

DECLARATION OF FORMATION OF INTERNATIONALIST COMMUNISTS - NC

Introduction

The following article is the founding document of the North Carolinian communist fraction Internationalist Communists (NC), which at the moment of its founding is based primarily in the cities of Charlotte and Durham. The article contains a series of short essays that discuss the historical and present working class struggles that have taken place within North Carolina, the necessity of a communist fraction in North Carolina in light of the recent increase of class struggle in the state, and the staunch internationalist perspective of the fraction, in opposition to the nationalists who masquerade as communists. This document aims to present a clear path towards the regroupment of communists in North Carolina and towards the day when the “spectre of communism” might once more haunt the world.



North Carolina as a Site of Historic Class Struggle

In the latter half of the 1800s, as industry developed and slavery ended, the working class of North Carolina began to assert itself. In 1854, one of the earliest unions in North Carolina, a typographical union, would be founded in

Raleigh¹. In 1884 a chapter of the national group the Knights of Labor would be founded in the same city, and it would not be long before rumors spread of “communistic” [sic] subversion, foreshadowing the militant struggles to come².

The end of the year 1900 in North Carolina saw numerous strikes and lockouts in cotton mills, lead by the National Union of Textile Workers³. During World War I there were strikes in cities such as Charlotte, and the IWW even launched a few strikes⁴. By 1919, the National Textile Workers Union, which had absorbed the defeated National Union of Textile Workers, claimed a membership of 45,000 in the Carolinas⁵. That year saw a wave of strikes: from Winston-Salem to Charlotte to High Point, the working class militantly fought to defend its interests⁶.

In 1928, the CPUSA would organize the first southern cell of the party in Charlotte, North Carolina⁷. A year later, the historical Gastonia strike would occur, where nearly the entire workforce at the Loray Mill in Gastonia would walk out, in large part due to the organizing of CPUSA member Fred Beal and the communist dominated NTWU⁸. Emboldened by the strike, workers in other local mills would walk out and strike as well⁹.

The bitter struggle of the strikers against the Mill owners and their enforcers would become violent, as the National Guard and police attacked strikers, vigilantes burned down the NTWU

1 Harley E. Jolley, *The Labor Movement in North Carolina, 1880-1922*, p. 357

2 *ibid.* p. 360

3 *ibid.* p. 368

4 *ibid.* p. 370

5 *ibid.*

6 *ibid.* p. 371

7 Gregory S. Taylor, *The History of the North Carolina Communist Party*, p. 19

8 *ibid.* p. 23

9 *ibid.* p. 28

headquarters, and the Gastonia police chief was killed in a shootout between police and armed strikers. Fred Beal and several other organizers would be arrested, and angry vigilantes would murder worker and union organizer Ella Mae Wiggins. While her murderers would be acquitted, Beal and fellow organizers would be found guilty, and he would flee to the USSR. Despite its failure, the strike became highly publicized nationally and internationally, and brought attention to the state of the labor movement in the south¹⁰.

10 *ibid.* pp. 42-43

11 *ibid.* p. 142

12 B.J. Davis, *Walking Out: The Great Textile Strike of 1934*.

While the Comintern's 1928 adoption of "Socialism in One Country" marked the party's break with the class struggle in words, the Gastonia strike would be one of the last struggles of the CPUSA before the decisive break of the party with the class struggle in deeds. Following the outbreak of WWII, the party opposed strikes and supported the American war effort¹¹. Despite the degeneration of the proletarian character of the CPUSA, the actions of rank and file party members, many of them workers, in furthering the class struggle in North Carolina should be commended and studied. Yet this was not the end of the class struggle.

In 1934 a national general strike of textile workers broke out, including in Gastonia, where 10,000 workers walked out¹². During the 1940s, as part of the early Civil Rights movement, tobacco workers in Winston-Salem, the majority of which were African American, would organize

and struggle for labor and civil rights¹³. A major defeat occurred in 1947 when North Carolina became a right-to-work state, severely limiting the power of unions, yet despite this setback, in 1958 a strike would break out against the Harriet and Henderson mills, which turned violent with shootings and bombings leading to the National Guard being brought in¹⁴. Strikes would continue to occur throughout the century, yet nothing as groundbreaking as the struggles of the first half of the century.

¹³ Brent D. Glass and Wiley J. Williams, *Labor Unions - NCpedia*.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ US Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Union Members – 2017*.

Since the 1970s, union membership in manufacturing industries has greatly declined, and North Carolina continues to be one of the least unionized states in the US, having a union membership rate of 3.4% as of 2017¹⁵. Despite this, North Carolina has been a site of militant and at times violent class struggle that has often played an important role in the struggles of the American working class, as the Gastonia strike and 1934 general strikes demonstrated, and with the new wave of teacher strikes across the nation, it is obvious that this role that North Carolinian workers play in the struggle of the class as a whole is far from over.

2018: The Inauguration of a New Wave of Class Struggle

On February 23, 2018, teachers in West Virginia organized and enacted an illegal, self-driven mass strike in response to poor working

conditions, low pay, and the increasing disregard demonstrated towards their profession by the state¹⁶. Soon after, teachers in North Carolina followed suit, with thousands of teachers walking out of schools and test centers to protest these same issues. It can be said that this was the most profoundly independent proletarian action in the American South in decades. The teachers did not seek the support of the legislature, the school boards, the unions, or any other organization which professed to have “their best interests” at heart. Instead, the teachers took it upon themselves to do what they believed was best for them, confronting the state legislature in Raleigh, system superintendents at local levels, the unions, and so on¹⁷.

The teachers of North Carolina recognized that those aforementioned groups were, after all, wholly separate from the teachers themselves. They had fundamentally opposing economic interests, with the state and its associated organizations having no particular regard for the economic well-being of the teachers themselves beyond paying them barely what was necessary to continue reproducing their labor power, as they were focused on the principals, administrators, and others who were already making upwards of double the income of the average teacher without even half of the average productive input: those who made money off of the unpaid labor of the teachers¹⁸. The official unions, being organs that are nothing more than bureaucratic vessels through which the class as

16 Maya Rhodan (TIME), *Why 20,000 West Virginia Teachers Are On Strike*.

17 Holly Yan (CNN), *North Carolina Teachers Will Be the next to Walk out. Here's What They Want*.

18 Public Schools of North Carolina, *North Carolina Public School Salary Schedules*.

a mass of labor-power is integrated into production, were of course ultimately wholly useless, unwilling to act in any way that could challenge the authority of the state. ¹⁹ Yan, *ibid.*

The teachers came to realize that they could take action themselves, and they did – the situation in West Virginia served as a catalyst. Under the defense of the shared interests of their profession, they were able to put forth their own demands, have them be recognized by the state, and even forced union bureaucrats to support their demands¹⁹. This was the germinative stage of a renewed front of class struggle in North Carolina. A section of the working class took into its hands its own fate and asserted its power, even against the organs which claimed to represent its economic interests, and participated in a movement that crossed territorial and state boundaries. These momentous actions of the North Carolinian teachers in conjunction with West Virginian teachers and teachers in other states have only increased the confidence of the state and national working class in its own strength and power, as teachers, along with the general populace nationwide, professed their support and sympathy for the strikers. Organized communists must step in to help direct this sectional struggle if and when it reignites into a common struggle for the class as a whole regardless of profession.

The Necessity of Communist Fractions

Between the existences of the formal world party, whether it was the Communist League (1847-52), 1st International (1864-76), 2nd International (1889-1914), or Comintern (1919-28), there have always existed “fractions”, groups which maintained organizational and theoretical continuity in between the existence of the formal party. These fractions were the genuine communist formations which were all that remained in an era of reaction when the party either disintegrated, in the case of the Communist League and 1st International, or betrayed the workers for the bourgeoisie, as in the case of the 2nd and 3rd Internationals. When the era of reaction ended and a new era of revolution began, these fractions, which in totality constituted the historical party, merged into a single formal organization, the world party.

The fraction is not a party, and would not engage in the sort of activity that would comprise “party building”. It is idealistic and voluntarist to believe that any small sect can through sheer force of will and a correct “party line” build a mass party which can then launch the revolution. This conception of the party is completely alien to Marxism, and is opportunistic, as it shifts the revolutionary subject from the class to the party. As Marx explained in a letter to Ferdinand Freiligrath:

After the "League" had been disbanded at my behest in November 1852, I never belonged to any society again, whether secret or public; . . . the party, therefore, in this wholly ephemeral sense, ceased to exist for me eight years ago . . . since 1852 I had not been associated with any association and was firmly convinced that my theoretical studies were of greater use to the working class than my meddling with association which had now had their day on the Continent. Because of this "inactivity" I was thereupon repeatedly and bitterly attacked. . . . Since 1852, then, I have known nothing of "party" in the sense implied in your letter. . . . The "League", like the Société des Saisons in Paris and a hundred other societies, was simply an episode in the history of a party that is everywhere springing up naturally out of the soil of modern society. . . . I have tried to dispel the misunderstanding arising out of the impression that by "party" I meant a "League" that expired eight years ago, or an editorial board that was disbanded twelve years ago. By party, I meant the party in the broad historical sense²⁰.

The party is not this or that group that calls itself a "Communist Party", "Workers Party", "People's Party" or any such variation. It is "everywhere sprung up naturally out of the soil of modern society", not artificially created, and during non-revolutionary times this party "in the broad

historical sense” is nothing but the communist fractions scattered throughout the world. Furthermore, the organization Marx established: the Communist League, was not a national group unlike modern day “vanguard parties”, but an international and unitary body in scope and organization. Unlike “vanguard parties”, the fraction has no intention to become a mass organization, as this would only mean the liquidation of its revolutionary content as its programme would be watered down to appeal to the un-revolutionary masses, and it understands that its geographical limitations are a defect brought upon by its existence solely as a fraction that would be overcome with the constitution of the world party.

Rather than attempting to draw a large portion of the working class into its ranks, the fraction is necessary for preserving and developing the revolutionary theory, drawing up a balance sheet of the present conditions, and ruthlessly criticizing the mistakes of past struggles to ensure that they are not in the future repeated. The fraction must serve as a beacon that cuts through the fog of capitalist ideology, propagating theory and participating in the struggles of the working class however possible, as “[communists] have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole”. The fraction must maximize its contact with as many workers as possible, going where the workers go: in the workplaces, in the unions, at protests, and at strikes, and acting with the intention of helping

the working class organize, cutting across the geographical, trade, political, cultural, racial, and gender divide. Of course unions are firmly on the side of capital, there can be no illusion that communists can infiltrate and seize control of them through sufficient organization, they are merely a site of worker activity, and thus the communist must enter it just as he must enter the workplace.

International Communists (NC) plans to use all the tools available at its disposal to further the class struggle, including the tactic of the class-union as employed by the ICP: an autonomous rank and file union that transcends workplaces, trades and regions to unite as large a group of the working class as possible in the defense of its economic interests, regardless of political ideology or personal beliefs, barring those ideologies/beliefs which would actively interfere with the unity of the working class, such as racism or fascism. The fraction would agitate within the union which would serve as a semipermeable membrane that would allow the communist programme to diffuse throughout the working class, and would allow those workers who recognize the correctness of these positions and accept the need to help organize the future party to enter the fraction. This ensures that the fraction remains unitary. Only those who accept the communist programme and are willing to adhere to the fraction's rules can be allowed in.

We Are Internationalist Communists

21 Rosa Luxemburg,
The Russian Revolution.

While Lenin and his comrades clearly expected that, as champions of national freedom even to the extent of "separation," they would turn Finland, the Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, the Baltic countries, the Caucasus, etc., into so many faithful allies of the Russian Revolution, we have instead witnessed the opposite spectacle...The Bolsheviks were to be taught to their own great hurt and that of the revolution, that under the rule of capitalism there is no self-determination of peoples, that in a class society each class of the nation strives to "determine itself" in a different fashion, and that, for the bourgeois classes, the standpoint of national freedom is fully subordinated to that of class rule. The Finnish bourgeoisie, like the Ukrainian bourgeoisie, were unanimous in preferring the violent rule of Germany to national freedom, if the latter should be bound up with Bolshevism²¹.

While those who are genuine Marxists and communists will understand the tautology of the term "Internationalist Communist," we feel such a designation is unfortunately necessary to distinguish ourselves from the pseudo-communists who call themselves Marxist-Leninists, Maoists, and Third Worldists, along with other such variants of Stalinism, the ideology born from the liquidation of the October Revolution.

Such communists are in reality nothing more than reactionary bourgeois nationalists, with their support for “anti-imperialist” states, wars of national liberation, and their belief in the possibility and necessity of “Socialism in One Country,” concepts that in reality are nothing but the opportunistic distortion of Marxist theory which served and continue to serve as the ideological justification for the existence of various bourgeois regimes.

22 Friedrich Engels, *Principles of Communism*. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*.

Calling ourselves internationalist communists affirms our staunch commitment to the core and invariant Marxist concept of proletarian internationalism and the understanding that “the workingmen have no country”, that “in the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, [communists] point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality”, and that “the communist revolution will not merely be a national phenomenon but must take place simultaneously in all civilized countries”²².

In this sense we claim theoretical descent from the historical Communist Left and Ultra-Left, which were staunchly internationalist and understood “Marxism-Leninism” for the counter-revolutionary sham it really was, while rejecting the term “Left-Communist” as being historically outdated: we are not to the left of the existing Marxist-Leninist “Communist Movement” because in reality such movement has no communist content.

In Conclusion

In the present day, humanity still continues its march towards certain extinction. Ten years after the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, which plunged millions into poverty and inaugurated a series of bourgeois revolutions, ethnic conflicts and civil wars in the unstable regions of the world, and following an upsurge in the class struggle worldwide, with riots, protests and mass strikes in both the developed and developing nations, the necessity for communist fractions to form and participate in the struggles of the working class cannot be understated, especially in a state with such a rich and lively history of militant class struggle. Despite its incredibly reactionary labor laws, or perhaps because of them, North Carolina has been the location of some of the most militant class struggles in the US. Now, after decades of minimal class struggle, brought upon by the neoliberal era, the recent teacher strikes have demonstrated that the beast has awoken from its slumber. There can be no more illusions – now more than ever must an alternative vision be put forward, against the inadequate visions of social-democracy and “democratic-socialism”.

As such we have taken it upon ourselves to form Internationalist Communists (NC), a communist fraction based in North Carolina. We call on all genuine internationalist communists in North Carolina to establish ties with our fraction and if

in agreement with our programme and principles to consider joining us, and we call on all genuine international communists everywhere to group together into fractions and establish dialogues with each other. All the preparations must be made for the future reemergence of the world party, and of the revolutionary class struggle. There is no time to waste. When the inevitable time comes for the regrouping of the world party, these fractions must be as immersed and as connected with the working class as the material conditions can possibly allow to maximize the chances of success of any future revolution. We conclude our declaration with the final lines of the Manifesto of the Communist Party: ²³ *ibid.*

The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. [Workers] of All Countries, Unite!²³

**Internationalist Communists (NC)
30 July 2018**