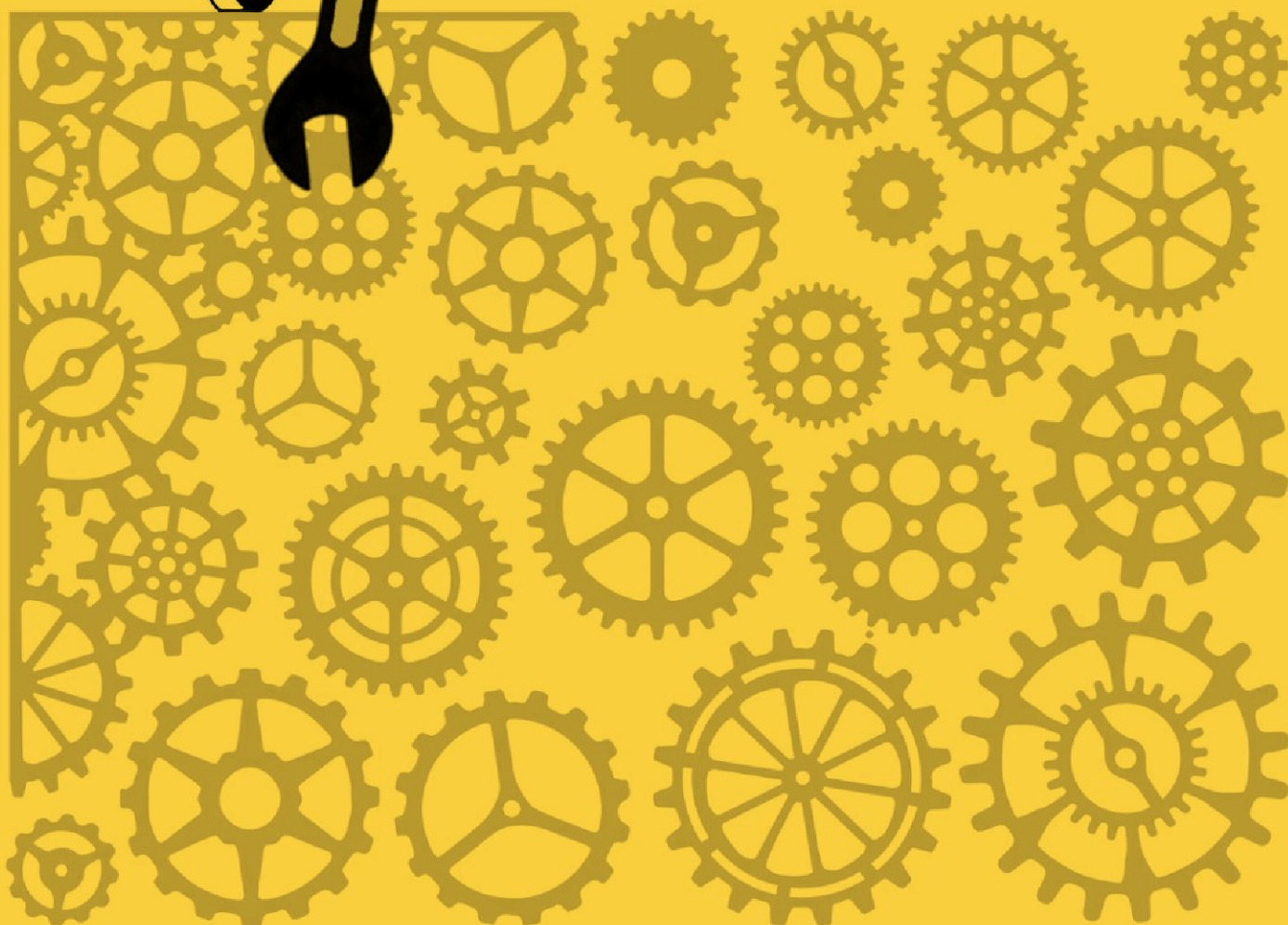


# **THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT**



## **AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR**



**INTERVIEW WITH MARC CHIRIK**

**[1985]**

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# INTERVIEW WITH MARC CHIRIK FOCUSING ON THE INTERNATIONALIST OPPOSITION TO WORLD WAR TWO, ESPECIALLY IN FRANCE

We are publishing an interview with Marc Chirik in which he talks in some detail about the revolutionary movement during the Second World War [\[1\]](#). Marc, a founding member of the ICC, had also been one of that small handful of revolutionaries who stood up to the enormous ideological and physical pressures of the “war against fascism” and who throughout the conflict remained loyal to the fundamental principles of internationalism, defended by Lenin, Luxemburg and others during the “war to end wars” of 1914-18. In 1939, following the defeat of the wave of revolutions and mass strikes which had brought the first imperialist war to a close, revolutionaries were far more isolated than they had been in 1914, and the history of internationalist opposition to the equally imperialist Second World War is not at all well known. And indeed the ruling class would be very

happy for it to remain unknown, since it challenges their whole narrative of 1939-45 as the “good war”, the one that had to be fought - a view shared by right and left of the bourgeoisie, with the left in particular contrasting the “futile” and even “imperialist” slaughter of the First World War to the “necessary sacrifice” demanded by the Second. Indeed, the small groups of communists who denounced this fraud at the time were then, and are still, slandered as agents of fascism – a slander that was more than once translated into murderous deeds, such as the assassination by Stalinist hit-squads of Aquaviva and Atti, two militants of the Internationalist Communist Party in Italy; Marc himself had a very close shave with the Stalinist killers in France, after a raid where the Stalinists found internationalist leaflets written in French and German and addressed to the soldiers of both camps. Marc’s memoirs are thus a precious contribution to reconstructing the history of this war from a proletarian standpoint.

This interview was held in 1985 and first printed in the book *Marc Laverne et La Gauche Communiste de France*, volume 1, 1920-70, a compilation of texts written by Marc between 1931 and 1969. The book was put together and published by Pierre Hempel, who also conducted the interview. At the time Hempel was a member of the ICC, but left the organisation in the 1990s. He publishes a blog called *le Proletariat Universel* which contains much that we disagree with, not least with regard to the ICC and to Marc himself. But we think that the interview itself provides us with an accurate picture of the real political and personal capacities of Marc Chirik.



# BEFORE THE WAR

**PH: Let's try to understand the march to war. Certain phenomena are apparent: the development of the ideologies of the counter-revolution, Stalinism and Nazism. Liberal bourgeois ideology adds to this by saying that the Communist parties at this time – opportunist but not yet bourgeois - with their tactic of “class against class”, which refused an alliance with the degenerated Socialist parties - helped the rise of Nazism. We must debunk this false idea of a liberal united front as the only obstacle to the seizure of power by the Nazis, who are equally capitalist. Regularly the newspaper Le Monde, along with all the Trotskyists, lament the lack of unity of the "labour movement" as the main cause of the victory of Nazism.**

**MC:** It's the question of the united front, which dates back to the Third Congress of the Communist International. The Bolsheviks, and the Comintern in general - contrary to what they had announced at the First Congress, which considered that the Socialist parties after the split must be considered as organs of the bourgeoisie - immediately after the Third Congress began to consider that the social democratic parties are part of the workers' movement. After the defeat of the revolution in Germany, they posed the question of winning over the majority of the workers. It was essential at all costs to reach the workers. How to reach the socialist workers if not by offering a "United Front" to the Socialist parties with a minimum programme of defending the immediate interests of the workers? And in this context they could denounce the non-defence of workers' interests by the Socialist parties in practice. Treint, secretary general of the CP, used the phrase "plucking the Socialist chicken", a bit like the cook who approaches the fowl to pull out its feathers. And we did not agree with Treint in these debates. This policy dominated the entire politics of the CPs, except the

Italian party, Bordiga, etc[2]. However, Bordiga, while in the majority in the Italian CP, renounced the leadership, obeying the principle that the party is a unified world party; it is not possible that a section, in a separate country, should have a leadership at odds with the leadership of the International. Very 'fair play'. Bordiga did not give up fighting for this orientation, but generously renounced the leadership. The battle would be waged, but Bordiga had abandoned the leadership, leaving it to Gramsci / Togliatti.

There were also reactions in the French party, never among the clearest. These were often emotional reactions. One of the delegates of the French left declared: "how can I sit at the table with those who murdered Rosa Luxemburg? Never!" Such an argument, based only on the fact that they had murdered Rosa Luxemburg, was insufficient. It was necessary to prove the fundamental question: were these workers' parties or not? The International gave credibility to the "workers'" parties a little like the Trotskyists do now with the left parties. But this policy of the left turn, of "class against class", etc., in the 30s, corresponded to the needs of Russia to push the European bourgeoisies not to ally with Germany.

**PH: But it was doomed anyway, even if the left democrats were allied with the Stalinists, this would not have counter-balanced the rise of Nazism.**

**MC:** Absolutely! We have the evidence of the national union in France, for example, behind De Gaulle, which did not prevent the right coming to power, from spending many years in government. Alliances and united fronts have never prevented the arrival in government of the various factions of the right. This was not a terrain of struggle for the working class. We also have the example of the united front with Kemal Pasha[3], who ended up carrying out an incredible massacre of all the communists, who were beheaded. One cannot make a united front with the bourgeoisie. If in the 19th century it made sense to talk about progressive factions of the bour-

geoisie against feudal tendencies, such as the alliance with the democratic bourgeoisie against Bismarck, this no longer has any meaning after the first imperialist world war. The whole bourgeoisie, the bourgeois system, enters into decadence. Progressivism is not progressive. If the bourgeoisie advances, this already shows that the proletariat is hesitant. For the Nazis to come to power and dominate the state in Germany, there had first to be a whole work of undermining on the part of social democracy, in order to demoralise the proletariat. And also the undermining work of the Stalinists, for whom after the Treaty of Versailles Germany had to struggle for national and social revolution at the same time; it was first necessary to destroy the Treaty of Versailles, which was the watchword of the Nazis, of the Nazi bourgeoisie. So if the alliance with the social democrats had existed, as the Trotskyists imagined, it would have done nothing at all. The question was: had the proletariat lost its class terrain? The proletariat had to fight not for the liberation of Germany but against the German bourgeoisie. But this struggle was abandoned in the name of the fight against fascism, the new hobbyhorse, as in Italy in the years after 1922 against Mussolini. It was "democracy" that paved the way for fascism. It needed fascism. And in this sense, the proletariat could not change it, it was already beaten. Thus the arrival of fascism only proved the defeat of the proletariat, a proletariat that had been driven for years onto a terrain of democratic and nationalist mystifications. From this point of view there was no question of "saving the country" against fascism and social democracy.

**PH: In the 70s, the Bordigists argued that the communists were the first "anti-fascists" in Italy and Germany.**

**MC:** This is wrong! The communists defended the necessity of grouping the working class on its class terrain, to confront fascism on its class terrain, but not on the side of the "democratic" bourgeoisie. At the time of Bordiga's leadership of the Italian party, the party refused any alliance

with the bourgeois parties which would supposedly prevent the coming to power of Mussolini. The Italian Left, including our Fraction in France, never identified with the anti-fascist struggle. It denounced the United Front in Germany; this is one of the reasons for the rupture of the Italian Fraction with Trotsky. And similarly, concerning Spain, it refused any alliance with or support for the Republicans against Franco. The fight against fascism yes, but on the terrain of the class, not in the name of the defence of the so called "democratic" republic.

The position of the Left was clear: no alliance, no United Front with the parties of the bourgeoisie. This was not a moral position. We denounced precisely the ideology of the bourgeoisie, who will always advance the faction that suits it the most.

**PH: We are thus in a period where, globally, with the Laval-Stalin pact in 1934<sup>[4]</sup>, the opportunist CP which was in the workers' movement passes into the camp of the bourgeoisie; on 1st May 34, it marches behind the tricolor flag and Jeanne d'Arc. It submits itself to the war aims of the bourgeoisie...**

**MC:** This is the climax. It is the completion of a process of degeneration of the CI and the communist parties since the 1920s, on the national question, the question of the United Front, etc., which leads directly, not to being a semi-workers' party, but a party of the Russian state and the capitalist state.

**PH: Overall the left, from the Social Democrats to the Stalinists, has all the cards now to prepare the proletariat for the idea of the inevitability of war. From 1934, they are on a forced march to bind the proletariat hand and foot, say in 3 or 4 years.**

**MC:** And thanks to "anti-fascism". This mystification was crucial to march the workers to war. Without the Popular Front, it would have been impossible to go to war. It took the Popular Front, the events in Spain, the



history of "anti-fascism" to bind or at least confuse the workers. The workers did not take part in the Second World War as they did in the First, full of innocent enthusiasm. They left disoriented, believing they were fighting for freedom, but not being very sure. But for years they had been dragged onto the bourgeois terrain of the Popular Front, of anti-fascism, to the point where they no longer knew where to turn. Once dislodged from their class terrain, they could only go - with fear and without enthusiasm – to the front in the war of France against Germany.

But there was so little enthusiasm that it can be verified by comparing the time it took diplomatically and militarily for the occupation of Poland (about 6 weeks) and the time it took for France to collapse. The collapse of France was in eight days. That's a stampede. And even at the beginning, to a certain extent in the French population, there is Petainism; when Petain starts to speak about stopping the war, everyone welcomes it: "we're fed up with the war!" So the workers do not go enthusiastically to this war that all the parties were calling them to.

**PH: But the workers were not strong enough to prevent it!**

**MC:** They were no longer on their class terrain.

**PH: So the 'Communist' Party of France supports the Nazi-Soviet pact<sup>[5]</sup>. It demands the official reappearance of L'Humanité. But at the same time, at the moment of the declaration of war it appears to defend something like a revolutionary policy. What was it?**

**MC:** Yes, and we must remember that this was a few weeks before the war. This pro-Russian turn immediately provoked splits in the CP. This "defeatist" argument, which consisted of supporting German and Russian imperialism and explaining that this is how to prevent Germany attacking Russia, when it wasn't even at war, didn't work. A whole part of the CP split. Gitton, a member of the Political Bureau and secretary general of the CGT, left the party, denouncing the treaty. He didn't break with the party



on a class terrain, but around a political action, lining up with the anti-Russian bloc, and then finding himself on the terrain of national defence, with those who wanted to reconstruct France. A large part of these people naturally found themselves in the government of Petain, starting with Marion who was for 15 years the representative of the CP in the CI. The whole St Denis group also, who were once, in 1923, the most militant young Communist elements. They ended up in Vichy.

**PH: And these were people that you had once fought alongside.**

**MC:** Yes. Yes of course. It was Doriot himself who had excluded us. They had reached a nationalist impasse. If they fought on a nationalist terrain, they were nationalists. Especially since Petain stood for "No to the war and defend France."

Then the CP, in turn, changed policy rapidly, coming up with the idea of "national resistance". So the workers were caught in several vices: either you march in the defence of France, or march in the defence of the USSR, or march in defence of Germany, or against Germany. There's a whirlwind in the heads of the workers.

In any case, the story of the "resistance" above all made it possible to drag the workers onto the terrain of national defence, all the more so with the massacres perpetrated by Germany. It was possible to make the workers think that their fate depended on victory against the occupier.

**PH: Now let's look at the state of the revolutionary milieu on the eve of the war, those who resisted the degeneration of the First International, who left or were excluded by the then chauvinist CP. There was the empty and premature proclamation of the still-born 4th International. There were a certain number of groups that pronounced against the war. But, with the declaration of war most of them broke apart. The Trotskyists fell into the camp of national resistance. Why was it that the clearest group of the time - the "Bordigists", who came**

## from Bilan - collapsed? Why did no-one in the revolutionary milieu take up revolutionary defeatism in the sense that Lenin did?

**MC:** Let's not dwell on the group "Union Communiste"<sup>[6]</sup> who already had a position on the Spanish question which supported or half-supported the POUM<sup>[7]</sup> and the Republic. They broke apart at the moment of the war, and what's more, they were surprised by the war. But those that had seen the war coming since the beginning of the 30's were above all the Italian Fraction. They had underlined that we had entered into a period of defeats and that these defeats would lead irreversibly to war.

The victory of the Nazis in 33 meant for us that the historic course was henceforth towards war. In view of this a deep reflection was to be undertaken. We had understood that the events in Spain were part of the general rehearsal for war, against those, in particular the Trotskyists, who were affirming that the Popular Fronts opened up the era of revolution.

The successive concessions of the Anglo-French bloc to Germany at the end of the civil war in Spain, and above all Munich, letting them occupy Czechoslovakia, etc., forced us to begin to pose questions.

Vercesi, who was the great theoretician, the great leader of the Italian Fraction, began to wonder: effectively, the crisis and unemployment in Germany had completely disappeared with the advent of Hitler. The development of the armaments industry - as they moved towards war, with Germany in front, and the other western countries close behind - was patent. There was a development of the war economy which effectively reabsorbed unemployment. Towards 38 and the beginning of 39, production reached the levels of 1928, whereas before they had fallen by 40%. World production took off again. There was little unemployment. Workers were back in work. Vercesi also posed the question: "In the first place, can the war economy be an economic solution to the capitalist crisis?" And it seemed to him that it was. It's of little import who you are working for, the fact is

that unemployment has been reabsorbed. Thus there is no necessity for imperialist war. The contradictions of international capitalism seemed to him to have been attenuated thanks to the war economy. And on the other side, there's a series of small wars such as Ethiopia, Manchuria, the war in Spain. All these ended up in terrible massacres, mostly of the workers. Thus Vercesi poses the question: why is there local but not international war? And he ends up by saying that the war economy reabsorbs the contradictions of the capitalist system. He also considers that inter-imperialist tensions are lessening and begins saying that the essential reason for world imperialist war consists of a class to class response, of capitalism to the proletariat. Thus, in his theory the war was a phenomenon aimed at massacring the proletariat. But he says that in order to massacre the proletariat capitalism has no need for a world war; it can massacre it bit by bit. Thus it massacres in Italy with the war in Ethiopia, it massacres in China and Japan with the war in Manchuria. It massacres the civilian population in Spain. Thus world war has ceased to be a necessity for capitalism since it can easily massacre the workers a piece at a time. Munich<sup>[8]</sup>, for those who thought like Vercesi, was the new Treaty of Versailles! That was it, it was the end of the war! We were going to see local wars but no longer world wars. There was no process leading towards a world war. That's what the leadership of the Fraction thought, but there was a minority in the Fraction, notably the comrades in Belgium like Mitchell, and then us, the group in Marseilles, who said "all this is madness! It's a complete revision".

**PH: But at the beginning you were impressed since it was Vercesi who was talking.**

**MC:** Yes, but our reaction was immediate: "no, no, that doesn't work, all these new theories... the war economy which magically reabsorbs the problems of capitalism...war is a product of imperialist tensions, not of the class struggle"

**PH: Bordiga didn't react?**

**MC:** Bordiga wasn't about. He was sleeping! He was in Italy. He never made contact. He refused contact. We tried to make contact with him but he absolutely refused any contact with the outside.

**PH: Why?**

**MC:** He didn't give any explanation. This was his position when we asked him why he remained in Italy - and he was there under surveillance by the police, he had been deported to the islands first of all then repatriated to house arrest in Naples - no, I must devote myself to the Italian proletariat, I must remain here because when the situation turns around I will be here! He thus refused any contact abroad, an attitude which went against all the work typical of the Bolsheviks who were obliged to work outside Russia. In France, in Belgium, he would have been able to undertake the work that was impossible for him to do in Italy. On the other hand Damen moved around thirty-six times during the war.

But with this position which dominated the Fraction and which reckoned that we were looking at a resurgence of the workers' movement, after Munich and after Spain, the title of the review *Bilan* was changed to *Octobre*. *Bilan* was the balance-sheet of the defeat, *Octobre* announced a revolutionary upsurge. Obviously, when war broke out it was those comrades that were most surprised. Thus the whole theory went up in flames. As always in such a case the justification came afterwards through a theoretical sleight of hand. With the war breaking out, we, the minority, asked them for an account of what happened. So? Your position didn't stand up before, and now here's the war, Poland first of all and then France enters the war?

They replied: Oh no! All these are local wars. The war of France and Germany is a local war. With Britain it's also a local war. With Russia's entry into the war it's still local. With the United States it's still local. Throughout the war they continued to support the idea that it wasn't a world imperialist war. For them it was a whole series of local wars. With such an



idea their position is simple: if the war expanded that meant that the proletariat had disappeared. It wasn't only defeated. It had disappeared as a political and social force. And as the proletariat had disappeared, a political group could not express a class position. Consequently the group must dissolve itself, that's it, and stop tilting at windmills.

## DURING THE WAR

**PH: What did you do then?**

**MC:** In practice the war was upon us. Activity became difficult. It became difficult to maintain links. In 1940 in Marseilles I myself was mobilised and sent to the front - but I was back there again in June 40. We kept up the life of the group in Marseilles. The group maintained itself. I was in Marseilles from 38. I had been a prisoner and escaped. With Jacob, a member of the leadership of the Fraction, with Cl., my partner<sup>[9]</sup>, and other comrades we decided to re-establish links with the different sections in Paris, Lyon, Toulon, Aubagne, and with Belgium. Jacob, as a member of the leadership, opposed it. However, the section in Marseilles took the decision to reconstitute the Fraction. It held a conference. We began by renewing contacts with Toulon first of all, with Lyon and then with Paris, and then Brussels. The comrades of Belgium refused. Some of the Paris comrades joined us, Lyon as well. Thus in 1942, we held the first conference for the reconstitution of the Fraction. It posed the question of pronouncing against the war. But we had no material. We had to procure a typewriter.

**PH: Nobody was arrested then?**

**MC:** Jacob was arrested and then deported. He didn't come back. He was stupidly arrested in the street during a round-up. He had false papers and genuine papers. He pulled both out at the same time! We tried to get him



out of prison at Aix, but without luck. He was deported to Germany and disappeared. As Mitchell did later....

So it was necessary to find a typewriter. Nobody had one. It was indispensable for publishing anything. We ended up finding one. Our correspondence up to then with the other sections were hand-written. From 41, we had some contacts around us, French comrades and RC. of Belgium.

**PH: So in 1942 then you still hadn't made a leaflet against the war?**

**MC:** We hadn't been able to up to then. But when the French comrades arrived, one of whom was a former Trotskyist, we decided to form the French Nucleus of the Communist Left and we produced a "Declaration of Principles" in 1942. It saw itself as part of the International Communist Left and we worked together. This immediately allowed us to produce leaflets.

**PH: So you made your first leaflets in 1942? How did you distribute them?**

**MC:** At the beginning it was simply a handful of copies, 50 odd with several carbons re-typed several times with our one typewriter. It was crazy work. We gave them out around us mostly, people who were close. Marseilles was really a place where all the political elements and refugees were coming from Paris. Ten million people had left the north for the south. In Marseilles there was a whole Parisian fauna including surrealists, Victor Serge, etc. Thus the Nucleus was set up and we began to organise our discussions.

**PH: Parallel to you another group existed, the RKD, the CR (Revolutionary Communists), who had put out leaflets against the war since its beginning in Italian, German and French. When did you make contact with these groups for the first time? Where did they come from and where were they going?**

**MC:** The RKD was a Viennese Trotskyist group[10]. They came from Austria. Revolutionäre Kommunisten Deutschland. They were Austrian but preferred to speak in the name of the German proletariat. The group was formed at the beginning of the 30's in Austria in the Left Opposition. It had undergone several splits. When Germany occupied Austria some elements fled and sought refuge in Paris, where one of its leaders still subscribes to Révolution Internationale. They were used to clandestine work. Their position in Paris at the time of the constitution of the Fourth International was to consider that it was premature while remaining in agreement with all the other Trotskyist positions, on the United Front, etc. They considered it too early and the situation not ready for it. They had better positions than Trotsky on the march towards war, like the group of Vereeken[11]. They didn't join the Fourth International, which allowed them to evolve. When the war broke out they said: struggle against the war. And when the Russian question was posed, they pronounced against the defence of Russia. The Hitler-Stalin Pact had shown for them that it had ceased to be a proletarian state. Others, like Shachtman, who didn't have a very clear position, clearly said however: no defence of Russia, but "defeatism". As the RKD were used to clandestine work, they had kept printing material and could write leaflets and undertake illegal revolutionary work. Further they were in Paris and in touch with all the Trotskyist groups. They had a certain audience that we didn't have.

**PH: Finally, they were better prepared than you with the declaration of war?**

**MC:** They kept themselves as they were. They were prepared for clandestine activity whereas the Italian Fraction was absolutely unprepared with the erroneous perspectives of its leadership. The Fraction hadn't kept up links. And then in the Fraction there was the question of political refugees above all during the phoney war which preceded the entry into war proper. The great majority of them had no papers at all. The outbreak of war meant

that as Italians they were part of the enemy camp. Or else they had to make pro-French declarations or be sent to a concentration camp. Or else they had to return to Italy. But returning to Italy...

There was a whole discussion in the Fraction: what to do? What's the best solution? A single position dominated: no declarations of support for this side or the other.

**PH: Were there those who lay low to save their skin?**

**MC:** No! Some were captured by the Petainist police or the Gestapo and sent to the Italian authorities. Others returned to Italy by their own means and participated in the formation of the Internationalist Communist Party. Others stayed. Before Italy officially entered the war France was already defeated. Which didn't give time to anyone to hesitate in making a pro-this or that declaration. France was at war, thus no longer demanded anything, still less with its rapid defeat.

In any case up to the French rout, the question of choosing between a French concentration camp or an Italian prison was our main concern. These were all the difficulties of the comrades of the Italian Fraction.

For the German refugees the question was simple: France arrests us and delivers us to Germany, including social-democrats like Hilferding. The RKD had already sorted out false papers before the war. They were ready to go underground. Some came from rich families, Viennese Jews who had fled German occupation and who had bought large sums of money with them and so provided themselves with adequate printing material. Whereas the Italians were all poor workers in irregular situations. But the RKD, which had been outside of the Fourth International since 38, made contact with the Vereeken group in Belgium. C was part of the Vereeken group and acted as an intermediary between us, fleeing Paris and coming to Marseilles. The RKD moved around France looking for other Trotskyist groups like themselves, also meeting C who presented himself as a mem-

ber of the French Nucleus of the Communist Left. The Austrians were interested and asked to make contact with us, particularly when they learned that we were against the war and against the defence of the USSR. We made contact. They then came to Marseilles and showed us their savoir-faire. They were really used to clandestine work. They sent us or gave us documents that they generally transported in boxes of food, with pasta or something else. They were at enormous risk since they travelled around. They had financial means, but even so they travelled on false papers. It took some courage. They'd had the experience of the Gestapo in Austria. One example of a heroic moment in their work: one of their comrades, a German comrade, was arrested. At the time of her arrest she made out that she was ill. She was thus sent to the hospital in Marseilles. At the time politicals were under direct surveillance, in this case by the Gestapo.

In the hospital corridor two members of the Gestapo did 12-hour shifts in order to guard the door of the room containing the false patient. At midday two others from the Gestapo came in to take over the shift.

Comrades of the patient decided to organise her escape. They got hold of German military uniforms. They were of Germanic origin, blond and spoke the language. They came a few minutes before the shift changeover at midday. They told the two guards that it was their turn to take over. The latter didn't suspect anything, especially as the RKD had worn the uniforms of officers, so they left. The RKD comrades opened the door. The woman left. They had parked a car like that of the Gestapo in the hospital square and then left without obstruction. They were really formidable. None of them fell during the war!

**PH: Very good! So these were the famous "hitlero-trotskyists" [12] who gave out leaflets in German and who the French bourgeoisie, with the Stalinists at their head, during the period of the Resistance and the Liberation, had wanted to liquidate, having assimilated them with the collaborators because they were anti-patriots (laughter)! And didn't**



## **the French Trotskyists in the Resistance also give out leaflets in German?**

**MC:** The Trotskyists in general did nothing against the war. The RKD did propaganda work in several languages and in German, even towards German soldiers. Even if the Trotskyists produced leaflets in German, it was always with bourgeois positions for the defence of the USSR. We should also remember that when Hitler occupied France there was a discussion within official Trotskyism where some posed the question like the Stalinists: couldn't we get the occupiers to allow the reappearance of our publications? The majority evidently rejected this but a minority envisaged working legally like the Stalinists Duclos and company. Coming back to the RKD, there were only a dozen or so but they undertook formidable work. But they were very activist.

## **PH: They thought that the war would end in revolution?**

**MC:** Everyone thought so. For us it was the memory of 1917 which predominated. All the remaining theories since 17 held that war opens up possibilities towards revolution. Thus, we thought that if the war is here, the course could be overturned towards a resurgence of class struggle. That's what we were thinking. We questioned this very much later. But the memory of 1917 Russia and 1919 Germany remained a living memory. In the Italian Fraction you couldn't imagine the atmosphere during the war, and above all from 33, we were so isolated. The Trotskyists defended the USSR, the Popular Fronts, carried out entryism into the Socialist parties and the PSOP of Pivert<sup>[13]</sup>. They participated in the Amsterdam-Pleyel conference.

## **PH: What was your analysis of the role of the unions during the war?**

**MC:** Already before the war we were posing the question: are the unions still organs of the working class? But the question was only posed. We posed above all the question of the nature of the Russian state.



**PH: But nonetheless minorities of the Dutch Left and the German Left of the 20's had already understood the anti-working class nature of the unions.**

**MC:** Yes. But in the Fraction the dominant position was the necessity to work within union organisations in the tradition of the 3rd International. When the Fraction fought the United Front, it fought the political United Front because it considered that the Socialist parties were a part of the bourgeoisie, while the unions were only reformist and it was possible to work within them despite everything.

**PH: But when you began to seriously pose the question during the war you began to reflect on the contribution of the Dutch Left. But up till then you didn't call into question this idea of working within the unions?**

**MC:** Yes, but in the Fraction there was already a debate from the 30's. Some elements posed the question about whether the unions were still organs of the working class. It was a debate that was at its beginnings; it was pursued during the war and it ended with the Liberation. The group Internationalisme henceforth had a clear position on the question, whereas the others with Vercesi remained prisoners of the idea that the unions were, despite everything, organs of the working class.

**PH: What did you think of the strikes during the war? What for example did you make of the strike by miners in Pas de Calais which were not initially controlled by the PCF, contrary to what they boasted about afterwards?**

**MC:** Behind the whole question of strikes... there weren't many strikes, above all there were campaigns against the STO, compulsory work in Germany - which was manna for the nationalist Resistance - but which signified super-exploitation and deportation of the workers. The Italian Fraction said that it wasn't a question of ignoring it, it recognised that the

workers' protests responded to a will not to work for the occupier, but underlined that the Stalinists profited from it by recruiting for the Resistance, claiming that this was the way to save workers from deportation.

**PH: What did you do then?**

**MC:** Inasmuch as we had possibilities to talk, to contact those around us, we supported the validity of workers' resistance, of the refusal to line up with the war, while denouncing the idea of joining the Maquis. Otherwise what choice was there? The workers were asked either to participate in the war in Germany or join the war here in the Resistance. Whereas it was absolutely necessary to struggle against both.

**PH: This miners' strike then, did you try to do something towards it?**

**MC:** Not this strike in particular. Generally our hope rested in waiting for a workers' uprising. It was a traditional point for us that the workers would revolt against the war. An anecdote can illustrate the validity of this. I worked in Marseilles as an electrician. I put up the telegraph poles. One day, one of our overseers said to us "come down here, war is declared! Mobilisation is underway!" Each of us avoided the temptation to go home. A large number of workers were immediately mobilised. I recall going directly to the house of a comrade. His wife was there in tears. I asked her what she was crying about? She replied, war has broken out, it is terrible! I responded: listen, now it will happen. What was difficult was the wait. Now we are going to wait for revolution! Finally, things will move!

For me, as for my comrades, it was the eve of the storm when you can no longer bear the tension. Ah! At last! The storm is breaking and then we wait for its consequences.

Whereas the leadership of the Fraction in Belgium declared the dissolution of the group, for us on the contrary, it was the moment we were going to continue the work, but in clandestinity, during the war in order to constitute the revolutionary forces.

**PH: Why did they declare the dissolution?**

**MC:** On the basis that the proletariat had disappeared as a social class!

**PH: They were the modernists of the time (laughter).**

**MC:** Then we stayed with the idea that a new period was opening up. We remained on the look-out for any movement of the workers that could come from discontent with the war. In France we thought that it would be small sparks that would ignite it. It's true that the miners' strike or other strikes were an expression of the discontent of workers who no longer believed the ideas told to them about working harder. There were reactions against misery, around the problems of bad provisions. Any movement of discontent by the workers in this sense is a premise for the revolt against war.

Also in 1943, when the movement in Italy broke out, some movements in Turin, Milan, etc., against the war, we said that it was the beginning of an international workers' reaction against the war. Of course the workers were straight away hemmed in from all sides...[\[14\]](#)

**PH: Did you exaggerate the significance of this workers' uprising in Italy?**

**MC:** We didn't have concrete, precise elements on these events. We had a paper from Geneva published in Swiss and, despite everything, the French press. The Petainist press denounced this movement: they're the enemies of Mussolini, infiltrated by Anglo-Americans, etc. For us the fact that French radio and press was strongly denouncing this workers' movement meant that the truth was very much contrary to what our class enemies were saying!

It was on the basis of these elements and our conviction of fact that the war was necessarily finished and that the general discontent would develop, that we were optimistic.

We organised a conference of the French Nucleus in Marseilles where we took a position, calling for vigilance about what would develop on the international level. What reinforced this conviction, regarding the question of our overestimation, was the declarations of Churchill. Since the south of Italy with Badoglio went over to the Allies, the entire front between north and south remain closed. There was no offensive from the Anglo-American bloc to try to force the issue. There was such immobilisation that it allowed the Germans, while Mussolini had been arrested and deported to an island, to go by plane and free him. It was incredible and the British didn't budge. And when the question was posed to Churchill in England about what are we waiting for - the Italian front is about to collapse? Churchill replied, it's intentional, we must let the Italian situation "stew in its own juice" for a time. And they gave the Germans, who were occupying the north at that time, the possibility of carrying a massacre, a formidable repression against the workers. The workers of Milan and Turin could only save themselves by joining the Maquis. The Maquis strengthened in Italy following the defeat of Mussolini which paved the way for German repression. The Allies had good reason for leaving them to "stew", in order to preserve capitalist social peace. They preferred to let this repression happen. They had no need of the workers for conquering the country, their military force was sufficient. What was at stake was the need to smother workers' discontent against the war. A win/win situation: by letting the Germans carry out the repression, they pushed the workers into the arms of the "democratic" ally. With the support of the Stalinists and all the democrats, there was a real development of the Italian Maquis, which didn't exist before, contrary to France.

For us this business demonstrated that the bourgeoisie are intelligent. Churchill knew what he was doing. He didn't jump the gun. He let the massacre of workers who were about to rise up happen, nipping it in the bud at the first symptoms.

# LIBERATION

**PH: And what was the position of Bordiga at this moment?**

**MC:** It was unknown! We hadn't made contact with him. Bordiga was in the south, in free Naples. He was at liberty to speak. Democracy came back with the government of Badoglio. Many papers appeared, a whole press, all sorts of declarations. But these declarations above all focused on the massacre of the workers of Milan and Turin by the Nazis. This avoided the fundamental problem. Basically it was inculcated in the workers of the south that they should fight Mussolini and fascism first of all – in other words, the same anti-fascism that had sent the workers to war. Now the bourgeoisie wanted the defeat of Mussolini. A whole heap of half-Trotskyist, half-Stalinist groups arose in terrible confusion posing the question: what is this war? And people calling themselves Left Communists appeared also, quoting Bordiga and bringing out papers.

One day we heard Henriot, government spokesman for Petainist propaganda, on the radio. He gave a speech saying in particular that Bordiga had just made a declaration saying that the conquests of the Red Army in Europe are not capitalist conquests but are in favour of the world revolution.

**PH: Are you sure you heard this declaration?**

**MC:** Yes, yes. And immediately, at its conference, the Fraction took a position: if it was true what the radio and press had just said about the declaration of Bordiga, that the Red Army supported revolution in Europe, we declared that Bordiga is not part of the Fraction and we will combat him and we will fight Stalinism. Bordiga was paying the price of 15 years of retirement and isolation. He wasn't up to speed with the evolution of our discussions.

A first question developed with Vercesi again. He said: Mussolini has



fallen like rotten fruit. The situation of Italian capitalism was such that Mussolini could no longer represent it. Consequently the bourgeoisie had let him fall. We asked therefore: does the situation in Milan and the uprising of workers count for nothing? For Vercesi the war was finished but it was finished by "the exhaustion of the war economy"!

**PH: Not by the mutual exhaustion of the combatants?**

**MC:** No, by the exhaustion of the war economy. And according to him in this case there will be a new crisis. And since the working class doesn't exist, there's no question of a resurgence nor of a workers' reaction to stop the war. There's no longer any need for Mussolini in Italy because there is a crisis of the war economy. Thus, we discussed amongst ourselves the significance of 43.

**PH: German refugees were also bombed at this time?**

**MC:** That started. The war took a very violent turn in northern Italy after the Allied landings.

The resistance of the German soldiers was desperate. Then again there was the landing in France where we saw the Germans pushed back. In Russia, it was the same after Stalingrad at the end of 44.

For the repression of the routed Germans, the Allied bourgeoisie applied the same principles as that of Churchill in Italy. When the German army found itself at the gates of Warsaw, the Red Army stopped: it let the massacre happen for 8 days. The Red Army didn't budge, it needed Warsaw "to stew in its own blood". Then the German army withdrew and the Russians entered a cemetery.

As the German army retreated, the same thing happened in Budapest for example. Again the Russian stopped. There was an uprising in the capital of Hungary, more or less confused obviously. And letting them be massacred was at least as important as in Warsaw. After the massacre was acco-

mplished the Russians entered the town with ease, as the gravediggers of a cemetery.

The whole of this plan was applied from 43, a policy of wiping out workers. A plan above all implicating Germany - which in any case was finished - in order to make it responsible for the massacre of the workers so that there was no possibility of the workers understanding who was really responsible.

### **PH: And the aim of the bombings?**

**MC:** They bombed, they destroyed entire towns that had no military objective: Dresden, Hamburg, Leipzig... A crazy massacre! But there was something else. As the German army retreated there begun, on the German front as well, there was a series of demonstrations and discontent against the war, with the question of provisions at the heart of them. At the front itself there were demonstrations against the war. At Stalingrad the Germans had suffered enormous losses. But the campaign for the conquest of Germany was a riposte against the general tendency to desertion. In the absence of the press it was difficult to get a clear account of the state of things. It was sufficient to see the reaction of the German military apparatus. Along the road of its debacle from Russia, thousands of German soldiers were hung in order to dissuade the others. This previously unheard of repression was testimony to a general tendency towards desertion.

Inasmuch as we were able to talk in Marseilles, I had the opportunity to work in an area where there was a unit of German soldiers. I talked with some veteran soldiers. All were afraid to return to the Russian front. That meant a terrible massacre for them. They said that Germany was kaput, Hitler was kaput. They also wanted the end of the war. It should be said that with the Liberation a large number of German soldiers wanted to desert although the officers tried to keep them together "in order to retreat together". Many were those who tried to desert. But, in France, it was

something dreadful for the German soldier. It was better for them to stay in the corps making up the German army than try to desert! The French population was unleashed. I have never seen such chauvinism in my life. Any German risked being lynched. This hysteria was stoked up by the whole of the French press, with L'Humanité at its head howling "to each his Boche!". It wasn't just words, but an appeal to public murder. Even Le Libertaire - contrary to those of us who were saying "in the final analysis, it's not the fault of the German people, but of the Nazi regime" - affirmed that "there was a general culpability of the German people!".

Sometimes, when the hysteria died down in Marseilles, we prevented some small groups of arrested German soldiers being lynched by the crowd.

Faced with that, I should say that the German soldiers in Marseilles locked themselves up in a fortress, saying that they didn't want to continue the war, but above all they didn't want to give themselves up to the FFI, the French Interior Forces: "we will only give ourselves up to the Americans". For them the American army was more of a guarantee that they wouldn't be given over to an unbridled mob. The German prisoners did not want to give themselves up individually and above all not to the French forces. They would only let themselves be disarmed by the Americans.

We saw arbitrary and improbable arrests. For example we knew some people from Alsace who were part of the German army, since Alsace was considered part of Germany. They were friends who had been mobilised against their will. They stayed working at the rear in offices. When the Americans arrived they tried to desert. They dressed in civilian clothes and escaped to Marseilles, arriving at Aubagne. It was two couples and they talked among themselves in Alsatian. The populace arrested them, said that they were German spies. They didn't hide the fact that they were Alsatians and had been part of the German army. They were tortured and killed.

**PH: And among you, the communist minority during the war, did you**

**also lose comrades?**

**MC:** During the war some had been arrested and deported. But, at the Liberation, no, because we knew that it was necessary to be careful. That didn't prevent us from bringing out a leaflet at that time (May 1st 1945) calling on workers to fraternise.

**PH: How many copies? And you weren't beaten up?**

**MC:** We didn't give them out hand to hand (laughter). We went to train stops and left them in the coaches. We distributed them at night in letter boxes. It was too risky during the day with the exacerbated chauvinism. For example, one day when a group of soldiers were being led under escort by the FFI we saw an intolerable scene. There were older German soldiers who had been in the rearguard. All along the route the crowd threw stones, spat in their faces, struck them, all sorts of things. The FFI had rounded up the scattered soldiers in the town in order to take them to prison. Then myself, with some of my comrades, stood up against it and spoke: - but these are men, stop hitting them, these are only soldiers recruited by force. What you're doing is scandalous.

I hadn't finished speaking when I was immediately trapped, surrounded by a threatening crowd: Who are you? And your accent is not quite French?

It could have been my turn to be lynched, my comrades quickly grabbed my hand and pulled me loose from this mess. We got out very quickly. It was impossible to say a word in public; it was shameful!

**PH: It was the worst period of your life?**

**MC:** I had never seen such a thing!

**PH: You could still believe in the working class at times like these?**

**MC:** Ah, yes! You could not stop believing in the working class. It was the only force which could react to the barbarity. Chauvinism can evaporate



little by little afterwards... Thus the end of the war didn't happen easily. In Germany in particular there were very marked movements of desertions, on the Russian front as well as in Europe. The uprisings in Germany were notable as all the young forces had been sent to the front and the ones who remained in the country were the foreign slave workers, the old and the women. A local militia was rapidly set up for each town. In several towns the population rose up, arrested the Nazis and massacred them. But the policy of the European democratic bloc consisted first of all of not letting the prisoners return. The general order was to prevent prisoners returning to their families in the towns and villages. The memory was present of the risk represented by this return, as in 17-18, when the sailors of the German navy in Kiel rose up against the war. The bourgeoisie had this fact in its head. In France about 2 million German soldiers were held prisoner. It was the same in Italy. But they were kept prisoner for 5 or 6 years! This force, this youth, if they had been returned to Germany, would have been equivalent to an enormous mass of unemployed and there would have been more important uprisings than those of the old and women. Germany was occupied and the Russians and Americans forbade any relation between soldiers and civil society.

**PH: Now I'm trying to understand better why the war ended. You describe how the Russian and western bourgeoisie tried hard to counter any risk of an uprising of any scale by the massacre of refugees and the prolonged internment of German soldiers, leaving proletarian reactions to "stew in their own juice". How did the Second World War finish? It finished anyway with a victory for capitalism.**

**MC:** As in all capitalist wars it terminated in defeat for some and victory for others. Here, the western bourgeoisie, with the USA at its head, along with Russia, completely changed the balance of forces that existed before the war. Germany could fight on one front, but not on two...

**PH: Revolution wasn't possible at the time then?**



**MC:** That's something else. That is a question which can only be raised from the point of view of the proletariat. From a capitalist point of view, and the different sides of capitalism, it was a question of avoiding an uprising of the class. Together they worked hard to smother any manifestations of proletarian struggle. For 3 or 4 years it was Germany that was the gendarme of Europe, it had the keys to the safe for the maintenance of social order; but when it began to weaken, the western bloc and Russia knew that they had to step in, fill the breach and take up this function of gendarme against any show of proletarian resurgence.

For those of us who understood that the war was a world war, this had to precipitate, sooner or later, a revolutionary uprising. On what did we base this? We based it on the lessons of history. Each great war had brought about a proletarian movement: the experience of 1871 with the Paris Commune, the Russian-Japanese war of 1905. But that only happened in the defeated countries: that's what we didn't draw out sufficiently. The First World War produced 1917 in Russia and 1917 and 1919 in Germany. The war produced the first revolutionary combats of the century.

We thus went into the Second World War with the conviction that the proletariat would be put in the situation where, after a series of massacres, it would say "better to rise up than to die". For us it was the classic, most comprehensible position. Those who didn't recognise what an imperialist war signified, as the majority of the Fraction beginning with Vercesi, considered that there would simply be massacres and not simply a generalised war, and that the proletariat had disappeared during the war, and they thus gave up hope of a proletarian uprising. For them the sole perspective was that the war would end with a crisis of the capitalist economy. Shortages would be so great in one of the blocs that they would no longer have the forces to continue the war. They were waiting for the crisis of armaments during the war. Nothing could happen for them, and when it did, they denied the importance of it; they denied the importance of 43 in Italy,

of the uprising of Budapest and Warsaw, of revolts in Germany. They didn't understand why the western bloc took the responsibility of holding prisoner 5 million German soldiers. It didn't occur to them why it was that the finest flower of the world proletariat before the war, in Germany, had been disarmed and decimated[15].

On the situation in the victorious countries in 17, on which revolutionaries had not sufficiently reflected: there was no uprising like in the defeated countries. It's the victorious countries that became the gendarmes against the uprisings in the defeated countries. France and Britain were in coalition against Russia. They took Poland in order to separate Russia from Germany. And when uprisings broke out in the defeated country of Germany they set up a cordon-sanitaire and when the revolution failed, they maintained 5000 soldiers and furnished them with arms for keeping domestic order. In the years after, uprisings did not stop in Germany: the Kapp putsch[16], etc. Against that France occupied the Ruhr. It was the lesson of WWI that we hadn't seen. It's not until today that this has become clearer, and even then the ICC alone has managed to draw out the idea that wars do not provide the best conditions for the revolution. The defeated bourgeoisie, weakened, called for help from the victors. In the Second World War this was much clearer than after the first. When the German government which succeeded Hitler proposed talks with the Allies, the latter refused because any German government in their absence would be too weak and this would lay the ground for revolution. No question of talks then; the Allies did not stop the war. They went on to occupy all the German territory...

**PH: We know from official histories now that the Americans raced the Russians for the occupation of German territory.**

**MC:** It's of little importance. They had the same interests. It was a race in order not to leave the ground free to the rival. The question of getting there first depended on the resistance of the German army.

**PH: No, no. It seems that Truman made a blunder, was taken in by Stalin whose army was decisively implanted in Europe, in East Berlin.**

**MC:** Perhaps. But it's not a problem for us to know who was faster than the other...

**PH: But there was a problem, I insist on that. In the workers' movement revolutionaries classically say "war or revolution". But here was a "liberation" from which no revolution came, where world war stopped, where the imbeciles of Trotskyism hid behind the idea of a national insurrection. According to the mass of recent works concerned with this war, it appears that the 3rd world war was already being prepared in the middle of the 2nd. Already the antagonisms between Russia and American were building and many in the west would have preferred an alliance with Hitler against Stalin; and in any case many were posing the problem of war against Russia.**

**MC:** In any case, in the war, at the beginning, yes there was a problem. They weren't certain of their alliances. But when it was necessary for Russia to enter the war the alliance was formed. Henceforth, they marched together hand in hand, with each trying to act for their own account. Exactly as in the case of the Hitler-Stalin bargain on the division of Poland which took place very quickly. But that always exists in imperialist conflicts. The same for tensions between France, America and the English. France didn't want to pay the costs of the war.

**PH: But in the revolutionary movement you talked of a possibility of a third world war at the end of the second?**

**MC:** Before coming to that, the question was: how to end the 2nd? What is the perspective from 43 onwards? Germany was heading for defeat, no-one had any illusions about that. The question was: does the perspective of a workers' uprising remain valid? As far as we were concerned, yes. We were waiting for a new wave of uprisings in line with the Paris Commune

and above all based on the lessons of 1917. But did this perspective exist? Some denied any perspective of possible workers' uprisings given the famous notion of the disappearance of the working class. A banal defeatist position from those who didn't understand and couldn't see.

Our position was to situate ourselves vis-à-vis these uprisings, to participate in them, contribute to them. We should note that these uprisings had indeed taken place. It had begun a little like at the time of the First World War, by a struggle within armies, desertions in Germany, strikes which announced the awakening of the working class from being chloroformed as it had been in 1914. There was real discontent but above all, once again in the defeated countries: in Italy, in Germany, in Poland. As I already said, in numerous small towns in Germany, there was a control by some popular militias. What was new was that the bourgeoisie understood it. It had drawn the lessons from World War One and it wasn't going to let flashpoints of struggle develop. It faced up to them, preventing prisoners from returning to Germany and occupying the country. Japan was the same.

There was above all the fact that the bourgeoisie know perfectly well how to play on chauvinist sentiments against the Nazi massacres. Within the populations an anti-German sentiment of revenge predominated. The western and Russian bourgeoisie played on this scale with all their forces. To such a point that the anarchists, the Trotskyists and all those situated on the left of Stalinism exalted the "victory against Nazism". It was their way of taking part in the unleashing of chauvinism.

In the beaten countries, there was the onslaught of the Americans and Russian armies. And in the victorious countries there was the unleashing of an incredible chauvinism, much worse than at the time of the First World War.

It was necessary to draw lessons from it. We saw the Russians and Ameri-

cans in a race. They were leaving no no-man's land. The German army was chased out of each town and they took their place. They massacred any hint of proletarian resistance.

On the contrary, the others, Vercesi and co., what they hadn't understood as a perspective before, they now considered that we were going into a period of the development of class struggle where the proletariat would move towards the reconstitution of the party. Our position in 45 was contrary to that: no reconstitution of the party, the movement wasn't there for it. We were still in a period of reaction.

The end of the war didn't resolve any problems. There was now the Russian/American antagonism, we were going to continue in the course of war and probably towards a third. The war in Korea confirmed this idea for us.

**PH: But before coming to that, you had seen a war more terrifying than the first. But Jaures had said that if there was another world war, it would be frightening, would result in millions of deaths and leave humanity drained of blood. You saw the unspeakable capacity for capitalist destruction, massive destructions of populations: did this irrational destructiveness of capitalism produce a discouragement in the revolutionary minority or among others – the idea that whatever happened they would destroy you?**

**MC:** The idea of Jaures has not been verified. On the contrary, the communist position was valid. If the proletariat didn't make a revolution (as the First Congress of 1919 said), if the wave of revolution did not develop, then, inevitably, a second world war would be prepared since the problems of capitalism were not resolved by the first. For us this was still more valid after the Second World War. This was only a continuation of the first. The second war was different, new blocs would be set up at the end of it. The same classical problem of marxism remained: there is no place in decadent capitalism for the development of the productive forces in relation to the



markets. Consequently, another war will take place. What we did see was the this capacity of Russian and American occupation, this taking hostage of 5 million German soldiers from Germany who were put into work camps, and all the triumphant chauvinism, so we concluded that we had to again wait until a situation arose where a revolution would be possible. The attempts of 43 and 45 had failed. Consequently there inevitably opened a period of reaction for quite a long time in a situation comparable to that of the 30's.

## RECONSTRUCTION

**PH: Capitalism went on to a reconstruction.**

**MC:** We hadn't seen the possibilities of reconstruction. We only saw the continuation of war. And, effectively, when you make a balance sheet - it's easier to judge today - the number of massacres, wars and destruction since 45 is greater than the Second World War cost humanity. Entire countries in Africa and Asia have been ravaged by war. There have been incredible massacres in Indo-China, Cambodia, etc. That has been the continuation of the world war in other forms, because capitalism has no solution.

But in the main industrial countries, in Europe above all, capitalism ensured a reconstruction which has allowed it to breathe life into the centre of capitalism and not the periphery.

We thought that the continuation of the war under other forms would lead the world proletariat against a brick wall, those of the victorious countries this time, faced with shortages of provisions. It took close to 6 years in Europe in order to assure normal provisions. Up until 1950 there were ration books in France. The precarious conditions of war persisted up to the 1950's.

**PH: That's the reason why I have been well-fed, since I was born in 1950 (laughter).**

**MC:** Immediately afterwards came the Korean War. What was also new is that for us it wasn't a new period of reconstruction and disarmament, as after the First World War where we saw disarmament and speeches about peace. It was only by the 30's that rearmament took off and assured the development of the war economy. Here, after the Second World War, rearmament didn't let up. The Americans distributed their surplus, implemented the Marshall Plan, but the development of armaments didn't stop. The whole period from 1950 to 1970 was a period of the continuation of the war economy. Rearmament had only restarted beforehand in 1934, 16 years after the war. Here, on the contrary, no armaments crisis, but an immense development of sophisticated armaments that were more and more destructive, and a continual massacre in the world.

**PH: You have been reproached for exaggerating the war in Korea as an imminent prelude to a new world war.**

**MC:** Tensions between the two blocs reached incredible paroxysms. There were more than a million deaths. It wasn't only MacArthur who envisaged using the atomic bomb. The most powerful imperialism in the world was engaged here, the United States. The Russians didn't have the atomic bomb yet. Korea was supported by China which was friendly with Russia. The configuration of the blocs that we know today was established following the world war. Some small countries changed places, but the heads of the bloc remained the same.

Thus this reproach of exaggeration is stupid, since the situation lacked very little for war to break out. MacArthur was only an army general but there were all the councillors of the White House who came from Trotskyism like Shachtman and Burnham. It's enough to read Burnham's book of the time which says: "Russia hasn't got the atomic bomb, we have it,

why are we waiting to use it preventively, when we recall that on the eve of the war we allowed Germany to reconstruct."

When you read the press of the time, you see a debate in the United States: do we use the bomb and lose China or do we simply try to divide Korea. When this debate unfolded, we had in our memory all the conferences between France-Britain and Hitler where each time the former gave concessions in order to stop war. In the end, Munich resolved none of the problems and led to war. Just as today, they filled our ears with peace conferences and destroyed some obsolete missiles. There was in fact a new preparation for the use of better arms. That was the state of mind in which we found ourselves in 1950. They were going to war... there was a cold war for a whole period. There were all the wars for decolonisation. We considered that it was a different period from the one between the world wars, 1919-30, where great illusions in peace predominated.

The crisis in Cuba was serious. It was only at the last second that the Russians understood that they were badly placed to take Cuba, which was too far away...

**PH: After the war, what became of the revolutionary minorities who had resisted on proletarian positions during the war? The RKD, Bordiga's party, Battaglia Comunista and you?**

**MC:** After the Liberation, let's look first of all at the RKD. They were disappointed Trotskyists. They were fundamentally against the defence of the USSR, but apart from that they remained Trotskyists. There was a crisis in general among Trotskyists in 46.

But you have to bear in mind that in this period there was a halt in the development of revolutionary groups. Two years after the Liberation. Whereas just at the end of the war we saw a development, two years later revolutionaries again found themselves particularly isolated. We found ourselves in the same situation as in the 30's.

The RKD focussed on anti-Stalinism, being anti-Russian became an essential question for them. It was the Evil Empire for them. They began to lose the marxist method and that led them towards anarchism.

To be clear here it was during the war that we had envisaged holding international conferences, open to the Dutch Left (with Canne Meier, etc) and several councilist groups, with the RKD and the OCR.

**PH: Who are the OCR?**

**MC:** These were the Trotskyists that the RKD had enticed away from Trotskyism by their platform at the end of the war. They were in the 4th International in Toulouse. Organisation Communiste Révolutionnaire. The two groups more or less evolved together.

The Dutch Left were mixed together with some elements close to Snee-vliet<sup>[17]</sup>. They were also against the defence of the USSR. Snee-vliet, who came from Spartacusbond<sup>[18]</sup>, was at least firmer on the question of the party, on the necessity for an organisation, whereas the Dutch Left did not support the idea of political organisation; it preferred the notion of working groups, thus it separated from Snee-vliet.

All the groups were invited, even the ICP.

**PH: But you were an irritant to the ICP?**

**MC:** yes, of course. And the ICP didn't want to participate in this conference after the war. They considered that the Bordigist party was the single, unique expression. From 45 to 46, the ICP comprised 3000 people, which was already enormous.

Contrary to the position of the RKD, who thought that Russia was enemy number 1, Bordiga on the other hand thought that it was the USA. Bordiga hadn't accepted the idea of Russian state capitalism. He said: in Russia there are agents who work for American imperialism, who exploit the

Russian workers and serve to transfer the benefits to American capital. He didn't recognise that they worked for their own account. For him the real enemy wasn't bureaucratic Russia but the American state. I made several attempts for the ICP to come, especially because the conference was taking place in Brussels.

**PH: What became of Vercesi? When did he participate in the Brussels anti-fascist committee?**

**MC:** It was at the beginning of 1945. We made a resolution for the exclusion of Vercesi but at the time when the Fraction was united.

Contacts in the USA were very sparse.

Soon after the exclusion of Vercesi the ICP reconstituted itself, but the crisis in the Italian Fraction also existed in the French nucleus on the fundamental question of perspectives. We recognised that at the end of the war the dark period, the reactionary course, would continue and that there would not be an immediate resurgence in the class struggle throughout the world. We kept the same position that we took in the 30's: it was stupid to form the party in such periods. Whereas the Italians, the party constituted around Bordiga and Damen, considered that a revolutionary period was starting up again: they participated in elections. The fact that they were 3000 strong led to the vision that it was the small foreign groups who should adhere to the party. They opened their arms to all the world, to those who had gone off to fight in the war in Spain, to those who remained with Vercesi.

We were evidently not in agreement on immediate perspectives, and above all we were against the idea of forming a party which included people who had been excluded, who did not renounce their positions.

**PH: It seems that according to the documents you were also for the formation of the party?**



**MC:** At the beginning, that was the line from 43 to 45. As the war finished we changed position: the revolution will not happen, it has been nipped in the bud preventively, thus no possibility of the party for the moment. There is only the possibility of an organisation of revolutionaries as in the 30's.

All the old members of the Union Communiste were caught up in this creation of the party (D., L., etc).

Two positions emerged: one is that the party is reconstituted and we no longer have any reason to exist as a separate group; the Fraction must dissolve itself and enter the party in Italy as individuals - the majority of them were Italian refugees (as some said at the time "the Italian proletariat has golden balls"! ). The authority of Bordiga did the rest. The other position, for us the majority of the French group, held that if founding the party in 43 might have been valid, now it was no longer so, so our position was: we should go to Italy to discuss their platform with these people, because in fact we had no basis, no document. We couldn't judge. We couldn't dissolve without knowing the positions and the usefulness or not of joining as a fraction, etc.

It thus produced a split in the Fraction; a part of the French nucleus joined the ICP. We continued to lay claim to the tradition of the IIIrd International: the party couldn't be formed anytime and anyhow, we couldn't dissolve just like that.

When the conference took place in Brussels, Vercesi was there also; we maintained a high personal regard. When I asked him for some explanation for his participation in the anti-fascist committee, he replied: this committee represented the soviets for me.

I replied to him that it wasn't true: the anti-fascist committee represented a conglomeration of parties, whereas the soviets were unitary organs of the proletariat.

Vercesi was still part of the Fraction in Belgium as an opportunist element. When we were talking about making common work at the end of the war, with the RKD and the councilists, he said to us: what? This is the United Front, etc. There was no longer any need to hold conferences, at all costs it was necessary to join the newly-created party.

**PH: Can you say something about the evolution of Bordiga's party?**

**MC:** It was formed in 43 in the north of Italy on the clearest positions against the war. In the north it was above all old comrades from the Fraction. In the platform of 43 they had much clearer positions in relation to Russia and in relation to the war. But, at the same time, in the south where the government of Badoglio was established, a number of more or less confused groups were formed, more or less against the war, but above all against fascism. Bordiga's and Vercesi's positions were equivocal.

But, up to 45 they evolved in parallel. In 45, with the reunification of Italy, the two halves of the party found each other. They then published the platform of 45 which is much more ambiguous, less clear on the question of Russia - it's the contribution of Bordiga. And that continued like that up to 52, where we see the split between the two<sup>[19]</sup>. In fact it was an unlikely, confused unity. Many comrades from abroad, in France, joined the party of Bordiga.

However, in 52, Bordiga and Suzanne<sup>[20]</sup> recognised that it was an error to form the party. But against this, those of the north continued to defend the validity of it. The question of the ICP on the unions remained orthodox, along the lines of the International, but at root closer to those of Trotskyism. Those in the north were in favour of participation in elections.

It was easier to discuss with Battaglia Comunista. But numerically ICP-Programma developed with a more particular sense of its activity.

**PH: On the whole did the two parties continue with a correct denunciation of bourgeois anti-fascism?**

**MC:** Yes but with many difficulties and ambiguities, from the fact that the minority had never been condemned for its position on Spain when it came into the party. In order not to embarrass these comrades who had been in Spain, they preferred not to talk about it; nor about Vercesi and his anti-fascist committee in Belgium. We had to wait 4 years for them to pronounce on it. We recalled that he had been excluded for this position and asked: how is he now a member of the central committee of the new ICP?

It was four years after that there was a small paragraph in their press saying that it was an error to have participated in such a committee.

**PH: The RKD reproached you, and yourself in particular, for not wanting the split immediately with the revisionists of Vercesi. I'll quote an extract of the RKD bulletin of April 45: "... it took a direct and open betrayal to advance the group of Marco<sup>[21]</sup> which then formed the left wing of the French and Italian Fraction but which didn't want to separate from Vercesi and company. Even after the entry of the revisionist fraction into the imperialist coalition, comrade Marco pronounced against an immediate split out of a concern that the discussion would suffer from it".**

**MC:** The RKD were above all Trotskyists, with correct positions against the war and on Russia. But on other questions, the national question, on the question of the party, they had the position of Lenin. They kept to their Trotskyist methods. They were for entryism vis-a-vis Trotskyism. They wanted to provoke splits among other groups. In relation to the Trotskyists I wanted to see splits, but not in the Fraction. Thus we were debating the question of the anti-fascist committee. When the question of joining the Italian party came up, some comrades said: it is necessary to make a split on this question. It was a fundamental question to discuss, and we really wanted to discuss it. We had wanted to go to Italy. And we did go there. We had been discussing the question of what the party was. Bordiga was there. There was a refusal by Bordiga.

**PH:** Last question. What came out of the conference of 45? Why did you disappear in 1952, leaving the ground free for Trotskyists groups such as Socialisme ou Barbarie? During this whole period of the triumph of the ideologies of national liberation, there was no longer a revolutionary voice against a bourgeois point of view. All the existing groups from the Bordigists to the Trotskyists wanted to support this farce of national independence for 20 years. You were irresponsible in leaving the ground free to them like this. And finally you did not contribute to theoretically arming the proletariat on the eve of the historic resurgence of 68.

**MC:** In the fifties, all the revolutionary groups began to run out of breath in their isolation. Their numbers fell. The Stalinists ruled on the streets. As we reached a clear position on the anti-working class nature of the unions and the workers were sticking with them like never before, we were cut off from the situation. So we brought out Internationalisme and L'étincelle in print.

**PH:** A printed paper was costly.

**MC:** It was dear but it came out of our pockets although we were only about a dozen of us. It came out with from 2 to 300 copies. After that we had no more means so we brought out Internationalisme only in a roneoed form. We settled on beginning anew the work of Bilan while waiting for the situation to decant.

After the conference of 45, we tried along with comrades of the Dutch Left to launch an international review for clarification together which could be a pole of reference for dispersed elements. There was only a single issue. We had some correspondence with Mattick<sup>[22]</sup> who had the same positions as Canne Meier<sup>[23]</sup> on the question of organisation. These councilist groups disappeared very quickly. We remained in contact with Spartacusbond ...

The period didn't allow the emergence of new groups.

The Bordigists in Italy shrunk from 3000 to about a hundred. All that was left after the departure of Battaglia Comunista was Programma, which diminished in numbers in its turn because discussion was not possible within it. If there was a discussion there was a split. All the old comrades disappeared little by little. But the group kept going because it had a platform around Maffi and Bordiga. But they were engaging in an activism around union struggles, around struggles for national liberation, saluting Che Guevara. It was the time that Dangeville and Camatte left. They gathered together a number of unprincipled types.

Internationalisme in its turn underwent difficulties. Some left for Socialisme ou Barbarie, seduced by the theories of Chaulieu on the third bureaucratic system. In this period comrades began to leave. And then the question of the Korean War. Some left for the United States. We went to Venezuela.

We thought that France would be at the heart of the next war and it was important that the activity of the group didn't stop. The idea was to continue working from abroad.

**PH: What do you think about this polemic on the gas chambers<sup>[24]</sup>?**

**MC:** I know nothing about it. I don't care how they were killed. They were killed in their millions. Guillaume and Co. are imbeciles.



[1] 1 A more developed account of Marc's life and work can be found in International Review n°65 and International Review n°66.

[2] The Bordigist current draws its heritage from the Left of the pre-1914 Italian Socialist Party, grouped around Amadeo Bordiga. This current was the first in the socialist, then communist movement to refuse on principle any participation in parliamentary elections. Bordiga fought within the Third International for the adoption of strict terms of membership, which would exclude from member parties all those who had supported participation in World War I, or adopted a centrist attitude on this key question. After World War II, the current around Bordiga participated in the formation of the Internationalist Communist Party in 1943-45, only to split in 1952 to form the International Communist Party. After a series of splits (each one creating a new "International Communist Party"), the main organisation representing the Bordigist tradition largely disintegrated in the 1980s as a result of its own opportunism and its infiltration by leftists and Arab nationalists.

[3] Kemal Ataturk, founder and first president of the Republic of Turkey. After the First World War and the allied occupation of the Ottoman Empire, this career army officer refused to allow the Ottoman Empire be dismembered by the Sevres treaty. He led a partisan revolt against the imperial government and set up a second political power in Ankara. It was from this city that he headed the war of Turkish resistance against the occupiers (cf Wikipedia). "Despite the fact that he had executed the leaders of the Turkish Communist Party in 1921, the Bolsheviks continued to see a 'revolutionary' potential in Ataturk's nationalist movement. Only when the latter openly sought to compromise with the Entente imperialisms in 1923 did the Bolsheviks begin to reconsider their policy towards him, and by this time there was nothing revolutionary at all in the foreign policy of the Russian state. And Kemal was no accident but simply an expression of the new epoch, of the utter irreconcilability of nationalism and proletarian revolution, of the complete inability of any faction of the bourgeoisie to stand independently of imperialism". From our pamphlet 'Nation or Class'

[4] "But it was only in mid-May 1935 that a decisive factor intervened: the Laval-Stalin pact in which the latter declared that he approved the programme of French national defence. This was one of the first attempts of the Stalinist USSR to join in the concert of the great imperialist powers. This time, the PCF reacted in 24 hours: it ran to support the national capital in a definitive and irreversible manner. From one

day to the next, it began exalting eternal France, Joan of Arc and the Marseillaise. Vaillaint-Couturier presented the Communists as the true heirs of the Capetian kings of France. Finally giving in to a pressure that had been held down for too long, the PCF now gave vent to torrents of exacerbated patriotism” ‘How the PCF left the proletarian camp’

[5] “The Nazi-Soviet pact, which went directly against anti-fascism and the PCF’s war preparations, pushed the latter into multiple contortions. Overnight it became the mouthpiece of the Nazi-Soviet alliance which it praised as a victory for peace, at the same time rediscovering the pseudo-internationalist language of revolutionary defeatism while continuing to act in the name of the defence of the national interest, denouncing the Paul Raynaud government of the day for carrying out an imperialist policy in the interest of Britain, insisting that collaboration with the USSR was the only possible means of ensuring global peace”

[6] It is at this point that another oppositional group known as the ‘15th Rayon group’, whose best-known militant is Gaston Davoust (Chaze) issue an invitation to all the oppositional currents to hold a series of meetings aimed at programmatic clarification and eventual regroupment.

The conference does not succeed in unifying all the groups that had taken part, nor in creating a French Fraction: in a period of defeat, the dominant tendency is inevitably towards dispersal and isolation. But a partial regroupment does take place and this too is significant: the Fraction de Gauche, Davoust’s group, and later on the minority of the Communist League – a minority of 35 members whose departure virtually crippled the League – unite to form the Union Communiste group which continued up until the war. Although it begins with a heavy baggage of Trotskyism, and is later found wanting when it comes to the ordeal of the Spanish civil war, a process of evolution does take place in this group: it calls the ideology of anti-fascism into question and by 1935 has concluded that the Stalinist bureaucracy is a new bourgeoisie. A similar position is adopted by the Ligue Communiste Internationaliste in Belgium”. See "Unravelling the Russian enigma"

[7] Founded in September 1934, the POUM (Party of Marxist Unification’) was a centrist party, without any real principles, regrouping the ‘Communist Left of Spain’ and J Maurin’s ‘Workers’ and Peasants’ Bloc’.

"July 19th 1936 - the workers of Barcelona, barehanded, crushed the attack of

Franco's battalions which were armed to the teeth. May 4th 1937 - the same workers, now equipped with arms, left many more dead on the streets than in July when they had to fight back against Franco. This time it is the anti-fascist government - including the anarchists and receiving the indirect solidarity of the POUM - which unleashes the scum of the forces of repression against the workers....Are the military fronts a necessity imposed by the current situation? No! They are a necessity for capitalism if it is to contain and crush the workers: May 4 1937 is stark proof of the fact that after July 19 1936, the proletariat had to fight Companys and Giral just as much as Franco. The military fronts can only dig a grave for the workers because they represent the fronts of capitalism's war against the proletariat. The only answer the Spanish workers can give to this war is the one given by their Russian brothers in 1917: revolutionary defeatism in both camps of the bourgeoisie, the Republican as well as the 'fascist'; the transformation of the capitalist war into a civil war for the total destruction of the bourgeois state." (Bilan, 'Bullets, Machine Guns, Prisons: this is the reply of the Popular Front to the workers of Barcelona who dared to resist the capitalist offensive').

[8] The Munich accords were signed between Germany, France, Britain and Italy, represented respectively by Adolf Hitler, Édouard Daladier, Neville Chamberlain and Benito Mussolini (who took part as an intermediary), at the end of the Munich conference of 29 and 30 September 1938. The Czech president, Edvard Benes, and the general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin, were not invited. The aim of these accords was to bring an end to the Sudetenland crisis but, indirectly, they were the death knell of Czechoslovakia as an independent state, allowing Hitler to annex the regions of Czechoslovakia populated by German speakers. The Munich accords are seen as bringing to an end the first Czech Republic, the 'second republic' only lasting a few months after the dismemberment of the Czech state.

[9] See this short biography of Clara.

[10] The RKD (Revolutionary Communists of Germany). "They were an Austrian Trotskyist group opposed to the foundation of Fourth International in 1938 because they felt it was premature. In exile, this group moved farther and farther away from this 'International'. They were particularly opposed to participation in the Second World War in the name of the defense of Russia, and in the end came out against the whole theory of 'degenerated workers' state' so dear to Trotskyism. In exile this group had the enormous political merit of maintaining an intransigent position against the

imperialist war and any participation in it for any reason whatsoever. In this regard it contacted the Fraction of Italian and French Left during the war and participated in the printing of a leaflet in 1945 with the French Fraction addressed to the workers and soldiers of all countries, in several languages, denouncing the chauvinistic campaign during the 'liberation' of France, calling for revolutionary defeatism and fraternization. After the war, this group rapidly evolved towards anarchism where it finally dissolved". IR 32 'The task of the hour: formation of the party or formation of cadres',

[11] "Poppe had two meetings in 1944 with the group 'Against the Stream' (Tegen de Stroom, led by Vereeken). Although this group rejected the defence of Russia in June 1941, it remained linked to the French Communist Internationalist Committee of Henri Molinier. It joined the IVth International after the war. More significantly was the fact that even within the Spartacus Bond, the last hesitations on the defence of Russia were not totally eliminated. A small part of the organization - which was against the defence of the Russian camp in World War II - took a stand in favour of this defence in case of a third world war between the western Allies and the USSR" 'A contribution to the history of the revolutionary movement: "Communistenbond Spartacus" and the councilist current (1942-1948)'

[12] Hitlero-Trotskyists: at the Moscow trials Stalin liquidated the Bolshevik old guard by accusing them of being 'Hitlero-Trotskyists'

[13] PSOP: The Socialist Workers' and Peasants' Party. In June 1936, the PSOP was created after the exclusion of the Seine Federation from the SFIO: "Under the pretext of defending democratic freedoms threatened by fascism the proletariat was led to accept the sacrifices necessary for the health of French capital, and finally to sacrifice their lives in the slaughter of World War II. The Popular Front found effective allies in its executioner's task amongst its left-wing critics: Maurice Pivert's Parti Socialiste Ouvrier et Paysan ... the Trotskyists and the anarchists. All played the part of touts amongst the most combative elements of the class and were constantly posing as the 'most radical', though the only thing radical about them was the mystification they peddled. The Jeunesses Socialistes de la Seine ('Socialist youth of the Seine'), or Trotskyists like Craipeau and Roux, practiced entryism, and were the first to argue in favour of and organise the anti-fascist militia; Pivert's friends within the PSOP were the most virulent in criticising the 'cowardice' of Munich. All were unanimous in defence of the Spanish Republic alongside the anti-fascists and all would take part



later in the inter-imperialist bloodbath as part of the Resistance. All did their bit in defence of the national capital, they have all deserved well of the fatherland!” ‘1936: How the Popular Front in France and Spain mobilised the working class for war’

[14] See IR 75, ‘1943: the Italian proletariat opposes the sacrifices demanded for the war’, [http://en.internationalism.org/ir/075\\_1943.html](http://en.internationalism.org/ir/075_1943.html)

[15] See International Review 95, ‘Berlin 1948: the Berlin Airlift hides the crimes of allied imperialism’, <http://en.internationalism.org/node/3865>

[16] Kapp Putsch: after the defeats of 1919, the working class returned to the offensive in response to the extreme-right Kapp putsch in 1920. But at the international level the revolutionary dynamic was beginning to decline. Democracy inflicted a defeat on the working class. See our article in IR 90, ‘The Kapp Putsch’.

[17] Sneevliet: the Communistenbond Spartacus was created in 1942 from a split in the Marx-Lenin-Luxemburg Front, which had itself come out of the RSAP (Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party). The latter, whose leading figure was Henk Sneevliet, was an organisation which after being banned by the Dutch government in 1940 oscillated between Trotskyism and the POUM, with anti-fascist, trade unionist positions, defending national liberation and the Russian state. The MLL Front which came after it carried out illegal internationalist work, denouncing all the fronts of the capitalist war: and in 1941 its leadership, minus one Trotskyist voice, decided not to support the USSR, denouncing the German-Soviet war as a new front of the imperialist war. The arrest of the MLL Front leadership – including Sneevliet – and their execution by the German army decapitated the MLL front in 1942. A few months later the Front split in two; one, a small Trotskyist minority which chose its capitalist camp; the other the internationalist militants who were to form, at first in considerable confusion, the Communistenbond Spartacus.

[18] Spartacusbond, see note 16

[19] Battaglia Comunista with Damen and Programma Comunista with Bordiga

[20] Suzanne: alongside the Italian Fraction, in 1942, under the impulsion of Marc Chirik who was also a member, and on the basis of a declaration of principles, the French Nucleus of the Communist Left was formed, with 8 militants and an executive commission of 3 members ( see ‘For the formation of the Fraction in France’, internal bulletin, October 1944). Among the members of the Nucleus there were: Mousso



(Robert Salama) Frederic (Suzanne V), Alberto (Vega, ex-member of the POUM Youth) Robert C, a former Trotskyist. Jean Malaquais was a close ‘fellow traveller’. This Nucleus and the Italian Fraction managed to re-establish contact with the occupied zone in Northern France and with Belgium

[21] Marco: Marc Chirik

[22] Paul Mattick. Joined the KAPD in 1920 and took part in revolutionary events. Settled in the USA in 1926 where he was a militant of the IWW. See our article ‘20 years since 1968, Evolution of the political milieu (part one, 1968-77)’, in IR 53.

[23] Canne Meier was a militant of the council communist current in the 1930s alongside Anton Pannekoek. See our article mentioned in note 21.

[24] Guillaume: “the informal magma called the ‘ultra-left’ has nothing to do with the organisations of the proletarian milieu. A heterogeneous conglomeration of various intellectuals driven by petty bourgeois radicalism, with no real historical and organisational tradition, it has always been a zone of passage for all kinds of modernist re-readings of marxism, typical of the petty bourgeois impatience which is disappointed in the working class. Made up of people who are much more attached to the sound of their own voice than in defending class positions, it’s also a magnet for all kinds of adventurism. This is the case with the P. Guillaume bookshop which, at the beginning of the 1980s, saw in the theories of R. Faurisson an opportunity to make some publicity; this was already a way of faithfully serving the ruling class. First because the ‘negationist’ theories, with or without the ‘ultra-left’ epithet, has never had any function than to undermine the denunciation of capitalism, by denying the historical truth of its most monstrous crimes. Second because by making the worn-out theories of the anti-Semite Faurisson fashionable again, the ‘negationist ultra-left’, just like le Pen, gave a boost to the propaganda of the left wing of the bourgeoisie, aimed at drawing workers behind the defence of the democratic state faced with the ‘return of the fascist danger’ ‘The ‘ultra-left swamp serves the campaigns of the bourgeoisie’

- **See also**

[http://en.internationalism.org/ir/088\\_antisacsim\\_barbarity.html](http://en.internationalism.org/ir/088_antisacsim_barbarity.html)

# MARC CHIRIK



**Marck Chirik** (May 13, 1907 – December 20, 1990), also known as Marc Laverne or simply MC, was a communist revolutionary and one of the founding militants of the ***International Communist Current***.

## Life

Chirik was born into the family of a rabbi. He had witnessed the October Revolution with his brother at the age of ten. His family moved to Palestine where he became an early member of the Communist Party of Palestine's youth organization in 1922 but was later expelled because he disagreed with the positions of the Communist International on the national question, which supported the Arab national movements.

He emigrated to France, where he joined the French Communist Party before being expelled at the same time as the members of the Left Opposition. He became a member first of the (Trotskyist) Ligue Communiste and then of Union Communiste, which he left in 1938 to join the Italian Fraction of the International Communist Left (ICL), since he agreed with the latter's position on the Spanish civil war against that of Union Communiste. During the war and the German occupation of France, the ICL's International Bureau led by Vercesi considered that there was no purpose in the fractions' continuing their work. He however pushed for the reconstitution of the Italian Fraction around a small nucleus in Marseille. He joined the Fraction française de la gauche communiste internationale which had been formed in 1944 and was close to Amadeo Bordiga.

However, he split with the Bordigist tendency in May 1945, when he opposed the decision of the Italian Fraction's conference to dissolve the fraction, its militants joining the recently formed Partito Comunista Internazionale as individuals and formed Gauche Communiste de France.

After Gauche Communiste de France dissolved in 1952 he left France for Venezuela in anticipation of World War III. He stayed there until 1968, developing a small current of revolutionaries in a group called Internationalism (Venezuela), then returned to France, where he and some of his Venezuelan recruits launched Revolution Internationale (RI), the only French left communist group after 1968 that attempted to systematically build an organization in the shadow of the larger left communist groups.

In 1975, the International Communist Current was founded by Revolution Internationale (France), World Revolution (UK), Internationalism (USA), Rivoluzione Internazionale (Italy), Internationalism (Venezuela) and Accion Proletaria (Spain). Chirik had been a leading member of two of these groups and he became a very important militant of the ICC until his death in 1990.

Marc Chirik is one of the main characters in *World Without Visas*, a novel by Jean Malaquais that takes place in Marseille during the Second World War.

# APPEAL: DAYS OF INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY WITH DESERTERS

The war in Ukraine continues with all the negative consequences for much of the world. However, acts of desertion and draft evasion also continue, which, if widespread, could lead to the end of the war. Anarchists from the Central European region are therefore publishing this call to organise active support for deserters. Wherever we live, let us make every other day a day of international working-class solidarity and resistance against the war. Let us organise in workplaces, schools and streets to strengthen the influence of desertions. Let us fight for dignified conditions for all who refuse to serve as a cannon fodder in the inter-imperialist war.

At least 200,000 people are fleeing Russia to escape Putin's military mobilisation, and tens of thousands more are avoiding mobilisation in Ukraine. Yet some voices claim that "the number of deserters is so negligible that it is strange to even begin to talk about it." These cynical attempts to "make invisible" people who choose not to serve in the army, to defect or to emigrate for political reasons, must be opposed. Their voices must be heard and practical help must be given.

Anti-war speeches do not yet have the subversive power needed to stop the war, which is why it is necessary to create conditions that make it easier

for other people considering a desertion to move from reflection to action. It is not a question of standing on the front line between the tanks of both armies and thinking that this will make the soldiers lay down their arms. It is about achieving the conditions at the international level that ensure that deserters can safely defect and live in another country without a risk of prosecution and social stigmatisation.

At present, opponents of the war in Russia and Ukraine have almost nowhere to go. They are trapped between national borders by their 'own' governments, while neighbouring countries refuse to accept them and provide them with decent material conditions. If people's choices remain limited to the options of 'either being forced to serve in the army or face persecution', we can hardly expect an increase in desertions. It is necessary to achieve the opening of borders not only for civilian refugees, but also for deserters from the armies on both sides of the war line. This is precisely what can significantly weaken the dynamics of war.

But this will never be done by negotiation with the various governments which are only the local minions of the world capital state, nor will it be done by a social-democratic call to "make concessions in the area of migration policy". Our only weapon for us, the proletarians, is the class struggle, it is the mobilization in the streets, it is the sabotage of the economy, and it is the direct action against permanent war... It is then, and only then, that the frightened ruling class is forced to let go, which will never constitute for us the goal of the struggle but only a moment from which new offensives must be carried out against the whole of this world of misery and war...

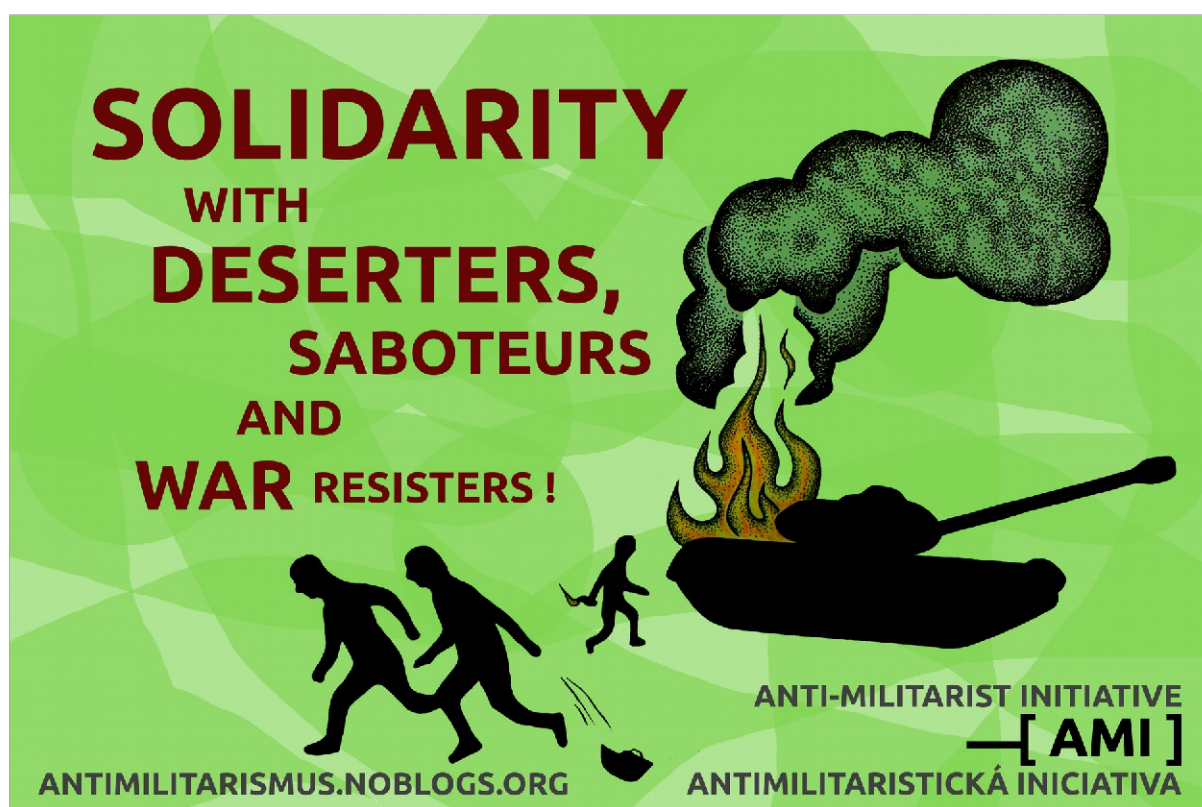
After all, the proclamations of politicians criticising the aggression of the Russian army are an expression of hypocrisy whereas they refuse to share material conditions and resources with people who refuse to serve in the army. And besides, why and how would they act otherwise, these worthy



representatives of the bourgeois order!?! It is necessary to stand consistently against Putin's aggressors, as well as against the statesmen of other countries who, through their own policies, allow the army to retain its war potential. It is the governments of the countries in which we live that effectively make it more difficult to desert, and thereby they contribute to the continuation of the war.

Those who are concerned about saving lives should be thinking about how to weaken the fighting capacity of armies, how to get soldiers off the front lines, how to get them to disobey, how to motivate them to use their weapons against those who force them to go to war. Let us think about this and organise direct actions that will turn these considerations into concrete results.

## **SOME ANARCHISTS FROM THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN REGION (NOVEMBER 2022)**



**ANTIMILITARISTICKÁ INICIATIVA**

**ANTI-MILITARIST INITIATIVE**

**[ AMI ]**

**AUGUST 2023**

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