Appendix: 1a- Comintern Document

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Terms of Admission into Communist International

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The First Inaugural Congress of the Communist International did not draw up precise conditions for the admission of parties into the Third International. When the First Congress was convened, only communist trends and groups existed in most countries.

It is in a different situation that the Second World Congress of the Communist International is meeting. In most countries, Communist parties and organisations, not merely trends, now exist.

Parties and groups only recently affiliated to the Second International are more and more frequently applying for membership in the Third International, though they have not become really Communist. The Second International has definitely been smashed. Aware that the Second International is beyond hope, the intermediate parties and groups of the “Centre” are trying to lean on the Communist International, which is steadily gaining in strength. At the same time, however, they hope to retain a degree of “autonomy” that will enable them to pursue their previous opportunist or “Centrist” policies. The Communist International is, to a certain extent, becoming the vogue.

The desire of certain leading “Centre” groups to join the Third International provides oblique confirmation that it has won the sympathy of the vast majority of class conscious workers throughout the world, and is becoming a more powerful force with each day.

In certain circumstances, the Communist International may be faced with the danger of dilution by the influx of wavering and irresolute groups that have not as yet broken with their Second International ideology.

Besides, some of the big parties (Italy, Sweden), in which the majority have adopted the communist standpoint, still contain a strong reformist and social-pacifist wing that is only waiting for an opportune moment to raise its head again, begin active sabotage of the proletarian revolution, and thereby help the bourgeoisie and the Second International.

No Communist should forget the lessons of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. The Hungarian proletariat paid dearly for the Hungarian Communists having united with the reformists.

In view of all this, the Second World Congress deems it necessary to lay down absolutely precise terms for the admission of new parties, and also to set forth the obligations incurred by the parties already affiliated.
The Second Congress of the Communist International resolves that the following are the terms of Comintern membership:

1. Day-by-day propaganda and agitation must be genuinely communist in character. All press organs belonging to the parties must be edited by reliable Communists who have given proof of their devotion to the cause of the proletarian revolution. The dictatorship of the proletariat should not be discussed merely as a stock phrase to be learned by rote; it should be popularised in such a way that the practical facts systematically dealt with in our press day by day will drive home to every rank-and-file working man and working woman, every soldier and peasant, that it is indispensable to them. Third International supporters should use all media to which they have access—the press, public meetings, trade unions, and co-operative societies—to expose systematically and relentlessly, not only the bourgeoisie but also its accomplices—the reformists of every shade.

2. Any organisation that wishes to join the Communist International must consistently and systematically dismiss reformists and “Centrists” from positions of any responsibility in the working-class movement (party organisations, editorial boards, trade unions, parliamentary groups, co-operative societies, municipal councils, etc.), replacing them by reliable Communists. The fact that in some cases rank-and-file workers may at first have to replace “experienced” leaders should be no deterrent.

3. In countries where a state of siege or emergency legislation makes it impossible for Communists to conduct their activities legally, it is absolutely essential that legal and illegal work should be combined. In almost all the countries of Europe and America, the class struggle is entering the phase of civil war. In these conditions, Communists can place no trust in bourgeois legality. They must everywhere build up a parallel illegal organisation, which, at the decisive moment, will be in a position to help the Party fulfil its duty to the revolution.

4. Persistent and systematic propaganda and agitation must be conducted in the armed forces, and Communist cells formed in every military unit. In the main Communists will have to do this work illegally; failure to engage in it would be tantamount to a betrayal of their revolutionary duty and incompatible with membership in the Third International.

5. Regular and systematic agitation is indispensable in the countryside. The working class cannot consolidate its victory without support from at least a section of the farm labourers and poor peasants, and without neutralising, through its policy, part of the rest of the rural population. In the present period communist activity in the countryside is of primary importance. It should be conducted, in the main, through revolutionary worker-Communists who have contacts with the rural areas. To forgo this work or entrust it to unreliable semi-reformist elements is tantamount to renouncing the proletarian revolution.

6. It is the duty of any party wishing to belong to the Third International to expose, not only avowed social-patriotism, but also the falsehood and hypocrisy of social-pacifism. It must systematically demonstrate to the workers that, without the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, no international arbitration courts, no talk about a reduction of armaments, no “democratic” reorganisation of the League of Nations will save mankind from new imperialist wars.
7. It is the duty of parties wishing to belong to the Communist International to recognise the need for a complete and absolute break with reformism and “Centrist” policy, and to conduct propaganda among the party membership for that break. Without this, a consistent communist policy is impossible.

The Communist International demands imperatively and uncompromisingly that this break be effected at the earliest possible date. It cannot tolerate a situation in which avowed reformists, such as Turati, Modigliani and others, are entitled to consider themselves members of the Third International. Such a state of affairs would lead to the Third International strongly resembling the defunct Second International.

8. Parties in countries whose bourgeoisie possess colonies and oppress other nations must pursue a most well-defined and clear-cut policy in respect of colonies and oppressed nations. Any party wishing to join the Third International must ruthlessly expose the colonial machinations of the imperialists of its “own” country, must support—in deed, not merely in word—every colonial liberation movement, demand the expulsion of its compatriot imperialists from the colonies, inculcate in the hearts of the workers of its own country an attitude of true brotherhood with the working population of the colonies and the oppressed nations, and conduct systematic agitation among the armed forces against all oppression of the colonial peoples.

9. It is the duty of any party wishing to join the Communist International to conduct systematic and unflagging communist work in the trade unions, co-operative societies and other mass workers’ organisations. Communist cells should be formed in the trade unions, and, by their sustained and unflagging work, win the unions over to the communist cause. In every phase of their day-by-day activity these cells must unmask the treachery of the social-patriots and the vacillation of the “Centrists”. The cells must be completely subordinate to the party as a whole.

10. It is the duty of any party belonging to the Communist International to wage a determined struggle against the Amsterdam “International” of yellow trade unions. Its indefatigable propaganda should show the organised workers the need to break with the yellow Amsterdam International. It must give every support to the emerging international federation of Red trade unions which are associated with the Communist International.

11. It is the duty of parties wishing to join the Third International to re-examine the composition of their parliamentary groups, eliminate unreliable elements and effectively subordinate these groups to the Party Central Committees. They must demand that every Communist proletarian should subordinate all his activities to the interests of truly revolutionary propaganda and agitation.

12. The periodical and non-periodical press, and all publishing enterprises, must likewise be fully subordinate to the Party Central Committee, whether the party as a whole is legal or illegal at the time. Publishing enterprises should not be allowed to abuse their autonomy and pursue any policies that are not in full accord with that of the Party.

13. Parties belonging to the Communist International must be organised on the principle of democratic centralism. In this period of acute civil war, the Communist parties can perform their duty only if they are organised in a most centralised manner, are marked by an iron discipline bordering on military
discipline, and have strong and authoritative party centres invested with wide powers and enjoying the unanimous confidence of the membership.

14. Communist parties in countries where Communists can conduct their work legally must carry out periodic membership purges (re-registrations) with the aim of systematically ridding the party of petty-bourgeois elements that inevitably percolate into them.

15. It is the duty of any party wishing to join the Communist International selflessly to help any Soviet republic in its struggle against counter-revolutionary forces. Communist parties must conduct incessant propaganda urging the workers to refuse to transport war materials destined for the enemies of the Soviet republics; they must conduct legal or illegal propaganda in the armed forces dispatched to strangle the workers’ republics, etc.

16. It is the duty of parties which have still kept their old Social-Democratic programmes to revise them as speedily as possible and draw up new communist programmes in conformity with the specific conditions in their respective countries, and in the spirit of (Communist International decisions. As a rule, the programmes of all parties belonging to the Communist International must be approved by a regular Congress of the Communist International or by its Executive Committee. In the event of the Executive Committee withholding approval, the party is entitled to appeal to the Congress of the Communist International.

17. All decisions of the Communist International’s congresses and of its Executive Committee are binding on all affiliated parties. Operating in conditions of acute civil war, the Communist International must be far more centralised than the Second International was. It stands to reason, however, that in every aspect of their work the Communist International and its Executive Committee must take into account the diversity of conditions in which the respective parties have to fight and work, and adopt decisions binding on all parties only on matters in which such decisions are possible.

18. In view of the foregoing, parties wishing to join the Communist International must change their name. Any party seeking affiliation must call itself the Communist Party of the country in question (Section of the Third, Communist International). The question of a party’s name is not merely a formality, but a matter of major political importance. The Communist International has declared a resolute war on the bourgeois world and all yellow Social-Democratic parties. The difference between the Communist parties and the old and official “Social-Democratic”, or “socialist”, parties, which have betrayed the banner of the working class, must be made absolutely clear to every rank-and-file worker.

19. After the conclusion of the proceedings of the Second World Congress of the Communist International, any party wishing to join the Communist International must at the earliest date convene an extraordinary congress for official acceptance of the above obligations on behalf of the entire party.