



LENINIST PROGRAM

Of international dictatorship of the proletariat

by **Guillermo Costello and Carolina Vidal**

The internationalist conception of the international dictatorship of the proletariat is not an invention of our minds, but rather, it is part of the theoretical legacy of Lenin's Third International and retaken by Trotsky to confront with the theory of socialism in one country.

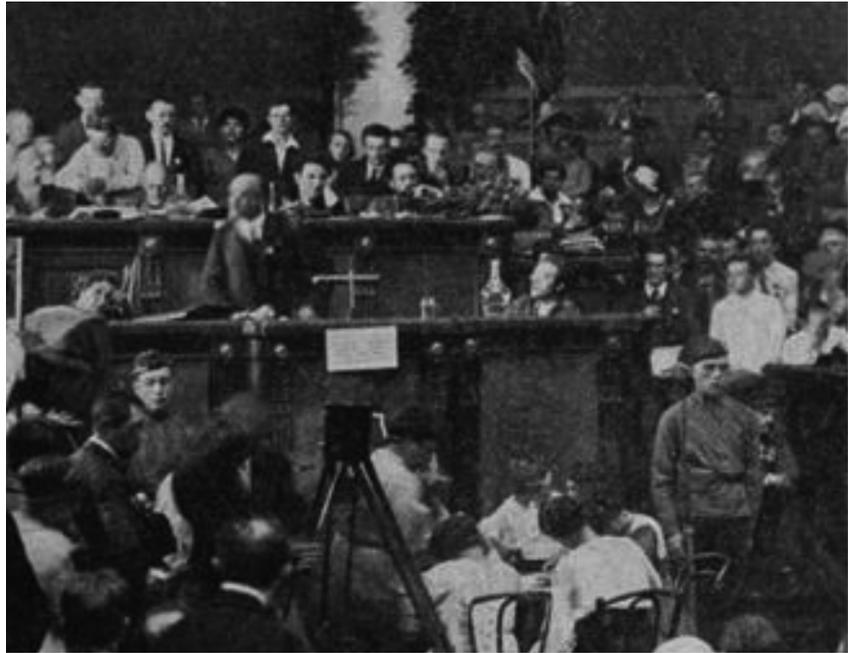
But this whole conception was mutilated by the centrist replacement of the proletarian dictatorship by petty bourgeois democratism, which centered the whole debate between "democracy v. dictatorship", and not around the dictatorship of the proletariat and world revolution.

But it's not about moaning about how bad centrists are, but to pick up the thread in the field of political theory of the elements that the old revolutionaries left us to face the tasks of a new generation of revolutionaries, for all that is new keeps something of the old.

Regarding the debates of the CI and the transition began in the USSR, we may say that the most important elaborations around the international character of the proletarian dictatorship were developed mainly between '18 and '21, stage that matches with the conformation and establishment of the USSR and that marked the revolutionary period of the 3rd International.



Trotsky understood the problem of rhythms and times in revolutionary politics, he understood as a necessity the international extension of the dictatorship of the proletariat, without being ultimistic with class struggle, but neither naturalizing the dictatorship of the proletariat enclosed within the Russian border due to the Stalinist bureaucratic deformation".."



The 3rd International had characterized the development of the revolutionary situation at an international scale, and understood that it had to develop the world party in the face of the presented tasks, not to “agitate revolution”, but to provide the party with an international program to extend the proletarian dictatorship at an international scale. Although the defeat of the German revolution implied a tactical revision of the 3rd at an international level as well as inside the USSR, never did it abandon the internationalist conception of the proletarian dictatorship.

With the counterrevolutionary turn of the 3rd International and Stalinism, Trotsky was able to retake the permanentist idea, i. e. international, of the proletarian dictatorship. As he perfectly understood the problem of rhythms and times in revolutionary politics, he understood as a necessity the international extension of the dictatorship of the proletariat, without being ultimistic with class struggle (if the proletarian dictatorship does not extend, there is no workers' state), but neither naturalizing the dictatorship of the proletariat enclosed within the Russian border due to the Stalinist bureaucratic deformation. That is why he says in “The class nature of the soviet State”: *“If the dictatorship of the proletariat does not become European and worldwide, it must head towards its own collapse. All this is entirely incontestable on a wide historical perspective. But everything revolves around the concrete historical periods. Can one say that the policies of the Stalinist bureaucracy have led already to the liquidation of the workers' state? That is the question now”*.

But as we have said before, we maintain that it is not about analyzing the “usage” of the concepts by revisionists, but to recover the notions of revolutionary Marxism for the current stage of class struggle.

For Lenin, the 3rd International constituted an international “alliance” of the leading parties of revolutionary proletariat whose solid foundation was no other than *“various Soviet Republics, that turn into reality, at international scale, the dictatorship of the proletariat, its victory over capitalism”*. (Lenin, The Third International and its place in history – 1919.)

Thus, for Lenin, the historical relevance of the 3rd CI was that it materialized in practice “Marx's most important slogan that summarizes the secular development of socialism and the labor movement, the slogan expressed in this concept: the dictatorship of the proletariat”.

This concretion was inscribed in “soviet democracy”, in which “the Proletarian and Peasant Sovietic Republic” was a second step, a second stage in the historical development of the proletarian dictatorship, whose first stage was the Paris Commune. That is why Lenin said: *“This Republic cannot die as a new type of State. This Republic is no longer alone in the world”*.

For him, the essence of Sovietic Power consisted in the fact that the permanent and only foundation of State power, of the whole State apparatus, is the mass organization of the classes that had been oppressed by capitalism before the revolution, i. e., of workers and semi proletarians. As we know, the foundation of the proletarian democracy was not that of a formal or juridical democracy, but the decisive participation of mass organizations in the leadership of the State.

Now, the problem resides in that centrism confuses everything, because it understands soviet power as a “democratic” form of the proletarian dictatorship, that Stalinists had eliminated with their Bonapartism.

PTS used to solve the whole problem (before adopting Gramscism and making out of revolutions accounting balances of assets and liabilities) with a sophism: the formula to avoid the dictatorship of the proletariat to become a Bonapartist dictatorship is all the same, but adding soviets. That means, a re-edition of Mandel’s socialist democracy, but with a Morenist vocabulary.

To solve this whole mess we must start from the question that everybody forgets: never did Lenin or Trotsky understand the soviets, after the victorious revolution, as their former form, that means **national**. Therefore, although soviets emerged as a Russian particularity, after the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the beginning of the building up of socialism, there occurred a change in their form and content, resulting in the establishment of a sovietic system, which is the Sovietic Federation, that means, the international form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. So Trotsky said that the sovietic system may arise after revolution in different countries, without the existence –as a previous condition- of organisms similar to the Russian soviets.

So, for Trotsky, the sovietic system is not simple a form of government but a new model of relation with property. (Can parliamentary democracy replace the soviets) 1929)

And that is why Lenin equals proletarian democracy to sovietic system, i.e., sovietic republics united by collaboration under a new mode of relation with property. This is very important because centrism, seeing all from the point of view of the overgrowth of democratic revolution into socialist revolution, thought that the democratic “part” of the dictatorship of the proletariat were the soviets under their national form prior to the October revolution. Thus, they thought they were finding a new blabbering to convince petty bourgeoisie that the revolution is not that bad and that they would not have to submit themselves to the dreadful Russian discipline.

Therefore, and going back to what matters the most for us, i. e., the tasks of the International, the international leadership of the insurrect proletariat, the key to the CI from the Leninist view was to continue developing, studying and proving in practice these “new federations” that will emerge on the basis of the sovietic regime and movement. For the 3rd, the Federation is the

form of “transition towards complete unity”, since without a tight (political and economic) alliance of the sovietic republics it would be impossible not only to safeguard its existence within the fence of the world imperialist Powers, but above all the restoration of the productive forces destroyed by imperialism. So, the soviet system was a previous condition for the transition to that complete unity, that is, a unique world economy regulated according to a general plan by the proletariat of all nations, “trend that has already revealed itself with all its clarity under capitalism and that is for sure appealed to develop itself and prevail under socialism”. Therefore, Lenin would say:

“Recognition of internationalism in word, and its replacement in deed by petty-bourgeois nationalism and pacifism, in all propaganda, agitation and practical work, is very common, not only among the parties of the Second International, but also among those which have withdrawn from it, and often even among parties which now call themselves communist. The urgency of the struggle against this evil, against the most deep-rooted petty-bourgeois national prejudices, looms ever larger with the mounting exigency of the task of converting the dictatorship of the proletariat from a national dictatorship (i.e., existing in a single country and incapable of determining world politics) into an international one (i.e., a dictatorship of the proletariat involving at least several advanced countries, and capable of exercising a decisive influence upon world politics as a whole). Petty-bourgeois nationalism proclaims as internationalism the mere recognition of the equality of nations, and nothing more. Quite apart from the fact that this recognition is purely verbal, petty-bourgeois nationalism preserves national self-interest intact, whereas proletarian internationalism demands, first, that the interests of the proletarian struggle in any one country should be subordinated to the interests of that struggle on a world-wide scale, and, second, that a nation which is achieving victory over the bourgeoisie should be able and willing to make the greatest national sacrifices for the overthrow of international capital.

Thus, in countries that are already fully capitalist and have workers’ parties that really act as the vanguard of the proletariat, the struggle against opportunist and petty-bourgeois pacifist distortions of the concept and policy of internationalism is a primary and cardinal task.” (V.I. Lenin. Draft Theses on National and Colonial Questions. For the Second Congress of the Communist International- 1920.)

The aim of this quotation is to establish that:

- 1) The international extension of the proletariat dictatorship is not a synonym of “simultaneity” of revolutions. It means, precisely, “extension”. Extension means, under a permanentist conception, that it may begin in the national field but it must develop in the international arena.
- 2) To affirm that the dictatorship of the proletariat is national and that the revolution is international, is an assertion that has no foundation at all, since it restricts the dictatorship of the proletariat to a sort of national stage of the revolution. Of course, the revolution has stages, episodes, concrete periods, etc. But they can be accelerated or compressed according to the development of a given a country, to the development of class struggle and the international proletarian leadership.
- 3) It is correct to say that the dictatorship of the proletariat has stages. They have a historical character and are based on the same trends that are expressed within capitalism in its era of decay. That is why the sovietic system, understood as a federation, understood in the international extension of the dictatorship of the proletariat, constitute for Leninism a trend that has already been revealed with all its clarity under capitalism, and it will develop in the transition to socialism towards this “complete unity”.
- 4) In conclusion, neither Bukharin’s conception of “world revolution”, nor Moreno’s, nor any other revisionist’s have anything to do with this. Putting an equal sign between these positions and ours are excuses not to address the center of the question. Future revolutions do not “have to” go through the path of the NEP, nor of a dictatorship of the proletariat that resists enclosed within the borders drawn by imperialism in an adverse situation. When we say “do not have to” go through this path, we are not saying that because of a special chemistry future revolutions will happen in the developed countries and will drive to an harmonic development of the transition to socialism. We don’t deny the weak links, nor the explosive conditions in semi colonies. We are talking about program, we say that the tasks of re construction of the 4th International involve retaking this communist program that has been bastardized; a program that starts from the concrete conditions of the present historical period but that fights for that “complete unity” on the basis of the international extension of the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is nothing but what Trotsky has systematized in the Theory of the Permanent Revolution.