion that freedom, understood as a real historical development of the proletarian class, has never been embodied in libertarian groups, but has always sided with the Socialist Party.

Anarchism is not a concept proper to the working class and to the working class alone: there we have the reason for the permanent 'triumph', for the permanent 'rightness' of the anarchists. Anarchism is the elementary subversive position of any oppressed class, and is the prevailing consciousness under any ruling class. Since every class oppression has taken form in a State, anarchism is the elementary subversive position

which finds in the State in se and per se the cause of all the sufferings of the oppressed class. Every class, as it becomes a ruling class, has realised its own concept of anarchy, because it has realised its own freedom. The bourgeois was anarchic before his class conquered political power and imposed on society the ideal State regime for defending the capitalist mode of production: the bourgeois continues to be anarchic after his revolution, because the laws of his State are not a constraint on him: they are his laws, and the bourgeois can claim to live without laws, can claim to live as a libertarian. The bourgeois will become anarchic again after the proletarian revolution: then he will again become aware of the existence of a State, of the existence of laws foreign to his will, hostile to his interests, to his habits, to his freedom: he will become aware that 'State' is synonymous with 'constraint', because the workers' State will deprive the bourgeois class of the freedom to exploit the proletariat, because the workers' State will be the bulwark of a new mode of production, which, as it develops, will destroy every trace of capitalist ownership and every possibility of its rebirth.

But the concept proper to the bourgeois class has not been anarchism: it has been the doctrine of liberalism, just as the concept proper to the working class is not anarchism, but Marxist communism. Every given class has its own given ideology, belonging to that class and to no other. Anarchism has been the 'fringe' position of every oppressed class: Marxist communism is the specific ideology of the modern working class, and of that class alone: the revolutionary theses of Marxism become a cabalistic cipher if you think outside of the modern proletariat and the capitalist mode of production, of which the modern

proletariat is the consequence. The proletariat is not hostile to the State in se and per se, just as the bourgeois class was not hostile to the State in se and per se either. The bourgeois class was hostile to the despotic State, to the power of the aristocrats - but was favourable to the bourgeois State, to liberal democracy: the proletariat is hostile to the bourgeois State, to power in the hands of the capitalists and bankers, but is favourable to the dictatorship of the proletariat, to power in the hands of the workers and the peasants. The proletariat is favourable to the Workers' State, as a phase of the class struggle, the final phase, in which the proletariat has the advantage as an organised political force; but classes continue to exist, as does the society divided into classes, and the form proper to any society divided into classes, the State, which is in the hands of the working class and the peasants, and which is used by the working class and the peasants to guarantee their own freedom of development, to completely eliminate the bourgeoisie from history, and to consolidate the material conditions in which class oppression can no longer be brought about.

Is it possible to reach a reconciliation in the polemic between communists and anarchists? It is, for anarchist groups formed from class-conscious workers: it is not possible, though, for groups of anarchist intellectuals, for professional ideologues. For the intellectuals anarchism is an idol: it is a *raison d'être* for their particular activity, present and future: effectively, for anarchist agitators the workers' State will be a 'State', a limitation of freedom, a constraint, for them as for the bourgeoisie. For libertarian workers anarchism is one weapon in the struggle against the bourgeoisie: revolutionary spirit overcomes ideology:

the State which they are fighting is really and only the bourgeois capitalist State, and not at all the State in se, the idea of the State: the ownership that they wish to abolish is certainly not ownership in general, but the capitalist mode of ownership. For anarchist workers the advent of the workers' State will be the advent of the freedom of their class, and thus also of their own personal freedom; it will open the way for every experience, for every attempt at the positive realisation of the ideals of the proletariat; the work of creating the revolution will absorb them, and will make of them a vanguard of devoted and disciplined militants.

In the positive act of proletarian creation, no difference will exist between worker and worker. Communist society cannot be built on domination, with laws and decrees: it springs spontaneously from the historic activity of the working class, which has acquired the power of initiative in industrial and agricultural production and is impelled to reorganise production in new modes, on a new basis. The anarchist worker will then value the existence of a centralised power, to guarantee him permanently the freedom he has acquired, and to permit him not to have to interrupt the work he has undertaken to run to the defence of the revolution at every moment: then he will value the existence of a great party of the better part of the proletariat, of a strongly organised and disciplined party, to give a spur to the creation of the revolution, to give the example of sacrifice, to draw the great masses of the workers by example, and to lead them to transcend more rapidly the state of humiliation and prostration to which capitalist exploitation has reduced them.

The Socialist concept of the revolutionary process is characterised by two basic features:

La Turza Internazionale in Francia

Rassegna settimanale di cultura socialista

Segretario di Redazione
ANTONIO GIAMMOGI
14 FEBBRAIO 1982

Edizione: 1. settembre 1978

— 100 —

Use measure: Cost, 20. Costs vary with the number of...

NOTES

La Rivoluzione comunista affina l'autonomia del produttore e nel campo economico, nel campo politico, l'azione politica della classe operaia (rivista a indovinare la dittatura, a creare la stessa operaio); questo valore storico reale: quando è funzione dello sviluppo di condizioni economiche nuove, anche di proletariato, anche di democrazia e di socialismo.

Compache dell' « Ordine Nuovo »

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I sindacati e gli opportunisti ci guardino bene da ogni demagoghismo concreto. Invece — che pretendono i deputati della sinistra politica dell'ingenuità nel dovuto dentro — non hanno mai studiato i problemi reali della classe operaia e dei lavoratori, hanno parlato di

[illegible]

trasferimenti; egli non è più un persona di
debito, un agente degli interessi capitalistici
poiché l'operaio può fare a meno del suo
per un lottizzarsi di anni del lavoro, il tutto
come agente disciplinare diventa ingenuo
il tentare di ridurre anche egli a produttore, o

The proletarian class is at present scattered at random through the cities and the countryside, around machines, or bent over the soil: it works without knowing why it works, forced into servile labour by the ever-pressing threat of death by starvation and cold. It does group together in the unions and the cooperatives, but through the necessity of economic resistance, not through spontaneous choice, not following impulses freely born

the Strength of the Revolution

in its spirit. All the actions of the proletariat mass necessarily move in forms established by the capitalist mode of production, established by the State power of the bourgeoisie. To expect that a mass that is reduced to such conditions of spiritual and bodily slavery should express an autonomous historical development, to expect that it should spontaneously initiate and sustain the creation of a revolution, is pure illusion on the part of ideologues.

To depend only on the creative capabilities of such a mass, and not to work systematically to organise a great army of disciplined and conscious militants, ready for any sacrifice, educated to carry out an instruction immediately, ready to take upon itself effective responsibility for the revolution, ready to become the agents of the revolution, is complete and utter betrayal of the working class, is the beginnings of unconscious counter revolution.

The Italian anarchists are touchy because they are arrogant. They lose their tempers easily when faced with proletarian criticism: they prefer to be adulated and flattered as champions of revolutionary ideas and absolute theoretical coherence. We are convinced that, for the revolution, collaboration in Italy between socialists and anarchists is necessary, a frank and loyal collaboration between two political forces, based on problems of the proletariat. But we believe that it is necessary for the anarchists too to submit their traditional tactical criteria to a revision, as has the Socialist Party, and that they should justify their political assertions with real reasons, defined in time and space. The anarchists should become freerspiritually: it's a claim that should not seem excessive to those who claim to want freedom and nothing but freedom.

The celebration of Mayday in Turin occurred immediately after the whole of the proletariat had emerged from a gigantic general strike that lasted for ten days and ended in defeat. The whole working population of Turin wanted to show that they had not lost faith in the revolution. The whole working population of Turin wanted to show that the strength of the revolution, far from having diminished, has in fact multiplied the numbers of its battalions and its regiments.

In the general strike, capitalism and the power of the State vaunted the whole of their armoury. The bourgeois State had put at the disposition of the industrialists of Turin fifty thousand troops in full battle gear, with tanks, flamethrowers and light artillery: for ten days the city was at the mercy of the Royal Guards, and the working class seemed to have been wiped out, seemed swallowed up into darkness and the void. The industrialists, with ten million in funds, flooded the city with posters and leaflets, enlisted journalists and scoundrels, agents provocateurs and breakers of strikes; published a newspaper that imitated the style and layout of the strike bulletin; spread lies and false alarms; spawned political clubs and associations, unions, parties and groups from every sewer in town; spread the most outrageous slanders against the leaders of the strike. Against this unleashing of capitalist forces the working class had nothing but the single sheet of the daily strike bulletin and their own powers of resistance and sacrifice. The metalworkers lasted out for a month, without wages; many suffered

hunger, and pledged their furniture, even their sheets and mattresses at the pawn shop; the rest of the working population also suffered hardships, privation and desolation. Turin was like a city besieged; the working population had to endure all the troubles and hardships of a cruel and relentless siege. The strike ended, in defeat. The idea that had sustained the workers was scorned even by a number of those representing the working class; the energy and faith of those leading the general strike was described as illusion, simple-mindedness and a mistake by certain representatives of the working class; when they returned to the factories, the proletariat suddenly realised the full extent of the setback forced upon them by the terrible presence of the vast forces of the owning class and the power of the State: a certain disheartenment, a yielding of the mind and will, a collapse of class feelings and class energies would have been justifiable, a surge of bitterness would have been natural, a faltering of the revolutionary army could have been foreseen.

But no! The hungry and the wretched, these folk, bleeding, beaten by the capitalist scourge and mocked by the stupidity or the malevolence of their so-called comrades in struggle, have not lost their faith in the communist revolution. The whole of the Turin proletariat came out onto the streets and into the squares to demonstrate their allegiance to the revolution, to spread before the millions and billions of capitalist wealth the human forces of the working class, the hundreds of thousands of hearts, arms, and brains of the working class, to oppose their cashboxes with the iron battalions of militants in the workers' revolution.

Ten days of strike, hunger, hardship, desolation

and defeat were not enough to bring about what the capitalist class and the power of the State felt sure of achieving: the defeat of the proletariat, the exorcising of the spectre that broods like a nightmare over their palaces and cash-boxes. The capitalist class and the power of the State transformed the day of May 1st into an orgy of blood and terror. The march was hit by a burst of rifle fire: two dead and about fifty wounded. Just what was needed for the direst and fiercest repression to be unleashed on the city. The most scandalous rumours are spread: bombs, daggers, plots..... Arrests multiply. The Royal Guards set about hunting down the demonstrators. Those arrested are clubbed and maimed with rifle butts, are trampled to the point of vomiting blood; the streets and squares ring with the sound of guns fired at windows, at groups of passers-by; lorryloads of Royal Guards, with their guns aimed at windows at doors and at passers-by, run riot in the city; groups of Guards crawl from every sewer to jab their bayonets in the faces of all and sundry, regardless now of distinctions of class, age or sex, be they a worker, a soldier, an official, a priest, a lady or a child, such is the rabid fury that their orders arouse in the confused and twilight minds of the mercenaries hired for this civil war.

But not even the ordeal of this great day, not even this barbarous saraband of unprecedented violence has managed to budge the position of the working class one inch: the funerals of the two people assassinated are transformed into an indescribable show of strength and discipline. New popular forces spill forth, new crowds join onto the revolutionary army as it accompanies its fallen to the cemetery.

8th May 1920

Superstition and Reality

The strength of the revolution bends before no defeat, bows to no pain, to no obstacle, however great. The working people have got beyond the critical phase of dispersal and disillusion: it has become a homogeneous and cohesive unit, has become an ordered and disciplined army of desires conscious of a real end, of minds that are aware of being the historic energies on whom weighs a mission that is higher than any human power. The working people, from being raw material for the history of the privileged classes, has finally become capable of creating its own history, of building its city.

8th May 1920.

"The times are long since past in which superstition attributed revolutions to the illwill of a handful of agitators. Today everyone knows that at the base of every revolutionary convulsion there must be some social need whose satisfaction is impeded by out-worn institutions. It is possible that this need might not yet be felt deeply enough and generally enough for immediate success to be assured, but every attempt at forcible repression will only succeed in making it surge forward with greater strength until it bursts its fetters. Thus, if we have been defeated, it is our duty to start again from the beginning. The interval of rest, probably brief, that is granted us between the end of the first act and the beginning of the second fortunately leaves us time for a most valuable piece of work: a study of the causes that determined the recent revolution and its defeat; causes that are not to be sought in the efforts, the talents, the faults, the mistakes, or the 'betrayals' of certain of the leaders, but in the general state of the society and in the situation existing in each of the convulsed nations."

Karl Marx*

Superstition attributes the general strike of Turin and Piedmont, attributes a movement that lived through ten days of the greatest intensity, a movement that involved half a million workers and peasants, that caused mortal ruptures in the apparatus of bourgeois State power, that showed how fast it could spread in the sympathies and the active consensus that it awakened in the whole Italian working class, such a movement it attributes to the provincial vanity of a handful of "irresponsibles",

to the false illusions of a group of wild "extremists", to the shady "Russian" machinations of certain intellectual elements that plot in the anonymity of the infamous committee rooms of the Turin Councils.

Seventy years after Karl Marx' claim that "the times are long since past", superstition finds devotees not only among the lesser writers of 'Corriere della Sera' and 'Giornale d'Italia', not only in the Hon. Edoardo Giretti, but also in the leaders and the directors of the CGL (General Confederation of Labour), which embraces two million of the Italian proletariat, and claims to be effecting the practice of Marxism in Italy today.

The Turin working class has been defeated. Among the conditions that determined this defeat are also the 'superstition', the shortsightedness of the leaders of the Italian workers' movement. Among the primary indirect factors that determined their defeat is thus also the lack of revolutionary cohesion in the whole Italian proletariat, which is having no success in throwing up from within itself, in an organic and disciplined manner, a Union hierarchy that is a reflection of its own interests and of its own revolutionary spirit. Thus, among the mediated conditions of first degree that determined the failure we must place the general state of Italian society and the existing conditions in every region and every province that constitutes a Union cell of the Confederation of Labour. In short, there is no doubt that the working class of Turin were defeated because in Italy there does not exist, or there have not matured, sufficient of the conditions necessary for an organic, disciplined and concerted movement of the worker and peasant classes. The "superstition" and the

shortsightedness of the leaders at the head of the organised movement of the Italian working people is indisputable proof of this immaturity, of this insufficiency of the Italian working people.

On March 7th a national gathering of industrialists took place in Milan. Commendatore Silvestri, president of the General Confederation of Industry, delivered to the assembly a most violent attack on the eight hour day, on the wage increases, on a pusillanimous government that had not defended capital at Pont Canavese, at Torre Pellice, and at Asti (the invasion of the Mazzonis cotton mills and the Asti saw mills), on a weak-minded government that is incapable of defending the individualist bourgeois regime against the onslaughts of the communists. The Hon. Gino Olivetti, secretary of the Confederation, spoke to the gathering on the question of the Factory Councils, and concluded with the proclamation that the Councils of the Turin workers must be crushed ruthlessly. The capitalist position expressed by Olivetti has been applied by the industrialists of Turin in their offensive against the workers' Councils, and can be summed up in the two principles that the capitalists' posters have been shrieking victoriously from every wall in the city since the defeat of the proletariat: "Work hours are the time for work and not for discussion" and "In the factories there can be one authority and one alone."

After the meeting in Milan the industrialists succeeded in getting clear assurances from the government. In Turin something new and unheard of is about to happen: the director of 'Giornale d'Italia' had scented blood in the corridors of power, and sent a special correspondent up to Turin, who rushed into editors' offices and

factory boardrooms asking, "Well, what's going on in Turin then? Why is Rome so frightened of the Turin workers? Why has my editor sent me to Turin to do a feature on the workers' movement and the Factory Councils? "

.....and all of a sudden the news starts arriving in our offices. Yesterday a thousand new Royal Guards arrived; today another thousand; huge detachments of troops are camping in such-and-such villages on the outskirts of town; they are setting up gun emplacements at various points on the hillside; in a church here, on the roof of a palace there machine guns have been posted; arms depots are being established in the buildings of organisations supported by the industrialists; these organisations have put themselves in direct contact with loyal officers commanding detachments in the province. Meanwhile the correspondent of 'Giornale d'Italia' reports in his dispatches from Turin that the industrialists have decided to break the working class, that the industrialists have sworn mutual solidarity and support even to the point of a general lock-out, that the industrialists of Turin will be fully supported by the whole Italian capitalist class, that the clash between workers and industrialists will not be long coming.

This whole manoeuvre of the capitalist class and the power of the State to barricade Turin, to trap Turin's working class like wolves in a ditch, was not even noticed by the leaders of Italy's organised working class. The vast offensive of the capitalists was minutely prepared without the 'general staff' of the organised Italian working class worrying about it, or even noticing it; and this absence of support from the centre of the organisation became a crucial condition of the struggle, a tremend-

ous weapon in the hands of the industrialists and the State power, and a source of weakness for the leaders of the local metalworkers.

The industrialists fought the action most capably. Industrialists are divided against each other when it comes to profits; economically and politically they are divided in competition. But when faced with the working class they become a block of steel: there is no defeatism in their midst, nobody to sabotage agreed actions, nobody to spread discouragement and panic. The industrialists, having encircled the city with a perfect military system, found a "Cleopatra's nose" to change the face of history: at the factory of 'Industrie Metallurgiche', over a trifle to do with tampering with the clock, the industrialists demanded that the comrades on the internal commission be suspended for a year; that is, they demanded that six comrades be deprived of their civil rights as proletarians for a year. From this point on the movement started, and became more and more serious as the industrialists unfolded with method and cunning the full span of their manoeuvre. The workers delegates at the negotiations were playthings in the hands of the industrialists, and they knew it, and the industrialists knew that the workers knew it. The workers were convinced that the negotiations were worthless, but they had to continue negotiating, because any loss of heart, any halt, any impulsive action would have sparked off the bloody clash for which the industrialists, the police, the military caste and the forces of reaction were waiting: the workers delegates were perfectly aware of the general terms on which events were developing as regards armaments, and for days and days they had to rack their brains and search their hearts and wait, play for time to see where the

adversary's offensive would stop, because the enemy was bound to come to a point where he could not avoid touching on matters of principle that would force those at the centre of the movement to commit themselves and join battle.

Thus we came to the general strike, to the magnificent turnout of the proletarian forces of Piedmont. We reached a point where, with the demonstrations of active solidarity given by the railwaymen, the sailors and the dockers, demonstrations that highlighted the essential weakness of the apparatus of the bourgeois State, one could even believe in the possibility of a general insurrection of the Italian proletariat against the power of the State, an insurrection considered already doomed to failure in its final aim, the composition of a revolutionary government, since the whole development of the movement had shown that in Italy there do not exist the organised revolutionary energies capable of centralising a deep and widespread movement, capable of giving political substance to a powerful and irresistible rising of the oppressed class, capable of creating a State and imbuing it with revolutionary dynamism.

The working class of Turin has been defeated, and it could not have been otherwise. The Turin workers were dragged into the struggle; they had no freedom of choice, they could not postpone the day of the conflict, because the initiative in class warfare still rests with the industrialists and the power of the bourgeois State. In Turin the big engineering factories still exist, the factories in which a refined division of labour and the continual perfection of automatic processes drive the capitalists to the most sordid and provocative forms of the oppression of man by man. The workers have been driven incessantly by these conditions of work to seek out forms of organisation and methods

Unions. These same conditions will give rise to of struggle in which to regain their strength and their position as a revolutionary class, which they no longer found expressed in their professional the same revolutionary impulses even after the political defeat. The industrialists will continue in their attempts to induce artificial competition between workers, dividing them into categories, and subdividing every category into other categories when the perfection of automatic processes has killed that competition; they will still try to turn the technicians against the workers and the workers against the technicians whenever work systems tend to unite these two factors in comradeship, and bring them to unite politically; the workers will continue to feel that they cannot be defended by the professional Unions in the struggle against the manifold and unpredictable traps that the capitalists, favoured by new means of production, are incessantly setting for them. They will never be quiet, they will never work in peace of mind, they will come to feel more bitterly their state of oppression, and will be more prone to impulse and outbursts of anger.

It was these new conditions of work that, having matured during the war, brought about the formation of the Factory Councils in Turin: the conditions remain the same, and so does the need in the minds of the workers, a need that is pressing, and has become articulate through political education, a need that only the Factory Council and the system of Councils will be able to satisfy.

The working class, through the development of industrial civilisation, through the development of the means of oppression and exploitation, is brought to carrying out actions, setting itself aims

and trying to achieve them, and using methods that cannot be understood by the cold and passionless men that bureaucratic mechanisms have placed in charge of its organisations of struggle.

Five hundred thousand workers and peasants have been drawn into the struggle; against them are ranged the entire capitalist class and the forces of State power. Energetic intervention by the centre of the organised labour movement could have equalised the balance of power, and, if not brought about a victory, at least maintained and consolidated the workers' conquests through the task of patient and determined organisation, through hundreds and thousands of little actions in factories and workshops. On whom does this intervention depend? On a body elected by the workers, under continuous control, with its members revocable at any moment? No. It depends on employees that have reached their positions by bureaucratic means, through friends; it depends on narrow-minded clerks who cannot even see what the industrialists and the State are up to, who do not understand life in the factory and the needs of the workers, and who are as "superstitious" as protestant ministers and as conceited as ministerial flunkies.

The working class of Turin has already shown that it has emerged from the struggle with its will unbroken and its determination intact. It will continue in the struggle, and will struggle on two fronts: the battle for the conquest of industrial power, and the battle for the conquest of the Union organisations and for proletarian unity.

The general strike has shown how expansive was the "journalistic" activity that sprang up in the area of industrial struggle in Turin. In 'l'Ordine Nuovo' of 11th October 1919 the malaise that was stealth-

ily spreading among the organised masses was described as follows:

"The workers feel that the complex of their organisation has become such an enormous apparatus that it has ended by following its own laws, laws that are intimate to its own structure and its own complicated ways of working, but are foreign to the masses, who have come to an awareness of their historic mission as the class of revolution. They feel that their will to power cannot find expression in a clear and precise sense through the present institutional hierarchies. They find that even at home, in the homes that they have built doggedly, patiently, cementing them with blood and tears, man is being broken by the machine, officialdom is sterilising the creative spirit, and a banal and verbalistic dilettantism tries in vain to conceal the absence of precise positions on the necessity for industrial production, and the non-existent understanding of the psychology of the proletarian masses. The workers are becoming angry with this state of affairs, but individually they are incapable of doing anything to change it."

The movement for the Councils gave expression and a concrete aim to this malaise which is now set in a frame of conscious and disciplined action. Turin must be coordinated with revolutionary Union forces throughout Italy, so as to draw up an organic plan for a renewal of Union structures that will permit the expression of the will of the masses, and will thrust the Unions into the battlefield of the Third Communist International.

8th May 1920

* Revolution and Counter revolution in Germany.

Towards a Renewal of the Socialist Party

The following speech was delivered at the National Council of Milan by the representatives of the Socialist Section and the provincial Federation of Turin, and served as the basis of a critique of the work and the direction of the Party directorate.

1) In Italy at the present time the class struggle is defined by the fact that industrial and agricultural workers throughout the national territory are irrevocably determined to pose the question of the ownership of the means of production in explicit and violent terms. The intensification of the national and international crises which are steadily annihilating the value of money demonstrates that capital is 'in extremis'. The present order of production and distribution can no longer satisfy even the elementary demands of human life, and it only survives because it is fiercely defended by the armed might of the bourgeois State. Every movement of the Italian working people tends irresistibly towards the realisation of a gigantic economic revolution that will introduce new modes of production, a new order in the productive and distributive process, and give the initiative in production to the class of industrial and agricultural workers, by seizing it from the hands of the capitalists and landowners.

2) The industrialists and landowners have achieved a maximum concentration of class discipline and power: a line promulgated by the Italian General Confederation of Industry is immediately carried out in every factory in the land. The bourgeois State has created a body of armed mercenaries,

organised to function as an executive instrument carrying out the wishes of this new and powerful organisation of the propertied classes; it tends to restore capitalist power over the means of production by a widespread application of the lock-out and terrorism, forcing the workers and peasants to let themselves be expropriated of an increased quantity of unpaid labour. The recent lock-out in the Turin engineering factories was an episode in this plan of the industrialists to bring the working class to heel: they profitted by the lack of revolutionary coordination and concentration in the Italian workers' forces with a bid to smash the solidarity of the Turin proletariat and drive into oblivion the prestige and authority of the factory institutions (Councils and shop commissions) that had initiated the struggle for workers' control. The length of the agricultural strikes in the Novara area and Lomellina show that the landowners are prepared to destroy production so as to reduce the agricultural proletariat to despair and starvation, implacably subjecting it to the hardest and most humiliating conditions of work and existence.

3) The present phase of the class struggle in Italy is the phase that precedes: either the conquest of political power by the revolutionary proletariat and the transition to new modes of production and distribution that will make possible a rise in productivity - or a tremendous reaction by the propertied classes and the governmental caste. No violence will be spared in this subjection of the industrial and agricultural proletariat to servile labour: a bid will be made to smash inexorably the working class' institutions of political struggle (the Socialist Party) and to incorporate its institutions of economic resistance (unions and cooperatives) into the machinery of the bourgeois State.

4) The workers' and peasants' forces lack coordination and concentration because the leading institutions of the Socialist Party have shown no understanding at all of the phase of development that national and international history is at present traversing, nor of the mission resting on revolutionary proletarian institutions of struggle. The Socialist Party is a spectator of the course of events. It never has an opinion based on revolutionary theses of Marxism and of the Communist International; it does not launch slogans which can be adopted by the masses; it does not lay down a general line, or unify and concentrate revolutionary action. As a political organisation of the vanguard of the working class, the Socialist Party should develop an overall action to raise the working class to the level from which it can win the revolution, and win it lastingly. Since it is composed of that part of the working class that has not let itself be demoralised and prostrated by the physical and spiritual oppression of the capitalist system, but has succeeded in maintaining its own autonomy and a spirit of conscious and disciplined initiative, the Socialist Party should embody the vigilant revolutionary consciousness of the whole of the exploited class. Its task is to focus in itself the attention of all the masses so that its directives become the directives of all the masses, so that it can win their permanent trust and become their guide and intellect. Hence it is essential that the Party live permanently immersed in the reality of the class struggle fought by the industrial and agricultural proletariat, that it be able to understand its various phases and episodes, its manifold manifestations, drawing unity from this manifold diversity. It should be in a position to give a real leadership to the movement as a whole and impress on the masses the

conviction that there is an order immanent in the present terrible disorder, an order that will systematically regenerate human society and make the means of labour suit elementary vital needs and civil progress. But even since the Bologna Congress, the Socialist Party is still a merely parliamentary party, immobilised within the narrow limits of bourgeois democracy and pre-occupied solely by the superficial political declarations of the governmental caste. It does not possess the features of party autonomy which should characterise the revolutionary proletariat, and the revolutionary proletariat alone.

5) After the Bologna Congress, the central institutions of the Party should immediately have initiated and carried through an energetic drive to homogenize and unify the revolutionary membership of the Party, in order to give it the specific and distinct features of a Communist Party belonging to the Third International. But the polemic with the reformists and opportunists has not even been started; neither the Party leadership, nor 'Avanti!' has counterposed a truly revolutionary conception to the ceaseless propaganda the reformists and opportunists have been disseminating in Parliament and in the trade union organisations. Nothing has been done by the central organs of the Party to give the masses a Communist political education, to induce the masses to eliminate the reformists and opportunists from the leadership of the unions and cooperatives, or to give individual sections and the most active groups of comrades a unified line and tactics. The result is that while the revolutionary majority of the Party has not found any expression of its thought or executor of its intentions in the leadership or the press, the opportunist elements, on the contrary, have been strongly

organised, and have exploited the prestige and authority of the Party to consolidate their positions in Parliament and the unions. The leadership has allowed them to centralize and to vote for resolutions that contradict the principles and tactics of the Third International, and are hostile to the Party line. The leadership has granted absolute autonomy to subordinate institutions, allowing them to pursue tactics and disseminate ideas that are opposed to the principles and tactics of the Third International. The Party leadership has been systematically absent from the life and activity of the sections, of the institutions and of individual members. The confusion that existed in the Party before the Bologna Congress and could be explained by a wartime regime has not disappeared; it has even increased terrifyingly. It is natural that in such conditions the confidence of the masses in the Party should have declined, and that in many places anarchist tendencies should have tried to get the upper hand. The political party of the working class only justifies itself when by a strong centralisation and coordination of proletarian action, it counterposes a real revolutionary power to the legal power of the bourgeois State and limits its freedom of initiative and manoeuvre. If the Party cannot unify and coordinate its efforts, if it reveals itself as a merely bureaucratic institution, with no spirit or will, the working class tends instinctively to build itself another party, and it moves over towards those anarchistic tendencies that bitterly and ceaselessly criticize the centralisation and bureaucracy of political parties.

- 6) The Party has been absent from the international movement. Throughout the world the class struggle

is increasing in scale. Everywhere workers are forced to renew their methods of struggle, and often, as in Germany after the military coup, to rise up with arms in their hands. The Party has not bothered to explain these events to the Italian working people, or to justify them in the light of the ideas of the Communist International. It has not taken the trouble to carry out the vast educational activity needed to make the Italian working people conscious of the fact that the proletarian revolution is a world phenomenon and that each single individual event must be judged in a world context. The Third International has already twice met in Western Europe: in December 1919, in a German city; in February 1920, in Amsterdam. The Italian Party was represented at neither of those two meetings. The Party's militants were not even informed by the central organs of the discussions and deliberations that took place at them. There is a ferment of polemic in the Third International about the doctrine and tactics of the Communist International; this has even led to internal splits (for example in Germany). The Italian Party has remained completely cut off from this vigorous debate of ideas which is steeling revolutionary consciousness and building the spiritual unity of action of the proletariat in every country. The central organ of the Party does not have its own correspondents in France, England, Germany, or even in Switzerland; a strange state of affairs for the paper of the Socialist Party that represents the interests of the international proletariat in Italy, and a strange state of affairs for the Italian working class, which has to obtain its information from the warped and tendentious reports provided by bourgeois papers and news agencies. As the Party organ, 'Avanti!' should be the organ of the Third International. There should be a place in 'Avanti!' for all the reports, polemics and dis-

cussions of proletarian problems that are relevant to the Third International. 'Avanti!' should contain a ceaseless polemic, in a spirit of unity, against all opportunist deviations and compromises; instead, 'Avanti!' stresses manifestations of opportunist thought, such as the recent speech in parliament by Claudio Treves in which was interwoven a petty bourgeois conception of international relations and a defeatist counter revolutionary theory designed to demobilise proletarian energies. This absence from the central organs of any preoccupation with keeping the proletariat informed of the events and theoretical discussions that are unfolding within the Third International can also be observed in the activities of the publishing house. It is still publishing unimportant pamphlets or writings spreading the ideas and opinions of the Second International, while it neglects the publications of the Third International. Writings by Russian comrades that are indispensable to an understanding of the Bolshevik Revolution have been translated in Switzerland, in England and in Germany, but they are unknown in Italy: Lenin's State and Revolution is just one of many. When works are published, they are execrably translated, and errors of grammar and of simple common sense often make them incomprehensible.

- 7) The above analysis has already revealed the indispensable renovation and organisation we feel must be carried out by the Party's membership. The Party must acquire its own precise and distinct features: from a petty bourgeois parliamentary party it must become the party of the revolutionary proletariat in its struggle for the advent of communist society by way of the workers' State: a homogeneous, cohesive party with its own doctrine, tactics and rigid and implacable discipline.

Non-Communist revolutionaries must be eliminated from the Party, and its leadership, freed from preoccupations with the preservation of unity and balance among the various tendencies and leaders, should turn all its energies to the organisation of the workers' forces on a war footing. Every event in national and international proletarian life should be analysed immediately in manifestos and circulars by the leadership, using them to promote the arguments of Communist propaganda and the education of revolutionary consciousness. The leadership should keep constantly in touch with the sections, and become the motor centre of proletarian action in all its manifestations. The sections should promote the constitution of Communist groups in all factories, unions, cooperatives and barracks, ceaselessly diffusing through the masses the ideas and tactics of the Party, and organising the creation of Factory Councils for the exercise of control over industrial and agricultural production. It should pursue the necessary propaganda for an organic conquest of the unions, the Chambers of Labour and the General Confederation of Labour, and should form the trusted elements that the mass will delegate for the formation of political Soviets and for the exercise of the proletarian dictatorship. The existence of a cohesive and highly disciplined Communist Party with factory, trade union, and cooperative cells, that can coordinate and centralise in its central executive committee the whole revolutionary action of the proletariat, is the fundamental and indispensable condition for any experiment in Soviets. In the absence of such a condition, every proposed experiment should be rejected as absurd and useful only to the opponents of the idea of Soviets. Similarly, we should reject the proposal of a little socialist parliament, for it would rapidly degenerate into a tool of the reformist and

opportunist majority in the parliamentary group for the dissemination of democratic utopias and counter-revolutionary projects.

8) The leadership should immediately prepare, compose and distribute a programme of revolutionary government by the Socialist Party, examining the concrete solutions that the proletariat, when it is the ruling class, will give to all the essential problems - economic, political, religious and educational - that assail the various strata of the Italian working population. Basing itself on the idea that the Party's power and activity is founded solely on the class of industrial and agricultural workers, who are totally without private property, and that it regards the other strata of working people as auxiliaries of the strictly proletarian class, the Party must issue a manifesto in which the revolutionary conquest of political power is explicitly proposed, in which the industrial and agricultural proletariat is invited to prepare itself and arm itself, and in which the principle of Communist solutions to present problems are indicated: proletarian control of production and distribution, disarmament of mercenary armed bodies, control of local government by workers' organisations.

9) On the basis of these considerations, the Turin Socialist Section proposes backing an agreement with those groups of comrades from all sections who would like to meet together to discuss these proposals and approve them; an organised agreement that will prepare for a congress in the near future, devoted to discussion of the problems of proletarian organisation and tactics, and which will examine the activity of the executive organs of the Party in the meantime.

8th May 1920

the Turin Factory Councils

One of the members of the Italian delegation, recently returned from Soviet Russia, reported to the workers of Turin that the platform of welcome for the delegation at Kronstadt was decorated with the following inscription:

'Long live the Turin General Strike of April 1920'.

The workers received this news with much pleasure and great satisfaction. The majority of the members of the Italian delegation that went to Russia had been against the general strike in April, and in their writings against the strike had maintained that the workers of Turin had been victims of an illusion, and had overestimated the importance of the strike.

It was for this reason that the workers of Turin received with such pleasure the Kronstadt comrades' act of solidarity. They said to themselves: 'Our communist comrades in Russia have a better understanding and appraisal of the importance of the April strike than the Italian opportunists, and have thus taught them a good lesson.'

THE APRIL STRIKE

The April movement was in fact an impressive event in the history not only of the Italian proletariat, but also of the European, and, we may say, in the history of the whole world proletariat.

For the first time in history, indeed, we saw a proletariat undertaking a struggle for the control of production, without having been driven to action by hunger or unemployment. Moreover, it was not just a minority, a vanguard of the working class that undertook the struggle: the entire mass of the workers of Turin entered the field and carr-

ied the struggle right through to the end, without a thought for the sacrifices and the privation involved.

The metalworkers struck for one month, the other categories for ten days.

The general strike of the last ten days spread to the whole of Piedmont, mobilising about half a million industrial and agricultural workers, and involving a population of about 4 million people.

The Italian capitalists exerted every effort to suffocate the Turin workers' movement: all the means of the bourgeois state were put at their disposal, while the workers kept up the struggle all alone, with no help from either the leaders of the Socialist Party, or from the General Confederation of Labour (CGL). In fact the leaders of the Party and the Confederation spurned the Turin workers, and did everything possible to prevent the workers and peasants of Italy from undertaking any revolutionary action by which they might have planned to show their solidarity with their brothers in Turin, and to bring them effective assistance.

But the Turin workers did not lose heart. They bore the whole brunt of the capitalists' reaction, maintained discipline right to the last moment, and, after the defeat, remained faithful to the banner of communism and world revolution.

ANARCHISTS AND SYNDICALISTS

The propaganda of the anarchists and syndicalists against Party discipline and the dictatorship of the proletariat had no influence on the masses, even when, because of betrayal by the leaders of the workers, the strike ended in defeat. In fact the Turin workers swore to intensify the revolutionary struggle, and to wage it on two fronts: on the one hand against the victorious bour-

geoisie, and on the other against their own treacherous leaders.

The revolutionary awareness and discipline which the Turin masses have shown have their historical basis in the economic and political conditions under which the class struggle has developed in Turin.

Turin is a purely industrial centre. Almost three quarters of the population, which comprises half a million inhabitants, is composed of workers: petty bourgeois elements are a minute quantity. Furthermore, in Turin there is a compact mass of office-workers, who are organised in Unions, and belong to the Chamber of Labour. During all the big strikes they stood by the workers, and have thus, if not all, at least the majority, acquired the consciousness of true proletarians in the struggle against capital, for the revolution, and for communism.

INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION

Seen from outside, production in Turin is perfectly centralised and homogeneous. The engineering industry, with about 50,000 workers and 10,000 employees and technicians, takes first place. In the FIAT factories alone there are 35,000 workers, employees and technicians: in the principal factories of this firm there are 16,000 workers employed in the construction of motor vehicles of every kind, by the most modern and efficient methods.

Automobile production is the keystone of Turin's engineering industry. The majority of the work-teams are made up of skilled workers and technicians, who do not, however, have the petty-bourgeois mentality of skilled workers in other countries - England for instance.

Automobile production, which holds first place

in the engineering industry, has subordinated to itself other branches of production, such as the woodwork and the rubber industries.

The metalworkers form the vanguard of the Turin proletariat. Given the particular nature of this industry, every movement by its workers becomes a general mass movement, and takes on a political and revolutionary aspect, even if, to start with, it was only pursuing Union objectives. Turin possesses only one important Union organisation, 60,000 strong, the Chamber of Labour. The anarchist and syndicalist groups that exist have almost no influence on the mass of the workers, who side firmly and decisively with the Socialist Party section, composed for the most part of communist workers.

The communist movement comprises the following organisations of battle: the party section, with 1500 members, 28 clubs with 10,000 members, and 23 youth groups with 2,000 members.

There is a permanent communist group, with its own leadership, in every factory. Individual groups come together, according to the topographical position of their factories, in local groups which, in turn, lead to a steering committee within the party section which concentrates in its hands the whole communist movement in the city, and the leadership of the mass of the workers.

TURIN, CAPITAL OF ITALY

Before the bourgeois revolution which created the present bourgeois order in Italy, Turin was the capital of a small State, comprising Piedmont Liguria, and Sardinia. In this period small industry and commerce predominated at Turin.

After the unification of the kingdom of Italy, and the removal of the capital to Rome, it seemed that Turin ran the danger of losing its importance. But the city soon overcame the economic crisis, and became one of the most important ind-

ustrial centres in Italy. One may say that Italy has three capitals: Rome as the administrative centre of the bourgeois State; Milan, as the commercial and financial centre of the country (all the banks, commercial offices and finance groups are concentrated in Milan); and finally Turin, as the industrial center, where industrial production has reached its highest level of development. With the transfer of the capital to Rome, the whole of the intellectual middle and petty bourgeoisie, which furnished the new bourgeois State with the administrative personnel necessary for it to function, emigrated from Turin, while the development of the big industries attracted to Turin the flower of the Italian working class. The process of development of this city is most interesting from the point of view of Italian history and the Italian proletarian revolution.

Thus the Turin proletariat became the spiritual leaders of the Italian working masses, who are bound to this city by many ties; through family relationships, tradition, history, and by spiritual links (every Italian worker's ideal is to be able to work in Turin).

All this explains why the working masses of the whole of Italy wanted, even going against the will of their leaders, to show their solidarity with the general strike in Turin: they see in this city the centre, the capital of the communist revolution, the Petrograd of the Italian proletarian revolution.

TWO ARMED INSURRECTIONS

During the imperialist war of 1914-18, Turin saw two armed insurrections: the first insurrection, which broke out in May 1915, was intended to prevent the intervention of Italy in the war against Germany (on this occasion the Casa del Popolo was sacked); the second insurrection, in August 1917, assumed the character of an armed

revolutionary struggle on a large scale.

The news of the March revolution in Russia was received with indescribable joy at Turin. Workers were weeping with emotion when they heard the news that the power of the Tsar had been overthrown by the workers of Petrograd. But the Turin workers did not allow themselves to be taken in by the demagogic language of Kerensky and the Mensheviks. When the mission sent to Western Europe by the Petrograd Soviet arrived at Turin in July 1917, the delegates Smirnov and Goldemberg, who presented themselves before a crowd of 50,000 workers, were greeted with deafening cries of:

'Long live Lenin! Long live the Bolsheviks!'

Goldemberg was none too happy with this welcome; he was at a loss to understand how it was that comrade Lenin had acquired such popularity among the Turin workers. And one must not forget that this episode occurred after the suppression of the Bolshevik revolt in July, and that the Italian bourgeois press was raging against Lenin and against the Bolsheviks, denouncing them as brigands and intriguers, agents and spies of German imperialism.

Since Italy's entry into the war (24th May 1915) the Turin proletariat had held no mass demonstrations.

BARRICADES, TRENCHES AND BARBED WIRE

The impressive meeting which had been organised in honour of the delegates from the Petrograd Soviet signalled the beginning of a new period of mass movements. There was not a single month passed when the Turin workers did not rise, arms in hands, against Italian militarism and imperialism. The insurrection broke out on 23rd August 1917. For five days the workers fought in the streets of the city. The insurgents, who had rifles, grenades and machine guns at their disposal, even man-

aged to occupy certain quarters of the city, and tried two or three times to gain control of the centre, where the government institutions and military commands were situated.

But two years of war and reaction had weakened the once-strong organisation of the proletariat, and the workers, with their inferior supply of arms, were overcome. They hoped in vain for support from the soldiery, for these allowed themselves to be fooled by insinuations that the revolt had been staged by the Germans.

The people erected barricades, dug trenches, surrounded some quarters with electrified barbed wire, and for five days they repulsed all attacks by the troops and the police. More than 500 workers fell, and more than 2,000 were seriously wounded. After the defeat, the best elements were arrested and removed, and the proletarian movement lost some of its revolutionary intensity. But the communist sentiments of the Turin proletariat were not extinguished.

A proof of this can be found in the following episode: a short time after the August insurrection, elections took place for the Administrative Council of the Turin Cooperative Alliance (ACT), a huge organisation which provides provisions for a quarter of the population of Turin.

THE COOPERATIVE ALLIANCE

The ACT is composed of the railwaymen's Cooperative, and the workers' General Association. Many years previously the Socialist section had won the Administrative Council, but now the section was no longer capable of organising active agitation among the working masses.

The capital of the Alliance was made up for the most part of shares in the railwaymen's Cooperative, belonging to the railwaymen and their families. The progress made by the Alliance had increased the value of the shares from 50 to

700 lire. But the party managed to persuade the shareholders that a workers' cooperative has as its end not the profit of individuals, but the strengthening the means of revolutionary struggle and the shareholders contented themselves with a dividend of $3\frac{1}{2}\%$ on the nominal value of 50 lire, instead of the real value of 700 lire. After the August insurrection a committee of railwaymen was formed, with the support of the police and the bourgeois and reformist press, which proposed to deprive the Socialist party of their predominance in the Administrative Council. The shareholders were promised the immediate liquidation of the difference of 650 lire between the nominal value and the current value of each share: the railwaymen were promised various prerogatives in the distribution of foodstuffs. The reformist traitors and the bourgeois press set in action every means of agitation and propaganda to transform the cooperative from a workers' organisation into a commercial business of a petty bourgeois nature. The working class was exposed to persecutions of every kind. Censorship stifled the voice of the Socialist section. But in spite of all the persecution and the brutalities, the Socialists, who had not for a single moment abandoned their view that the workers' cooperative is a weapon of the class struggle, once again obtained a majority in the Cooperative Alliance.

The Socialist Party obtained 700 out of 800 votes, despite the fact that the majority of the electors were white-collar railway workers, whom one might have expected, after the defeat of the August insurrection, to have wavered in their loyalties, and even to have shown reactionary tendencies.

IN THE POST-WAR PERIOD

After the end of the imperialist war, the proletarian movement made rapid advances. The work-

ing masses of Turin understood that the historical period opened by the war was profoundly different from the epoch preceding the war. The Turin working class perceived immediately that the 3rd International is an organisation of the world proletariat for the direction of civil war, for the conquest of political power, for the institution of the dictatorship of the proletariat, for the creation of a new order in economic and social relationships.

The problems of the revolution provided the object of discussion in all the workers' assemblies. The best elements of the working class vanguard came together to publish a weekly journal of communist inspiration, 'l'Ordine Nuovo' (The New Order). In the columns of this weekly the various problems of the revolution were discussed: the revolutionary organisation of the masses, who were to win the Unions in the cause of communism; the transference of Union struggle from the field of narrow corporatism and reformism to the level of revolutionary struggle; control over production; and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The question of the Factory Councils was also high on the order of the day.

In the Turin factories small workers' committees already existed from before, recognised by the capitalists, and some of them had already engaged in struggle against officialdom, the reformist spirit, and the constitutionalist tendencies of the Unions.

But the majority of these committees were nothing more than the Unions' creatures: the lists of candidates for these committees (the 'internal commissions') were prepared by the Union machinery, which would choose in preference workers of an opportunist inclination, who would give no trouble to the employers, and who would stifle

every mass action at birth. In their propaganda the followers of 'l'Ordine Nuovo' were in the front line in supporting the transformation of the internal commissions, and the principle that the preparation of lists of candidates should take place in among the working masses, and not up in the heights of the Union bureaucracy. The tasks which they assigned to the Factory Councils were the control over production, the arming and military preparation of the masses, and their political and technical preparation. They were no longer to fulfil their old function of watchdogs to protect the interests of the ruling classes, nor to hold back the masses in their action against the capitalist regime.

THE ENTHUSIASM FOR THE COUNCILS

The propaganda for the Factory Councils was received with enthusiasm by the masses; in the course of half a year Factory Councils were established in all the engineering factories and workshops, and the communists won a majority in the metalworkers' Union. The principle of Factory Councils and control over production was approved and accepted by a majority at the congress, and by a majority of the Unions belonging to the Chamber of Labour.

The organisation of the Factory Councils is based on the following principles: a body is set up in every factory, in every workshop, on the basis of representation (and not on the old basis of the bureaucratic system); it makes real the strength of the proletariat, struggles against the capitalist order, or exercises control over production, educating the whole mass of the workers for revolutionary struggle and for the creation of the Workers' State. The Factory Council must be formed on the principle of organisation by industries: it must represent for the working class the model of the communist society, which will be

reached through the dictatorship of the proletariat: in this society there will no longer exist class divisions, all social relationships will be regulated according to the technical exigencies of production and its corresponding organisation, and will not be made subject to an organised State power.

The working class must understand the full beauty and nobility of the ideal for which it is struggling and sacrificing itself: it must realise that to reach this ideal it is necessary to pass through several stages: it must recognise the necessity of revolutionary discipline and of dictatorship.

Every factory is divided into plants, and each plant into craft teams: each team performs a given part of the work: the workers of each team elect one worker with a binding and conditional mandate. The Assembly of the delegates of the whole factory forms a Council, which elects an Executive Committee from its own numbers. The assembly of the political secretaries of the Executive Committees forms the Central Committee of the Councils, which elects from its own number a study committee for the city, for the organisation of propaganda, the elaboration of work plans, the approval of projects and proposals from individual factories or, indeed, from individual workers, and finally for the general direction of the whole movement.

THE COUNCILS AND THE INTERNAL COMMISSIONS DURING THE STRIKE.

Some tasks of the Factory Councils have a purely technical and even industrial character, as, for example, the control of technical personnel, the dismissal of employees who show themselves to be enemies of the working class, struggles with the management for the conquest of rights and freedom, and the control of production in the factory, and of financial operations.

The Factory Councils soon took root. The masses willingly accepted this form of communist organisation, grouped themselves round the Executive Committees, and energetically supported the struggle against the capitalist autocracy. For all that neither the industrialists nor the Union bureaucracies were willing to recognise the Councils and the committees, they nevertheless obtained considerable successes: they threw out the agents and spies of the capitalists, and forged links with the office-workers and the technicians to get information of a financial and industrial nature. In the affairs of the factory they themselves held the power of disciplining workers, and they showed the scattered and disunited workers what direct action by the workers in industry means.

The activity of the Councils and internal commissions manifested itself more clearly during the strikes: these strikes lost their impulsive, fortuitous character and became the expression of the conscious activity of the revolutionary masses. The technical organisation of the Councils and the internal commissions and their capacity for action was perfected to such an extent that it was possible, within five minutes, to get 16,000 workers, scattered through 42 divisions of FIAT, to down tools. On 3rd December 1919 the Factory Councils gave a tangible proof of their capacity to lead mass movements in grand style. Behind the backs of the Socialist section, who held the whole mechanism of the movement in their control, the Factory Councils mobilised, without any preparation, and in the space of one hour, 120,000 workers, drawn up by factories. One hour later this proletarian army launched itself like an avalanche into the centre of the city, and swept the whole nationalist and militarist rabble out of the squares and off the streets.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE COUNCILS

At the head of the movement for the establishment of the Factory Councils were the communists belonging to the Socialist section and the Union organisations. The anarchists also took part, seeking to oppose their high-flown rhetoric to the clear and precise language of the Marxist communists.

However, the movement came up against furious resistance from Union functionaries, from the direction of the Socialist Party, and from 'Avanti!' The polemic of these people was based on the difference between the concept of the Factory Council and that of the Soviet. Their conclusions had a purely theoretical, abstract and bureaucratic nature. Behind their high-sounding phrases was concealed the wish to avoid the direct participation of the masses in the revolutionary struggle, the desire to maintain the Unions' hold over the masses. The members of the Party directorate repeatedly refused to take the initiative of a revolutionary action before a coordinated plan of action had been drawn up, but they never did a thing to prepare and elaborate this plan.

However, the Turin movement did not succeed in expanding beyond localised limits, since the whole bureaucratic mechanism of the Unions was set in motion to prevent the working masses in other parts of Italy from following the example of Turin.

The Turin movement was mocked, sneered at, insulted and criticised in all ways.

The bitter criticisms of the Union bodies and the Socialist Party directorate gave new encouragement to the capitalists, who no longer had any hindrance in their struggle against the Turin proletariat and against the Factory Councils. The conference of industrialists which was held in March 1920 in Milan elaborated a plan of attack. But the 'guardians of the working class' and their

political and economic organisations, took no notice of this fact: abandoned by all, the Turin proletariat was forced to confront, by itself, with its own forces, the nation's capitalists and the power of the State. Turin was inundated by an army of policemen: around the city cannons and machine-guns were set up at strategic points. And when this whole military apparatus was ready, the capitalists began to provoke the proletariat. It is true that, faced with these formidable conditions of struggle, the proletariat hesitated to take up the challenge. But when it was seen that the clash was inevitable, the workers emerged courageously from their positions of reserve, and were determined to conduct the fight right through to its victorious end.

THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST COUNCIL IN MILAN

The metalworkers were on strike for a whole month, the other categories for ten days. Industry was at a standstill throughout the province, and communications were paralysed. But the Turin proletariat was isolated from the rest of Italy: the central organs did nothing to assist them: they did not even publish a manifesto to explain to the Italian people the importance of the struggle of the Turin workers: 'Avanti!' refused to publish the manifesto of the Turin party section. The Turin comrades were labelled everywhere as anarchists and adventurists. At that time there was due to be held at Turin the National Council of the Party. But such a convention had to be transferred to Milan, because a city "in the grip of a general strike" seemed hardly suitable as a theatre of Socialist discussion.

On this occasion the complete impotence of the men called upon to lead the party was revealed: while the working masses in Turin were courageously defending the Factory Councils, the first

organisations based on workers' democracy and embodying the power of the proletariat, in Milan they were chattering over projects and methods for the formation of Councils, as a form of political power to be won by the proletariat: they were ways of systemising conquests not yet won, and they were leaving the Turin proletariat to its fate, leaving the bourgeoisie the possibility of destroying a workers' power that had already been won.

The Italian proletarian masses showed their solidarity with the Turin comrades in various ways: the railwaymen of Pisa, Livorno and Florence refused to transport troops bound for Turin: the port workers and sailors of Livorno and Genoa sabotaged the transportation of materials in the ports: the proletariat in many cities went on strike, contrary to the orders of their Unions.

The General Strike of Turin and Piedmont came up against sabotage and resistance by the Unions and by the Party itself. Nevertheless it was of great educational significance because it demonstrated that the practical union of workers and peasants is possible, and once again proved the urgent necessity of fighting against the whole bureaucratic mechanism of the Unions, which are the most solid support behind the opportunist efforts of the parliamentarians and reformists to stifle any revolutionary movement of the working masses.

July 1920.

chronology

Italy after the first world war had an increasingly militant working class which was fast organising a power capable of threatening the power of the bourgeois state. There was talk of a power vacuum: government was virtually nil, the economy was in chaos, the police and the military were rundown and could not be relied upon, and the industrialists had as yet no organisation with which to fight the wave of workers' struggles.

However, this situation was soon to change, and everyone recognised that 1920 would be the year of making the workers' movement in Italy.

Late 1919	Prime minister Nitti reorganises and strengthens the police force, and recruits a 'Royal Guard' of 25,000 men.
March 7th 1920	Founding conference of Confindustria, the organisation of Italian employers whose immediate concern is to curb strikes and smash the power of the Factory Councils.
March 29th, 1920	The metalworkers of <i>Industrie Metallurgiche</i> , a branch of FIAT in Turin, call for a sit-down strike. The precise nature of the issue is not clear, but with the employers set on their course of provocation, the clash was bound to come. The management responded with a lock-out.
March 31st 1920	In all FIAT plants in Turin sit-down strikes are called in solidarity and FIAT accordingly make the lockout total.
April 11th, 1920	During negotiations the employers' demand is that the power of the Factory Councils be kept within the limits of the old Internal Commissions. The whole question of power at the point of production is at stake.
April 13th 1920	The Turin Chamber of Labour calls a general strike for the defence of the Councils. The strike is virtually total and covers most of Piedmont. It receives strong support from the port and railway workers in the North.
April 19th-20th, 1920	The National Conference of the Socialist Party is moved from Turin to Milan. There is strong criticism of the strike and of the role of the Turin section. They reply with " <i>Towards a Renewal of the Socialist Party</i> ".
April 23rd, 1920	The strike ends. The city has been besieged by troops, and the workers betrayed by the Socialist Party, which had withdrawn its support and left the Turin movement isolated from the rest of Italy. The socialist section of Turin have to accept the employers' terms.
July 1920	2nd Congress of the Communist International, to which Gramsci submits his report.