

Internationalist Papers

A Publication of the International Communist Party (ICP)

To the Reader: 1921-2001 – A Continuity of
Doctrine, Program, and Organisation

The Course of
Capitalism: USA

“Globalisation” and Proletarian
Internationalism

Where We Come
From – A Brief
Chronology

Against All Democratic Illusions

The Laboratory
of Counterrevolution

The Palestinian Question and the
International Workers' Movement

Back To Basics:
The 1921 Livorno Program

Suplemento en Español

*La Asamblea Constituyente
en Venezuela*

*Movimiento obrero e internacionales
sindicales*

El cadáver todavía camina

Programa del Partido Comunista Internacional

De dónde venimos

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

To the Reader: 1921-2001...	p. 1
"Globalisation" and Proletarian Internationalism	p. 3
Against All Democratic Illusions	p. 7
The Palestinian Question and the International Workers' Movement	p. 10
The Course of Capitalism: USA	p. 17
Where We Come From - A Brief Chronology	p. 27
The Laboratory of Counterrevolution:	p. 31
A Brief History of Stalinism in Italy (And Elsewhere)	p. 31
Gramscism: An Age-Long Bane of Communism	p. 53
Back To Basics: The 1921 Livorno Program	p. 69

Suplemento en Español

La Asamblea Constituyente en Venezuela...	p.73
Dos Textos de Nuestra Corriente:	p. 76
Movimiento Obrero e Internacionales Sindicales	p. 76
El Cadáver Todavía Camina	p. 80
Programa del Partido Comunista Internacional	p. 88
De Dónde Venimos	p. 90

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TO THE READER: 1921-2001 - A CONTINUITY OF DOCTRINE, PROGRAM, AND ORGANIZATION

Eighty years ago, in January 1921, the Communist Party of Italy (Section of the Communist International) was born. For us, this is not a simple anniversary, in which to pay a purely ritualistic homage to the past. For us, to recall and remind such a date means to inscribe it in a veritable continuum, which links together 1848 (the year in which The Communist Manifesto appeared), 1871 (the year of the Paris Commune, the first proletarian upheaval), 1917 (the year of the Red October, the first successful communist revolution), 1921, and the present, difficult years... A continuum which, through the ups and downs in the history of the communist movement, represents our history and reaches and embraces our days as well.

1921: the party was born in an area of Europe and at a time in history which were strategically decisive for the sorts of international revolution; and during the first two years during which it was led by the Sinistra,¹ the Marxistically sound and consistent Left which had led a relentless struggle within the Socialist Party, it endeavoured to apply most rigorously the Bolshevik lessons to the capitalistically advanced West. It was this very Sinistra which, after the defeat of the revolutionary process in the mid-1920s (a defeat due to the converging forces of fascism, democracy, and stalinism) managed to keep alive the doctrine, the program, and the organization, and to consign them intact to the following generations.

For us, it is thus clear that "1921" means "1848" as well as it means "today" and "tomorrow": in the sense that a single red thread keeps unrolling in history, and we are tenaciously and solidly holding on that thread. Today, recession deepens everywhere and, in so doing, brings to the surface (and increasingly will do so) the social issues and clashes which were suppressed or pacified in the post-WWII decades, thanks to the large reaping of profits in the years of economic reconstruction on the one hand and to the destructions brought about (theoretically, politically, and organizationally) by the stalinist counterrevolution on the other. Notwithstanding the veritable disaster produced by such totally capitalist countries as USSR (or China, or Cuba, etc.) presenting themselves as "socialist" or "communist", the necessity of communism will return to make itself felt, as the only real and plausible alternative to the purely destructive road capitalism is again entering.

To these issues – which are the ever central issues of communist doctrine, program, and organization – Internationalist Papers 10 is entirely devoted. The core of it is occupied by a thorough, two-article analysis of what Stalinism accomplished in Italy as a veritable "laboratory of counterrevolution", and of the role played in it by Antonio Gramsci, a veritable "man for all seasons" for both the opportunist parties and the spontaneist groups – a kind of myth not only in Italy (where it lately grew hazy, in fact), but especially in the Anglo-American area (where it has become a sort of embarrassing passe-partout in all fields), an icon which the future revival of class struggle on the international level will have to overturn and shatter impiously. "Where We Come From – A Brief

¹ "Sinistra" means "Left" in Italian. We prefer to use this term in Italian (instead of the accepted and generic use of the term "Left", designating a broad spectre of positions) to indicate the current which founded and originally led the Communist Party of Italy, before being ousted by a rising Stalinism. See below the article "Where We Come From. A Short Chronology". Also see "What Is the International Communist Party. A Presentation", in Internationalist Papers 9 (2000).

Chronology" and the "1921 Livorno Program" complete this part, providing the reader with all the necessary historical background and developments, and with a synthetic outline of our current through those terrible decades. To our present, a present still weighed down by the long-term effects of that counterrevolution, the rest of the articles are devoted: the so-called globalization, the still persistent democratic illusions, the deepening recession (especially in the U.S.), the ever critical situation in the Middle East, and how to react to all this on the ground of a solid Marxist programme.

The "Suplemento en Español" contains an analysis of recent developments in Venezuela (the Constituent Assembly), one article written in 1949 which clearly detailed the nature, role, and course of trade unions, and the attitude of communists towards them, and one written in 1953 which historically examines the issue of parliamentarism and reaffirms our anti-parliamentary (because anti-democratic) position. Our program and the Spanish translation of "Where We Come From – A Brief Chronology" complete this section, once again linking past and present – a continuity which distinguishes us.

No, we aren't simply celebrating an anniversary.

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**THE WORKING CLASS
IS REVOLUTIONARY
OR IT IS NOTHING
(K. MARX)**

"GLOBALISATION" AND PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM

'Globalisation' (a term currently much in vogue, almost as if it were a new phenomenon) is understood to signify a process which Marxism identified at the very beginning as an inherent aspect of the capitalist mode of production.

In contrast to the feudal mode of production (inflexible and static, characterised by isolated productive units and with very little interchange or movement of commodities and human beings), the capitalist mode of production is dynamic. It expands continually, constantly seeking out new sources of raw materials and energy, and new markets. It is systematic in its contempt for existing limits and borders, and gradually attracts all the regions of the earth into its own sphere.

Such dynamism was implicit in capitalism *from the beginning*, even when the new mode of production was barely out of the cradle. In this regard, it is worth remembering that the future capitalist nation *par excellence*, England, started amassing its fortune – later, the necessary bedrock for the country's technological and economic progress – on the sea, courtesy of the corsairs of pirates like Sir Francis Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh!

As the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 reads: "*The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere. [...] It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to adopt what it calls civilisation into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image.*" (Ch. 1: 'Bourgeois and Proletarians').

It was precisely this unremitting dynamism and revolutionizing process (bound up to the laws of profit, production and exchange), and *not* the wickedness of any single politi-

cian or – worse still – any particular country, which *inevitably* drove capitalism down the path of the slave trade (with its four-sided equation: England-Africa-America-England), colonialism, and, lastly, imperialism, the so called 'supreme phase of capitalism'.

Capitalism was, then, global from its birth, insofar as it sought to subjugate the world (as far as it was conceived at any given historical moment) to its own design. At the end of the eighteenth century, this world corresponded to present day western Europe; during the nineteenth century the 'capitalist world' came to be identified with most of Europe and the Americas; in the twentieth century a great leap was made in the direction of Africa and Asia. Naturally, this was a bloodstained process: a never ending cycle of wars and armed conflicts – which culminated in two World Wars – brought about destruction and hardship, and today, as the powers that be seek to muscle in on new territories and carve out new markets for themselves, we await the latest in a long line of inter-imperialist butcheries.

Those who believe – and make others believe – that we are witnessing something new and extraordinary, and that this is all due to the freshly baked strategies of G7 whiz-kids hot on the 'new economy', are (yet again) making a dupe of others and, indeed, themselves. In a world whose furthest confines have been reached and whose markets are saturated with unsold commodities, we have reached the stage where capitalism (in deep crisis since the mid-1970s) is desperately seeking to launch anew the *process of self-valorisation*.

In order to accomplish this, capital – split up into national constituent parts all in fierce reciprocal competition with one another, but united the world over by the same needs, strategies and aims – is forced to pursue a bitter war in the effort to control raw material sources and the roads along which they are transported, as well as the routes of trade and exchange. It must seek to speed up and intensify the process by which living

labour (i.e., that of men and women in flesh and bones, the wage-earners) transforms itself into surplus labour and, therefore, into surplus value. But to this end, it must introduce increasingly sophisticated technologies (which, however, give rise to further unemployment) and exploit to the hilt the employed labour (=flexibility, increased labour loads, and intensive exploitation of proletarian migrants and women and children in areas which formerly stood to the sidelines of capitalist production processes but which are now at one with them).

This is globalisation: better, *this is capitalism!* Any attempt to understand it in other terms merely conceals the hypocritical desire to deny the reality of a mode of production which was created along those principles, developed according to those principles, and on those principles – and *because of those principles and their contradictory development* – will become extinct.

Indeed, the extension of the capitalist mode of production worldwide leads, at the same time, to the creation of a worldwide proletariat. Capitalism is founded upon the exploitation of living labour, since it is from here – from the unpaid part of the labouring day – that it derives its own surplus value. It is essential to its very existence. So, just as capitalism incessantly revolutionises the reality with which it comes into contact, it cannot avoid creating proletarians in every corner of the globe: geographical, national and cultural barriers collapse as entire populations are wrenched away from their ancient traditions and methods of cultivation and driven towards cities near and far. There is certainly nothing new in this either: as was suggested before, it goes back to the earliest days of the capitalist mode of production.

Hence the reason why Marxism has always insisted on the fact that the proletarian class *as such* is international and internationalist: not in terms of the individual consciousness of each single person (moulded by the dominant ideology of the time) but in terms of its *necessary class role, its historical role*. And, in the violent materiality of living and labouring conditions which it imposes, it is capitalism itself which leads to such a situation. It is also obvious, therefore, that capitalism seeks by whatever means at hand (the media, religion, the lure

of nationalist, racist and ethnic sympathies, the demagogic rhetoric of ‘little fish versus big fish’ and the competitive allure of ‘all against all’) to dismantle this international army, disorientating and crushing it, while at the same time – despite itself – swelling its ranks at every turn.

After more than seventy years of counter-revolution (during which democracy, fascism and Stalinism – contrary to all appearances – scratched each other’s backs in the effort to crush the threat of a proletarian revolution), the idea, experience and memory of being an international class complete with an international political program have been destroyed, together with the party which embodied that program. As materialists we are, however, aware that reality is subject to constant transformation under the pressure of social and economic laws and that, therefore, this class identity will – albeit with great difficulty and not necessarily in a linear manner – return once again among the ranks of this global army. The concerted action of conditions both *objective* and *subjective* will ensure this will take place: the former can be summarised in terms of a deepening economic crisis which will constrain individuals, isolated groups and, as time passes, ever larger sections of the labouring classes to rebel and fight; the latter will become manifest in the presence and theoretical and political actions of the newly born international communist party (which represents the historical consciousness of the international proletariat, and is its organiser and guide).

We harbour no illusions as to when these objective and subjective conditions will come together. We know that much time will pass, that there will be alternate and contradictory phases, high points and low points, advances and retreats. Above all, we are aware that the hand of time cannot be forced or foreshortened by acts of volunteerism, no matter how selfless such acts may be. Slowly yet surely, and with method, we will labour on the subjective conditions: the revolutionary party, a new generation militant cadre and its role alongside the labouring class in its daily struggles, and its urgent return to a historical stage it has been forced to abandon for the last seventy years of devastating counter revolution. Capital itself will accomplish the rest by in-

vading each and every corner of the earth, turning the masses into a proletariat, endlessly giving rise to contradictions and aggravating its own crisis by means of competition and an increasingly exasperated trade war. Those who have not been totally overwhelmed by the tenets of the prevailing ideology cannot fail to have noticed the tell-tale signs of growing misery: increased poverty, the increasingly brutal exploitation of the employed and rising unemployment figures which show no sign of diminishing, the day-to-day difficulties of communal life, the destruction of the environment, the worsening of general living conditions, and so on.

During this phase – a phase in which proletarian forces are still to be found wanting – the centre stage is occupied by what Marxists call the ‘half classes’, an accumulation of social sectors ranging from public employees to vast sectors of the labour aristocracy. These sectors are threatened and hit directly by the unstable and precarious conditions characterising this phase of the crisis, and their guarantees and privileges – formally believed to be eternal – are already on the line. The ‘quality of life’ of these ‘half classes’ is worsening, albeit gradually, yet it is worsening enough to make them stand up and make themselves heard. They are organising themselves to defend what they have and claim back what they once possessed: the ‘quality of life’, the ‘freedom’ to mind their own affairs without being conditioned and having spanners put in their labours, the harmony and equilibrium of years gone by, the illusory belief that they were immune to the crises of capitalism, their very own corner of paradise, the celebration of what is small and manageable, and so on.

The so called ‘Seattle Movement’ is tarred with precisely this kind of brush. It is a confused movement of diverse sectors and interests which, after its opening sally in the north-west American city, promptly made itself felt in Davos, Washington, Genoa, and elsewhere. Among its rank and file can be counted the anarcho-syndicalists à la IWW

(Industrial Workers of the World), the protected sectors of the American labour aristocracy within the officially recognised AFL-CIO trade union movement (whose stance is openly protectionist), French farmers (the familiar flag waving bearers of chauvinistic petitions), ‘Third World’ representatives whose political stance is that of emerging national bourgeoisies strangled at birth or oppressed by more powerful competitors, *ouvriéristes* and “autonomists” of various denominations whose theoretical-political substance may be easily summed up by the slogan: “To Fight is Right!” Attention, however: all of this has come about in the name of ‘fairer rules’, a ‘better quality of life’, a ‘more humane market’, a ‘more considerate globalisation’, etc. – the typically naïve (or hypocritical) reformism of ‘half classes’ which, while decidedly reluctant to abandon the capitalist mode of production, would like to see it operating in a less ruthless manner: chickenpox without the pocks. In the future, the ongoing agony of an outmoded mode of production will more and more give rise to similar movements and reactions, and the historical delay in the return of revolutionary proletariat will only ensure that this situation continues. Yet the very character of these movements and reaction means they are not, and neither can they be, the answer. They are only a symptom of the disease and the agony.

Anyone who really sees through the present crisis in capitalism, its preparations for future worldwide butchery and its blatantly destructive nature, must learn to place him/herself outside the disease and the agony and understand the historical need for the destruction of capitalism and its replacement with a superior form of production.

So he/she will have to repossess the entire communist programme, a programme which, far from being the fruit of vague rebellious yearnings, is first and foremost a theory and a science of revolution and the political organisation indispensable for its realisation and management.

INTERNATIONALIST PAPERS

BACK ISSUES

n° 1 (May 1992)

To the Reader: Resuming Our International Press - Marxism And Russia - The Myth of "Socialist Planning" in Russia - What Distinguishes Our Party - Back To Basics: Fundamental Theses of the Party (1951)-Our Press

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n° 4 (June 1995)

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n° 7 (May 1998)

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n° 8 (Spring/Summer 1999)

To the Reader: Party And Class Today (While a New Imperialist War Is Raging) - The War In Serbia and Kossovo Is a Capitalist War -Economic Crisis And the Science of Marxism - The Mole Keeps On Digging - Invariance of Socialdemocracy, Invariance of Marxism - U. S. News: How the Other Half Lives, 1999-2000 - The Kurdish Question
Back To Basics: Force, Violence and Dictatorship In the Class Struggle (IV) - Party Life - Suplemento en Español: Activismo (1952) -Reformismo y socialismo (1950) - Las dos caras de la revolucion cubana (1961) - Our Press

n° 9 (Spring/Summer 2000)

What is the International Communist Party: A Presentation

AGAINST ALL DEMOCRATIC ILLUSIONS

Democracy is the most impregnable form of armour plating available for the birth, development and conservation of capitalism. Indeed, its grip on society stems back to the eighteenth century when it made its claim for the equality of individuals and the rationality of a world governed by intelligible laws. This claim was the 'form' of a 'substance' by now perfectly clear: deep within the feudal mode of production (rigidly and statically closed inside a hierarchical structure and characterised by isolated units of production) a new mode of production was germinating. This new mode was dynamic, aggressive, intolerant of rules and confines and global in its projection.

In claiming that individuals were equal, the paralysed and paralysing conventions of the medieval social and economic structure were broken: which also implied that bargaining (at the level of contacts and contracts, exploration and colonisation, commerce and markets) would take place on a free basis. In declaring that the world was governed by intelligible laws, daily life was stripped of the mystery of divine grace and god-given laws and was handed over to study, discovery and invention: which, in their turn, revealed a host of new alternatives to society and the economy.

It was a great step forward for mankind, but both these claims were pulled up short in the wake of precise limits. Individuals were equal, but only up to a certain point: the new society which emerged from the ashes of the old was founded upon glaring class divisions, and this necessarily implied deep social, economic and cultural inequalities. As for the claim to the rationality of a world governed by intelligible laws, this remained confined to the world of natural sciences, and reluctance was shown in making the next step, i.e., recognising that those cast iron, intelligible laws also governed society.

And so it was left to Marxism – the science of social becoming, itself determined by the same indissoluble contradictions of the capitalist mode of production (and therefore not the figment of this or that 'daydreamer's' imagination!) – to make this step: to show that these intelligible laws were applicable to human society and to analyse the causes of inequality. Yet in doing so, Marxism turned 'democracy' itself inside out and lay bare its nature as an 'ideological construction', a 'false consciousness', a theory tailor-made for the dominant bourgeois class. And all this as early as the publication of *Communist Manifesto* in 1848.

The dominant class has peddled the illusion that despite a mode of production based on the market, all-out competition and the constant hankering after profits – a mode of production comparable to a bloodstained battlefield – everyone is equal and has the same chances to compete, to know and to get on in life. For the last three hundred years this illusion has proved a powerful weapon, seeping into each and every corner of collective life, and often clubbing into passive submission those very people whose status and position in society were far from being equal: the exploited, the oppressed, the working class, the proletariat.

Marxism has always fought this illusion. It has demonstrated – in theory and in practice – that being born in a class society is in itself a source of inequality. It has also shown that this inequality is carefully cultivated and preserved by all means of communication, by culture, by the domineering ideology and by the mass of opinions, commonplaces, mental attitudes and forms of psychological inertia which take their origin from the social and economic underground and are in a dialectical relationship to it, and that all these things are a tremendous burden upon the exploited and oppressed classes.

Marxism has always claimed and demonstrated that democracy (this goddess that the bourgeoisie wishes to see worshipped in eternity) is a *fraud and a means of domination*. And it follows that those political institutions founded upon it (from the lowest to the high-

est, from the smallest to the biggest, from the neighbourhood committee to the United Nations) are extremely powerful bodies intent on cooping up the forces of social change. In its efforts to demystify democracy, Marxism has availed itself of a powerful ally: capitalist society itself! Indeed, whilst fervently spreading the gospel of equality and democracy, capitalist society actually negated these values. The much vaunted 'free market' was only free for the briefest of moments – until such time, in fact, as the fetters of feudalism were completely abolished and the masses of poverty-stricken men and women were wrested from the yoke of serfdom. At that stage, the latter were 'free' to sell their labour, and capitalism immediately evolved in the direction of centralism, monopoly and, later, the mammoth financial conglomerates which today squeeze out and destroy any democratic-individualist illusion! The freedom of the individual (social subject or economic subject, it matters not) before the law (legislative or economic) is a *glaring mystification*. As is the idea of autonomous culture or – worse still – of culture as a means of better understanding one's place in society.

And yet these deadly illusions refuse to disappear. They lie at the very heart of capitalist society, and are part of the rhetoric we are forced to swallow and memorise from our earliest schooldays. They represent an act of faith which is never questioned and, indeed, must never be called into question. The strength of these illusions grows with every conflict (where 'democracy leads the fight against autocracy') and with every election (where everything revolves around the 'the defence of democracy'). All this continues while society itself increasingly becomes a suffocating mechanism intent on grinding down individuals, the vulnerable classes and humanity as a whole. The more society becomes fascist and authoritarian (with all the characteristics of fascism, which does not imply only repression but, more importantly, the fostering of consent), the more it congratulates itself on being democratic.

Our political wing (which relates back to the theory and political battles of Marx and Engels, Lenin, and the Communist Party of Italy of the early twenties) – has always declared and demonstrated that *democracy is the most impregnable form of armour platform available for the development of capitalism; that fascism and democracy are diverse yet converging forms of a single domineering class; that fascism completes the process of intellectual and material disarmament initially undertaken by democracy (with the vital contribution of social democracy); and that in given historical periods capitalism turns to fascism as a means of defending and strengthening democracy.*

On its debut at the end of the Second World Butchery, our era has seen the victory of political totalitarianism and its economic equivalent (which derives from the structure of bourgeois relations in its imperialist phase): this totalitarianism may be an openly fascist dictatorship or it may assume the more insidious guise of democratic control. It matters not. It is an era in which the sprawling state monopolies and colossal economic and financial corporations rule the global roost. It is an era which has seen the militarization of our daily lives and, via a host of deftly organized channels, the formation of widespread consent. It is, therefore, the era in which democratic discourse and rhetoric has almost irresistibly taken the upper hand.

Revolutionary communists must then surge forward along the path laid down one hundred and fifty years ago, and lead the fight openly against the dominion of capital *in whatever shape or form it has assumed on the political level*. And they must be aware that democracy in all its shapes or forms is founded on an illusion, and that for that very reason is highly insidious. It is democracy which remains responsible for paralysing a worldwide proletariat whose long suffering masses are the direct victims of inequality and exploitation. And it is the capacity of the masses to understand and react which is – and will remain for some time – deadened by the illusions fostered by democracy.

During the time of elections (a lengthy period which, as it happens, increasingly keeps the capitalist world on tenterhooks) democracy must be de-mystified and pitted against the communist programme. And this programme can only be expressed in the theory, practice, tradition and experience of the international communist party.

In the dismal world of today, oozing with democracy, suffering, democratic rhetoric and the blood of oppressed staring masses, the capitalist mode of production (with all its incurable contradictions) will once again prove to be our best ally: all those individuals, groups and sectors of workers and classes who suffer material and ideological exploitation will be pushed to react and join the party. They will perceive that beneath the rhetoric of democracy is concealed an unavoidable truth: *this mode of production has come to the end of the road and it is time it was thrown in the dustbin of history.*

Bourgeois revolutions, like those of the eighteenth century, sweep on rapidly from success to success, surpassing one another in dramatic effects; men and things seem set in sparkling diamonds, ecstasy is the spirit of every day; but they are short-lived, soon reaching their climax, and a long hangover afflicts society until it learns soberly to assimilate the results of its periods of storm and stress. Proletarian revolutions, on the other hand, like those of the nineteenth century, constantly criticize themselves, continually interrupt their own progress, return to what seemed completed in order to start all over again, make a terrible and total mock of the half-measures, weaknesses and meannesses of their first attempts; they seem to overthrow their opponent only that he may draw new powers from the earth and rise up against them more gigantic than before, they recoil repeatedly from the indeterminate enormity of their own aims, till a situation is created from which retreat is impossible, and circumstances themselves cry: *Hic Rhodus, hic salta!*

(K. Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1852)

THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION AND THE INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' MOVEMENT

Embroiled in a like struggle for the social control of their own proletariat and that of their adversary, the ultra-bourgeois regimes governing the Israeli state and the National Palestinian Authority seemed for some time to have buried the question of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict beneath the rubble of continual backbiting and reciprocal provocation. The fact that the conflict is once again headline news proves for the umpteenth time that no solution will be found to the problems haunting the area – at least within the present framework – unless the plight of the Palestinian refugees and proletarians concentrated in that zone (a veritable sword of Damocles over the heads of the entire Middle Eastern bourgeoisie, both Arabic and Jewish) is dealt with less ambiguously and miserably than today.

It is obvious and apparent that Camp David I and the Oslo and Wye Plantation 'agreements', Camp David II and the latest 'verbal invitations' of Sharm el-Sheikh (a glaring admission of impotence concealed behind the vague verbal declarations of diplomats who are little more than putty in the hands of a self-interested American imperialism), have only proved temporary, stop-gap measures over the years.

The nail in the coffin for all residual national questions in Palestine – where, topping the historical development agenda, the Palestinian proletariat and multitudes would have fought alongside the national bourgeoisie for their own 'homeland' – was most certainly the 'Black September' in Amman (1970), even if this turning point had been on the cards for several years.

The Palestinian movement in Amman (in the sham nation of Jordan, an Anglo-Saxon imperialist invention inhabited for the most part by Palestinians who, in contrast to the wealthy State-governing minority community of Bedouins, all stand on the lowest rung of the social and material ladder) was led by weak and inconsequential,

bourgeois and *petit bourgeois* nationalist fringe groups. But it possessed a solid mass base and an organization which had become representative in the defensive material struggles against savage exploitation and acute poverty.

In this context, instead of directing the fight of the revolutionary masses against the regime of King Hussein, the PLO first sought an agreement with this regime and then, in accordance with conditions negotiated, withdrew from the city, thus facilitating the massacre of rebels which ensued.

"The Middle-East", we wrote in our Italian newspaper Il Programma Comunista (no. 17, 1970) at the time, "is literally imprisoned inside a strait jacket which has been tailor-made in the cynical, brutal and ferocious interests of imperialism, and its tragic destiny will forever consist of seeking to wriggle itself out of this vile garment. The area resembles less a mosaic of nations (which neither exist in ten minor formats nor in one major format) than of States fiercely bent on protecting their own mean interests: cut from exactly the same cloth, each state in turn is snipped away at by this or that great power in the struggle for access to oil wells or cotton fields; each rants and raves for independence, but this is denied by their own dependence on world markets or the supply of arms on the part of world powers; each is at once brimming with pride and yet humiliated by its pawn-like condition of servitude to whoever happens to be calling the shots at any given time; each is governed by a greedy, parasitic pseudo-bourgeoisie or by a feudal – nay, tribal – wrecking crew whose pockets are lined with ancient gold; all of them are in service to interests as big as the planet itself or to powers-that-be which are even more cynical than their selfsame governors; and not a single one of them proclaims a new mode of production, to say nothing of a new social order."

This is not the place to dwell on the process

underlying the actual formation and constitution of the Middle Eastern States, an ultra-sensitive area linking three different continents. After the fall of the Ottoman empire, the area was sketched out anew at the end of the First World War by imperialist powers intent on the conquest and control of new markets and strategically important sources of raw materials. This process was aggravated still further following the conclusion of the Second World War and the birth of the state of Israel in 1948, albeit in the presence of national freedom movements which had begun to find their feet around this time. The creation of Israel marked the beginning of American control over the area. American imperialism had now replaced its much weakened British counterpart and, in the years to follow, Israel's policy of progressive territorial expansion effectively sanctioned the increasingly widespread domination of the United States at the expense of rivals new and old: the latter could only blather on pathetically behind the fig leaf of worthless UN resolutions.

Pending a return to the subject at a later date, readers are invited to consider our Party's considerations on this matter in nos.12 and 13/1965 of *Il Programma Comunista*, entitled *La solita babele del Medio Oriente (The same old Middle-Eastern Babel)*. Even at that time – over and beyond the official declarations (whatever their source, high or low) of 'mutual fraternity' and the plans for 'pan-Arabism' – we stressed the chronic impotence and inconsistencies of the ex-colonial bourgeois classes.

"Thanks to the combined intervention of the two main victors to emerge from the carnage of the Second World War," we wrote in the first of the two articles published in 1965, *"the anti-colonial revolution in the Middle East, as indeed elsewhere, has proved far less revolutionary than might have been wished for, both for general historical reasons and with a view to the development of those countries involved. If the newly instated powers-that-be are not created in the wake of the surging movements of the exploited masses and are not upheld by the combined armed strength of the same, then an 'out and out' bourgeois revolution in the era of imperialism is even*

less likely than in the past. Feudal monarchies in many Middle Eastern countries have, therefore, enacted a relatively smooth transformation into bourgeois monarchies and continue to rule under a new guise. Yet even in those cases where a monarchy has been replaced by a republic, the process was less a result of mass political movements than limited military revolts." Hence there was no deep seated, radical bourgeois revolution in the Middle East and the *"ties with the worldwide centres of imperialism mean that the local bourgeoisie is practically powerless: its policy of 'non-alignment' [the reference is to Nasser's pseudo-socialist policy, ed. note] is an implicit admission that it is at the mercy of an east-west divide and is compelled to swing from one side to the other."*

During the crucial period from 1967 to 1970 all the skulking skeletons finally came out of the cupboard and, once again, a war was required to untie the remaining knots. *"What kind of independence and what kind of peace can be hoped for,"* we wrote at the time of the Six Day War in *Il Programma Comunista* no.11/1967, emphasising that the interests and positions of the national and international imperialist powers were what was really at stake, *"in countries whose pipelines pump life-giving oxygen into the arteries of global capitalist piracy? It pays the upholders of regimes in these countries – the newly established bourgeoisie, the nouveaux riches or the semi-feudal yeomanry – to pay lip service to whomsoever detains the keys to the coffers, stealing from neighbours (members of the same race perhaps) whatever their financiers and masters dangle in front of their insatiable, vulture-like eyes."*

Bolstered by its full scale military and information apparatus, American diplomacy was extremely active during the post-war period, promoting enterprises aimed at consolidating still further the influence it had acquired in an area whose role in the dispute between imperialist powers was becoming increasingly important. *"The dollar gangsters,"* we wrote in *Il Programma Comunista* no.14/1958, *"are primarily concerned with preventing the formation of the one great State which would meet with the aspirations of the pan-Arabic movement. They are bent on maintaining the military*

alliances which are the main obstacle to the unification of the Middle-Eastern populations. [...] The Arab countries are currently in the same situation as Italy during the Risorgimento: a population united by an indivisible historical evolution, the same language, customs and traditions, has been split up into a dozen separate states. [...] The demand for a united state (a cause to which Garibaldi, Kossuth and Bolivar had once nailed their colours), the suppression of political divisiveness and separatism, is not a communist or proletarian aim: it is national and democratic. It is wholly part of the national bourgeois democratic revolution. A fully aware proletariat is not interested in the formation of the national State in itself but in what the transition brings about in terms of social change. It is interested in the dialectical openings of the 'powerful economic factors' which Lenin saw as being hemmed in and immobilized by anachronistic political structures lingering on in semi-feudal and backward countries."

Only a coherent, armed revolutionary national movement could, then, break into tiny fragments the vase which was so carefully being pieced together during the game of agreements and inter-imperialistic frictions. And only this would have merited the support of the proletarian masses – not, certainly, with a view to sorting out the national question, but that of the historical development of the entire proletarian movement at international level. When military solutions are not forthcoming, diplomats are called to do their legal best at democratic summits: around the conference table, words are carefully weighed as delegates barter agreements with the most astute brigand of the moment. This is anathema to proletarian movements, and solutions obtained in this manner are inevitably of a reactionary nature.

In no. 16/1958 of *Il Programma Comunista*, we wrote: "As we fully expected, once the Middle Eastern problem became fodder for diplomatic negotiators, the only epilogue possible would be a cynical, laughable fraud. And a fraud especially for the young Arab States. Many of them – especially those who produced essential raw materials, like Iraq, Tunisia, Morocco and so on – were concerned about losing pur-

chasers and divided in their interests and historical traditions. They also feared losing control over the frenzied and untrustworthy masses in their midst. All of the States were ready to bow down before the first banker who was 'charitably' disposed to providing life-giving oxygen in the form of ready cash. In their greed, the budding bourgeois Koran-worshipping classes put to one side their mannered 'anti-colonialism' and bartered the withdrawal of 'foreign soldiers' for the triumphant arrival of cash which was no less foreign in nature. And in so doing, the pretended harbingers of the revolutionary holy war appropriated the principles of 'non-interference' and 'mutual respect of national sovereignty and integrity' – to all effects a defence of the status quo, itself the expression and product of imperial domination and the overturning of the much mooted desire for a united Arab State stretching from Western Asia to North Africa."

In increasingly dynamic fashion, the interests of the new national Middle Eastern bourgeois classes were thus engulfed by the economic and political interests of imperialist countries. The former were drawn into various spheres of influence and deployed all together in such a way as to defend the requirements of worldwide capitalism against the pressures exerted by the disinherited Arab – and especially Palestinian – masses.

In this context, the birth of the Palestine Liberation Organization (with its own diplomatic and public organization, as well as a military wing dealing with internal policing and, externally, with diplomatic questions and negotiations on the part of its leadership) comes across as the birth of an official business committee representing the interests and affairs of a Palestinian bourgeoisie whose needs and requirements, forever to remain of prime importance, took precedence over the spontaneous initiatives of the suffering masses living in the refugee camps and filthy hovels dotted throughout the area.

The PLO has always behaved as if it were the governing organization of a national bourgeois class which, apart from anything else, was coward and inconsequential as a result of its relationships with the interna-

tional powers responsible for its selfsame creation, and to whom it must have felt indebted. A glance at the period covering the much haggled-over history of the infamous UN resolution no. 242, 1967 (called 'Land in exchange of peace', the resolution was supposed to sanction a return to the pre-June 1967 borders and would have seen Israel having to renounce its gains in territories – Jordan, the Gaza and Golan – which had been occupied after the war) until the setting up of the Palestinian National Authority (which, last year, would have unilaterally sanctioned the birth of the State of Palestine had it not been forced to run off with its tail between its legs after the major imperialist powers – including Russia – had denied so much 'unilateral decision-making!') reveals a straightforward rejection of the material needs of the Palestinian proletariat.

"The diplomatic solution," we wrote in no. 2/1988 of our Italian journal, *"would reduce to the creation of a mini-State located within the borders occupied by Israeli military forces: a non-vital entity condemned ad infinitum to an economic and political dependence on Israel and Jordan – a Middle Eastern Bantustan which only the unrivalled hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie could hope to pass off as a recognition of the 'Palestinian right to self-determination' or something resembling a home; a shameful harlequinade destined to perpetuate the arguments of war afflicting the area, and not those of peace. Any party or organisation professing 'solidarity' with the Palestinians cannot abide by such 'solutions' (while all democratic parties have done so) without betraying the cause they claim to be fighting for. It is no coincidence that diplomatic bodies the world over, bearers of diverse and often antithetical plans, are manoeuvring towards a solution of this kind: all are anxious to prevent the Fertile Crescent from sooner or later becoming the stage for social as well as political explosions, and all wish to guarantee the allied or rival imperialist powers – responsible for allotting due spheres of influence – access to the much coveted gravy train which can be tapped into to satisfy economic, political and military appetites."*

The events in Amman in 1970 had made visible a phenomenon whose genetic make-

up was already inscribed (that is, a confederation to all effects between the PLO and the Arab and Israeli bourgeoisies *against* proletarian masses in the area), and history would materially confirm the significance of this: indeed, on several different occasions the Palestinian proletariat was to pay dearly for answering a call to sacrifice which was never geared to its own ends.

In a revolt to defend general living standards, the Libyan and Palestinian proletariat put up a heroic resistance in Tall El Zaatar in 1976: Syrian and Phalangist troops, actively assisted by the Israeli navy (which controlled access to the sea) and the PLO army (which exercised its 'right to non-interference' and thus refused to intervene: in reality, supine lip service was being paid to dictates requiring that 'constructive' diplomatic relations prevailed and that everything in the neighbourhood garden remained hunky dory) ensured that the revolt ended in a bloodbath. Six years later the Sabra and Chatila camps massacre at the hands of the Israeli army marked the end of the siege on Beirut, after PLO troops had abandoned the terrain to the 'international peacekeeping forces' of the UN. This was a further demonstration of the primary importance the Palestinian bourgeoisie – by now a placid commercial player in the lucrative markets of the Arab States in which it had fully integrated itself – attached to the social control of the proletariat. In line with this objective was the instrumental request for national independence, a much bartered request which was by now fully part of the faint-hearted, unilateral or multilateral diplomatic games being played. After the PLO officially repudiated violence as a means to achieving their objective, and after what amounted to an act of mutual recognition with Israel, the request for independence was reduced to a mere territorial sales purchase agreement whose final price necessarily covered the costs involved in controlling the increasingly disinherited proletarian Palestinian masses.

Although the vultures of international diplomacy recognized the self-styled Palestinian Autonomy – with its leopard-like presence in a territory including the Gaza Strip and parts of Jordan, surrounded

by army-protected Israeli settlements – , little was done to halt the spiralling process of blood and misery among the poverty-stricken Palestinian masses. And this process continues to this very day as the recent events which took place after Sharon's provocative and Israeli-orchestrated visit to the Mosque area last September demonstrated.

Another recent episode serves to confirm the fact that the PLO is fundamental for the bourgeoisie of the Middle East and the whole world, and that mutilated Palestinian plebeians are regarded as nothing more than cannon fodder by their leaders: on occasion of the furious military reprisals of the Israeli army following the lynching of two Israeli reserves captured by the Palestinians, the headquarters of the UN and the 'enemy' Arafat were warned off three hours before the Israeli military command attacked, thus enabling them to seek safety and continue to play their part in the deceitful comedy while the civilian population was being fiercely bombarded.

The current framework of economic and social relationships and the simultaneous desire to maintain the status quo means that any solution to the Palestinian question is necessarily illusory and artificial. The facts have taken upon themselves to pass sentence on this matter, and suitable pretexts have been found ready at hand (for example, the dispute over the status of east Jerusalem, a city whose importance is less a question of religion than of a pivotal guiding role for communications and traffic – both for the Israeli and Palestinian bourgeoisie).

Israel will never be able to voluntarily renounce its occupation of territories it believes are 'useful' in terms of vital resources – first and foremost among these, water – and military control. Consequently, it will never abandon its policy of segregation and discrimination of those Arabs living within its borders because this form of subjugation is functional to Israeli capital's hankering after surplus value. For its own part, the PLO cannot wholly renounce riding the tiger of a newly created artificial State because the economic crisis continues to exert increasingly intense pressure on

the Palestinian masses and the commerce and profits of the *petit bourgeoisie* and the middle classes.

For the other Arab countries – and especially Jordan – the primary objective is to circumscribe the vigorous uprisings and rebellions of the poverty stricken masses in their midst: turbulence should, if possible, be limited to areas outside their own borders, and the energies of the masses should be channelled into religious or national causes. It was precisely the fear that contamination among the starving and exploited proletarian masses might lead to one or two crowns being toppled that determined the outcome of the Cairo summit last October (after the verbal 'ceasefire' of Sharm el-Sheikh had immediately been given the lie by the slaughtering of young Arabs used as cannon fodder).

The summit invited the 'U.N. to intervene to protect the Palestinians' and asked for 'an international tribunal to investigate into criminal acts carried out by Israel.' In substance, this was nothing more than a plea for help by the Middle Eastern bourgeoisie to the worldwide bourgeoisie to defend the status quo and, therefore, their own regimes.

Without further ado – time and space are of the essence – attention must also be drawn to America's need to strengthen its control over the Middle East in the wake of worldwide imperialist interests in the area and the collapse of Soviet imperialism. The Gulf War had allowed the USA to reinforce its own military presence in the area in order to defend the financial and petroleum interests of American capitalism. After the war, the USA became the torch bearer of a strategic alliance between Israel and Turkey, and in so doing strengthened their own military and diplomatic potential by coupling (the new ace card of Yankee strategy) military power with monopolistic control over water supplies to the whole Middle East.

This *modus operandi* led to mounting instability among those countries in the area which came under the 'sphere of American national security' (Syria and Iran were already casting longing glances in the direction of European – and particularly German – capitalism), and the

American administration – having also noted the failure of the preceding policy of ‘dual containment’ in Iraq and Iran – was forced to compensate for this with some kind of stabilizing activity. Hence its efforts to speed up the peacemaking process between Israelis and Palestinians: in establishing peace between the two, the Arab bourgeois class would have felt more psychologically indebted to pro-American policymakers, and rival imperialist powers would have been kept at bay.

Indeed, American imperialist ambitions required the division of Middle-Eastern countries, and the financial, political and military support of the Israeli-Turkish alliance was a continuation of this. However, in order that this policy of division might pay off, it had once again to be set off against some form of ‘moderating’ intervention (also because the stability of the axis and its distant ‘away match’ potential over the entire ‘Eurasia’ region had to be reinforced). This intervention would be directed towards involving the majority of Arab countries in US policy (most were more or less forced to divert the pressure of their respective proletariats through the rhetoric of solidarity with their Palestinian brothers) and persuading them to be more accommodating. The failure of this initiative demonstrates that when a worldwide economic crisis aggravates inter-imperialistic tensions on a global scale, the dynamics imparted by the material forces of the economic underworld of bourgeois society are increasingly loathe to remain within the ambit of ordinary ‘international relations.’

During the imperialistic phase of capital, the bourgeoisie needs to wage increasingly destructive wars against what are, essentially, the proletarian masses, firstly in the coloured continents, and then in their own imperialist metropolises. This irreversible process can only be interrupted by a class war which the international proletariat, guided by its Party, will have to declare against a permanently antagonistic worldwide bourgeoisie whose first line of defence is political and economic domination.

Now that the cycle of purely national struggles and fights for Palestine and the whole Middle East has revealed itself

definitively bereft of historical prospects, *the Palestinian proletarian masses are faced with one solution*, and it is a solution which may also lead to the end of oppression and national discrimination: *the struggle for international proletarian revolution*, beginning with the overthrowing of *all States* in the region – from Israel to the various republics and Arab emirates – and the expulsion of the imperialist brigands behind the political and economic exploitation of the Middle-Eastern masses. In such struggle, under the material force of things the proletariat of other imperialist countries will necessarily be involved and in such struggle the Middle Eastern proletariat will have to unite itself if the revolution is to triumph on a worldwide scale.

Our present address to the Palestinian proletariat can be no different to that which our Party recommended thirty years ago in the wake of the Amman massacre, and it is with those selfsame words of yesterday – albeit tinged with even greater hatred (if possible) of today’s putrid society – that we use today those very same words: *“The fedayeen express the fully justifiable wrath of a plebeian class which has been mutilated by the road roller of bourgeois ‘peace’. But what they can expect from the heroism born of their own desperation? They themselves are the product of a vile game which has been conducted behind the backs of peoples (and at their own expense) who have been conquered or lost at the gaming tables of capitalism during the feverish race to rule the world: would ‘Palestine for the Palestinians’ prove more liberating than Jordan? They are martyrs of the collective drama, and its plot cannot be untangled – this is not their fault – as it currently stands by means of a society which deemed it thus and continues to do so. They have neither ‘brothers’ nor ‘cousins’ in States – nearby or far away – they had naively decided they could count upon: not in Cairo, not in Damascus, not in Moscow and not in Peking. They will have brothers the day on which the European and American metropolitan-based proletarians of a thieving world put an end to their cringing, shameful servitude to false priests proclaiming the myth of ‘peace’, ‘dialogue’ and a ‘solidarity’ made up of misbegotten hymns and mawkish petitions. They will have brothers when these selfsame proletar -*

ians (they who have inherited the few last - ing conquests of a finally defunct bourgeois society and not its wealth of ignominies) finally free themselves from the dual yoke of capital and its treacherous lackeys, and joyfully accept the fraternal task of giving to those who have never received. They will have them when the Middle East ceases to make distinctions between Jordanians and Lebanese, Syrians and Iraqis, Egyptians and Saudis and recognizes them instead as proletarians who know nothing of frontiers and reject the deceitful concepts of 'race' and 'nation'; when the enemy is identified in term of class and not 'race' or 'nation'; and when they unite as a single 'people' - a single 'unprejudiced' army - to sweep away those cops and robbers, both foreign and

local, who continue to feed off their misfortunes! Sadly, as things stand, a scenario of this kind is a distant prospect, and it does not depend on us. But it must be planned for, and if it is not, then the massacres will continue, the wound will fester and the truce will remain what it has been for the last fifty years: an undying agony. It is high time that this was understood, proletarians, if their cannons aren't to call the shots yet another time! More than ever before, you have nothing to lose and a whole world to gain."¹

¹ "Non c'è via di salvezza, nel quadro dell'ordine esistente, per le vittime del cannibalismo imperialistico" in 'Il Programma Comunista' no.17/1970.

Workers of Britain, America, France, Italy, Japan, Germany, and other countries! Listen to the representatives of the millions of the peoples of the East in revolt, who have taken an oath to rise up and help you in your fight, and who look for fraternal aid from you in their fight. Disregarding centuries of bondage and enslavement, we turn to you with faith in your fraternal feelings, with confidence that your victory will mean the liberation of mankind, without distinction of color, religion, or nationality. May confidence be awakened in you as well that ours is a struggle for a new and better life, for the development of the peoples of the East on the same foundations of labor and fraternity on which you want to build your life. May you hear the thunder with which tens and hundreds of million of working people in Asia and Africa respond to our oath. And may this crashing be answered by the thunderclaps of your fight for the common liberation of all the toilers! Long live the unity of the workers of all countries with the laboring masses of Asia and Africa! Long live the world revolution of all the oppressed! Long live the victory over the world of oppression, exploitation, and violence.

Long live to the Communist International!

(From "Appeal to the Workers of Europe, America, and Japan" - Baku, 1920)

THE COURSE OF CAPITALISM: USA

America, America. "Experts", opinion-makers, and apologists for the capitalist economy, amplified by the drumbeat of the mass media, have been unveiling the U.S. productivity juggernaut over the past decade, jumping on every newly-disgorged fact to hail its performance as a "boom", "record-breaking", or a "miracle". Most significant, for these people, is the continuous growth, never missing a beat, which, beginning in 1991, finally in January 2000 became longer than the previous golden age, the Sixties. This dynamic seems all the more exalted because it has taken place while violent economic and financial turbulence was rocking the rest of the world, from East Asia to Latin America, by way of Mexico and Russia, not to mention the "great" Japan (which has been tumbling ruinously downward into an almost permanent slump) and the Old Continent, languishing in a stagnation from which it only now seems to be emerging.

As for the renewed American "miracle", the professors of bourgeois economics, in their attempts to (first of all) explain it adequately to themselves, have not been able (even after spilling rivers of ink) to come up with anything better than the following: the prodigious feat has its basis in the so-called flexibility and deregulation of the entire production system, the motor of growth, onto which was then grafted, as the foot on the accelerator, the so-called "new" economy (raised to a new theory or model of capitalist development), thanks to which, as the most ardent partisans would have it, the cyclical character of the production system has been transcended. The professors, moreover, use the same paradigm to explain the condition of the rest of the West, which has thus far missed out on the "new economy". Marxism has always denounced all the bourgeois economic theories that have come and gone through history, among which the most fetid and foul-smelling was Stalinist theory, which dressed up capitalism in the disguise of communism. Marxism always unmasked these theories at their outset, before history came along to confirm the critique in timely fashion. For the rest, bourgeois theories are nothing but the product of the development of capitalism, and the more capitalism becomes parasitic and putrid, and the more its contradictions intensify, the more these theories become vulgar, muddled, and impotent. The latest theory is no exception, even when rebaptized with the recycled name "New Economy". But our interest here is not so much to discredit the "new" rubbish, based on nothing more than the surface novelties of capitalist relations of production, as to explain the basis of American growth and its indissoluble link to the chronic world crisis into which capitalism sank in 1974-75. In so doing, we will obviously also be unmasking the "new" theories.

Before getting into the analysis, it is necessary to point out that while we must focus our attention on "internal" factors of the U.S. economy, it is also essential to take "external" factors into account, and specifically how they link up with the world market and the inter-imperialist balance of forces. We must also take care not to separate economic from military pre-eminence, and from the military intervention increasingly required to maintain the economy, etc. etc.

Industrial Production

It is absolutely superfluous to note the importance of the development of industrial production, whether for investigating the health of the capitalist economy and specifically of the capitalist accumulation process (the goal and the motor of the very development of capitalism), or for confirming the Marxist theory of the law of the deceleration of the rhythms of growth and thus of the tendential fall of the average rate of profit. The bourgeoisie, spurred onward by capital's vital need to valorize itself in perennial antagonism with all the other capitals, which in the imperialist epoch and in a phase of advancing crisis has remained even more acute, is unconsciously compelled to try to make sense of their facts in ever shorter periods: a year, six months, three months, one month, day by day.

Marxist doctrine has always avoided a quarrel over such data, which mean little or nothing

1. In working up the data for 1974-1999, based on material from the OECD, the figures for 1999 were not yet definitive. However much they might have fluctuated, their influence on the period under consideration is, understandably, minimal.

2. Once the euphoria of postwar reconstruction was over, from 1974 onward the rhythms of growth in the West, i.e. of mature and senile capitalism, could only settle into feeble increases. As a result, the bourgeoisie considers growth of slightly more than 3% a great achievement, or in fact a boom.

3. See "Capitale a temperatura di fusione", in our Italian monthly "il programma comunista", no. 1-2/2000.

because they express a development which, as such, is not only limited in time but which mainly shows the influence of merely contingent elements. What therefore interests us are not short, and still less very short periods, but rather long historical cycles.

The average annual rates of growth of American industrial production from 1859 to 1999 are: 1859-1872, 7.1%; 1872-1913, 6.1%; 1913-1974, 4%; 1974-1999, 2.9%¹. In the 1990-1999 period, using 1990 as a base of 100, total growth was 38.62%, or an annual average rate of 3.7%. (see Table 1)

All this shows that: 1) the law of the decelerating rhythm of growth has been fully confirmed; 2) based on the average rate of the last decade of the 20th century, we can state with complete certainty that in this period we are not dealing with any productive "boom"². The latter point, moreover, is strengthened (when considering short cycles) by a comparison with the earlier period of continuous expansion 1960-1969, in which the annual average rate of growth of 5.7% was 2% higher.

It should be pointed out that the law of the inevitable deceleration of the rhythms of growth and thus of the tendencial fall of the average rate of profit is in no way contradicted even when – as precisely underscored by short cycles – the fall of the average rate of profit is temporarily halted or even reversed, as we see in the 1990-1999 period, when compared to the previous decade 1980-1989, in which the average rate of growth was 3%.

Thus while this growth, though higher than in the rest of the West and higher than in the U.S. itself in the 80's, is *in no way a production boom*, we must point out, on the other hand, that it has been taking place in the context of a henceforth *chronic world overproduction* from which the United States cannot be exempt. This is confirmed (as in other ways, e.g. the rhythm of the centralization of capital)³ by the rates of plant utilization or productive capacity, which was 80.6% of the entire American capital plant in 1999 (see Table 2).

That this rate refers to an increased productive capacity is irrelevant; the peculiar characteristic of the capitalist mode of production, distinguishing it from

earlier modes, is production for production's sake, and therefore the immanent instinct of a production without limits. Spurred by the insatiable hunger for surplus value, capital also requires the consumption (or utilization) of the inanimate part of the productive forces (machines, factories) to be at the highest possible intensity. Thus it suffers when the swamp of the market restructures its insatiable

instincts and constrains it to lower capacity utilization, which means a lower volume of products and thus a smaller mass of surplus value or profit. It follows that the threshold of 80.6% is already overproduction, unless one believes the U.S. to be in a production regime without inventory, i.e. the fable of "just in time". In this regard, as a further confirmation of this framework on a world scale, we should underscore the tendency toward a general increase in the volume of inventory (an increase which is one of the elements which individuates the crisis in the transition from prosperity to the crisis itself). From 1975

Table I. Indices of production

1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
98,9	97,0	100,0	103,4	109,1	114,4	119,4	127,1	132,4	137,1
	-1,92	3,09	3,40	5,51	4,86	4,37	6,45	4,17	3,55

Source: Federal Reserve, 5.15.2000

Table 2. Productive Capacity and Capacity Utilization

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Productive capacity	120,2	122,3	124,7	127,2	131,2	137,4	144,8	152,5	161,8	169,9
Capacity Utilization %	82,3	79,3	80,2	81,3	83,1	83,3	82,5	83,3	81,8	80,6

Source: Federal Reserve, 5.15.2000

to 1990 inventory increased more than fourfold⁴ and recent data also show their tendency to increase in the decade now ending.

When we speak of overproduction, we refer to a general condition of the relation between consumption and production, in which the crisis phase and general paralysis have not yet been entered, and yet the productive forces are retained, by the absorptive capacity of the market, from fully expressing their potentiality. In such conditions, it appears superficially that overproduction does not exist. And this is made even more misleading by the fact that in such a phase some sectors, such as those which are "virgin" for the market (and capitalism is compelled to constantly create new ones), are in a state of productive euphoria and promising expansion. It is obvious that if the market is able to absorb 100 and is already absorbing 100, the "new" products, in order to be absorbed, must be substituted for the "old" ones, thus determining an accumulation of inventory and then a fall in production of the latter, unless the market's capacity for consumption is artificially increased for a time. But we will treat this problem later.

To better understand the complex dynamic of capitalist development, from the side under investigation here, (production), we must deepen the analysis and try to verify if there are in fact "new" sectors (which, as stated above, capitalism is periodically constrained to create, and which its apologists hail each time as a new economic system) and, if they indeed exist, how much relevance and influence they have on the general movement.

Given that this is a direct reference to the so-called "new economy", we should make it clear that we are not referring to everything that goes by that name, first of all to the performance of the stock markets, which have determined its freshly-minted and inflated use, nor to commercial aspects such as e-business, e-commerce or Net-economy, all of which have nothing to do with the production of value. Thus what interests us, and is *really* important, is only the production of goods, equipment or of final consumption, once we have defined the "new technologies" of the moment,⁵ on which the Internet economy bases its claims.

On the basis of U.S. statistical data (cf. sources cited), the industrial production of 1) computers and office equipment, 2) communications equipment, 3) semi-conductors (including the related electronic components) which we are synthesizing with the term "new", represents 28.93% of the entire growth of production, within the overall 37.1% for the period 1992-1999, using 1992 as a base of 100. Thus, working out the percentages, we see that the rest of industry (including mining, electricity and gas) has been growing at 26.367% (whereas the "new" sectors have grown by ca. 900%) with an average annual growth rate of 3.4%, higher than the other advanced industrial countries. Even taking into account the millennium bug, the new sector contributes significantly to American growth and could contribute even more in coming years, for two reasons: a) the world market is not yet saturated; b) the U.S. produces from a quasi-monopolistic position.

We have used the expression "contributes" (to growth) in order to underscore, (and thus avoid any misunderstanding) that the New Economy is not the "locomotive", and that, from the productive point of view (and, as we shall also see, from the technological point of view as well), it is not the cause of the so-called American boom (a boom whose existence we moreover deny).

The Productivity of Labor and the Fateful Technological Revolution

The increase of production obliges us to ask if this is determined by a strong or sustained increase in the productivity of labor, one based in turn on a revolution in the productive process under the impact of technological innovation. Our earlier assertion that productive capacity is being used at an average of

4. B. Berberoglu, *L'eredità dell'impero*, 1995.

5. We are not considering biotechnologies because for now their development is just at the beginnings: \$60 billion on a world scale.

Table 3. Rates of Variation in Hourly Productivity, per Operative, etc. in Manufacture

USA	Japan	Germany	France	Italy	UK	
Hourly Production	30,78	26,20	28,38	36,25	22,81	19,02
Total Production	31,7	7,58	1,61	15,64	12,95	4,46
Production per Operative	33,85	15,62	23,78	34,96	21,58	19,22
Total Hours	0,76	-14,66	-20,77	-15,10	-8,08	-12,16
Employed	-1,52	-6,89	-17,85	-14,42	-7,14	-12,23

Source: Our elaboration of data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (Apr. 28, 2000). For Germany data are available only for the western part of the country.

Table 4. Current account (mld\$ US)

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Balance on goods	-109,0	-74,0	-96,1	-132,6	-166,1	-173,7	-191,2	-196,6	-246,8	-345,5
Balance on services	30,1	45,8	60,4	63,6	69,1	77,7	89,1	90,7	79,9	80,5
Balance on goods and services	-78,8	-28,2	-35,6	-68,9	-97,0	-95,9	-102,1	-105,9	-166,8	-264,9
Balance on income	28,5	24,1	22,9	23,9	16,6	20,5	18,8	6,1	-6,2	-18,4
Unilateral current transfers, net	-26,6	10,7	-35,0	-37,6	-38,2	-34,0	-40,0	-40,7	-44,0	-48,0
Balance on current account	-76,9	6,6	-47,7	-82,6	-118,6	-109,4	-123,3	-140,5	-217,1	-331,4

Fonte: USA, Bureau of Economic Analysis, luglio 2000

is confirmed in the data. Based on American statistics, we see that the hourly productivity of labor in U.S. manufacture (Table 3) grew by 30.78%⁶ in the period 1990-1998 and is behind France (36.25%) and Sweden (43.68%), a bit higher than Germany and Japan, and significantly higher than Italy; bringing up the rear, at 19.02%, is England.

American figures are not only in the middle of the chart but, according to a deeper analysis breaking down figures by sector,⁷ once the impact of productivity growth in the production of computers themselves is subtracted from the general data, productivity for the rest of manufacture remains lower than in the years 1950-1972. Thus on one hand, in the production of computers, which we can extend to the "new" sector, the productivity of labor is off the charts, while on the other hand this increase remains circumscribed within that sector. In other words, *the new technologies do not really represent a significant technological innovation in the production process as a whole.*

Moreover, even without considering the unspoken assumptions, the supposed supremacy of U.S. productivity is contradicted by facts which are, in reality, irrefutable: on one hand, the

6. From the same source, in the 1980-1990 period, hourly productivity grew by 36.02%. Dealing solely with the U.S., the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in another study dated 5/4/2000, provides the following data for the period 1990-1999: for the business sector, 19.87%; for the non-farm business sector, 19.09%; for the non-financial corporations, 25.1%. The OECD, in its annual country report on the United States (May 1999), indicates the following annual average rates for non-financial corporations: 1973-97, 1.7%; 1992-97, 2%; 1995, 1.2%; 1996, 2.8%; 1997, 2.6%; 1998 (estimate), 2.9%. While we cannot be sure of the uniformity of the data, they clearly show (as underscored even more forcefully in the following footnote) that we are in no way dealing with a strong surge of productivity in general.

7. Cf. the journal "Surplus", no. 6/2000, pp. 106-107, containing the table from a study undertaken by R. Gordon (1999): "Ac-

ording to Gordon [in disagreement with the "New Economists"] there is no real evidence that the increase in productivity [...] is something spread through all sectors. On the contrary, all the recovery in productivity growth can be attributed to the manufacture of durable goods; the rest of the manufacturing sector and the other sectors, in the best of hypotheses, remain mired in the slow rhythms of the productivity slowdown". Going into even more detail, Gordon shows that, of the branches of durable goods, it is the production of computers (which do not constitute more than 1.5% of GDP!) which is propelling all the others, which, taken by themselves, are doing worse than in the 1972-1995 period. With all possible corrections for randomness, Gordon confirms a real recovery in labor productivity growth to the levels of the 50's and 60's. But this is due not to the use of computers, but rather to their production.

80% might give the reader the impression that labor productivity has increased so enormously that capital has been compelled to reduce plant utilization. This hypothesis is based on the erroneous identification of productive capacity with hourly productivity, and would prevent from seeing that precisely the opposite is taking place: capital, compelled to reduce plant utilization, is doing everything possible to squeeze labor power harder, seeking on one hand to prolong the working day and, on the other hand, to further increase labor productivity through the intensification of labor. But let us see how this

increased commercial confrontation with Europe over a vast array of products and, on the other hand, even if influenced by the overvaluation of the dollar, the increasingly negative slide of the U.S. balance of payments (Table 4) which in 1999 was \$345.5 billion and which worsened even more in 2000.

It is superfluous to point out that, based on what has been elaborated up to this point, we have kicked away one of the basic pillars of the theory of the "New Economy", namely that advanced technologies have not merely greatly accelerated the productivity of labor in general but that they constitute the basis of a new industrial revolution beginning in "information" and then exploding into the Internet. The bourgeois and even more so their hirelings are so conceited in the belief that their system is eternal that, not understanding the meaning of the term "revolution", they tack it onto any surface movement of the putrescent capitalist sea.

The Internal Market and the Euphoria of Consumption

Up to this point we have been looking at only one aspect of the question, that of production. Let us now look at the other fundamental aspect of the cycle of reproduction of capital, namely circulation.

According to the IMF, from 1992 to 1999 (Table 5), private consumption in the U.S. increased by 34.08%, final internal demand increased by 35.76%, and total demand increased by 38.61%. The other advanced countries, as shown in the table, are at best increasing consumption at one-third of American levels.

The development of capitalism is indissolubly linked to the birth and expansion of the world market, but for each individual capitalist state the development of the internal market is of fundamental importance. A stagnant internal market, or one in recession, rebounds onto production, except theoretically in the case of a powerful surge in external trade and thus of exports, which obviously cannot be created with a magic wand and based solely on the competitiveness of the country's own products.

If, in relation to the other advanced capitalist countries, the U.S. is leading the way in the increase of production because their internal market (the largest in the world) is much more active, for the moment we can only note that this growth in production is accompanied by a corresponding growth in internal demand: these two statistical facts, however, are not comparable, and the latter ones do not tell us the reason for the growth (in the same way that the in-

Table 5. GDP and Internal Consumption (% variation from previous period)

Real GDP	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	1992-99
US	3,1	2,7	4,0	2,7	3,6	4,2	4,3	4,2	32,68
Japan	1,0	0,3	0,6	1,5	5,0	1,6	-2,5	0,3	7,91
Germany	2,2	-1,1	2,3	1,7	0,8	1,5	2,2	1,5	11,61
France	1,5	-0,9	2,1	1,8	1,1	2,0	3,4	2,7	14,49
Italy	0,8	-0,9	2,2	2,9	1,1	1,8	1,5	1,4	11,28
Total Demand									
US	3,1	3,3	4,4	2,5	3,7	4,5	5,4	5,1	38,61
Japan	0,4	0,1	1,0	2,3	5,7	0,2	-3,1	0,6	7,21
Germany	2,8	-1,0	2,2	1,7	0,3	0,7	2,5	2,2	11,92
France	0,8	-1,6	2,1	1,7	0,7	0,8	4,0	2,6	11,55
Italy	0,9	-5,1	1,7	2,0	0,9	2,5	2,9	2,5	8,35
Private Consumption									
US	2,9	3,4	3,8	3,0	3,2	3,4	4,9	5,3	34,08
Japan	2,1	1,2	1,9	2,1	2,9	0,5	-0,5	1,2	11,94
Germany	2,8	0,2	1,0	2,1	0,8	0,7	2,3	2,1	12,62
France	0,9	-0,4	1,2	1,2	1,3	0,2	3,6	2,3	10,72
Italy	1,9	-3,7	1,5	1,7	1,2	3,0	2,3	1,7	9,85
Final Demand									
US	2,8	3,1	3,8	2,9	3,7	4,0	5,4	5,5	35,76
Japan	0,9	0,3	1,1	2,1	5,3	0,1	-2,5	0,5	7,90
Germany	3,6	0,9	2,0	1,3	0,6	0,3	1,7	1,8	10,82
France	1,1	0,4	1,1	1,1	1,3	0,6	3,5	3,1	11,92
Italy	1,0	-4,5	0,8	1,7	1,7	2,2	2,4	2,0	7,34

Fonte: FMI, World Economic Outlook, aprile 2000

crease in productivity of labor does not explain the increase in production.) Bourgeois accounting measures national output income (an improper term) as if it were produced *ex novo* in the course of the year, incorporating it into the calculation of the gross domestic product (GDP).

In the 1992-1999 period, the U.S. GDP grew by 32.68%, while, as we said above, private consumption and final internal demand (setting aside total demand, which includes inventory) grew by 34.08% and 35.76% respectively. In short, consumption, proportionally, grew more than "income". If the increase of consumption was maintained equal to the growth of GDP, that would have determined, with exports remaining constant, a small growth in production; otherwise, with exports and the growth of production remaining constant, a smaller quantity of imported goods. In such an hypothesis, the decrease of imports is less realistic than the decrease of production. And however (in the alternative of a reduction in one or the other) it would be more realistic that both decline.

It follows from this that *it is consumption which is spurring production*, and in relation to the rest of the world, this results in an overvalued dollar making American goods less competitive, and in more being consumed than is generally being produced.

The fact that, in other industrialized countries (e.g. Japan and Germany), a comparison of the statistical data just mentioned shows the same tendency as in America (consumption growing faster than output) does not mean that it confronts us with the same conclusion. It shows, first of all, how fundamental the internal market is as a basis for productive growth; thus for these countries a stagnant market makes for stagnant production, even when the situation of foreign trade is the mirror-opposite of the U.S. Secondly, it follows that we have to answer the second question only for the U.S.: if consumption is pushing demand, what is pushing consumption?

The growth of demand or consumption is tied first of all to the growth in the capacity of expenditure. Without recourse to credit, this growth is tied, for private individuals, to income, for companies, to profit, for the state, to budget surpluses. Let us call this capacity for expenditure potential and "natural" (capitalistically speaking): potential, to distinguish it from effective expenditure, which e.g. for private individuals is determined by income minus savings, or by income plus some quantity of previous savings; "natural", to distinguish it from artificial, determined by the factor of credit, through which one consumes, through anticipated income and the accumulation of debt, what will have to be produced, and what is artificially pumped up by the effect of extra profits. On the basis of this schematic distinction, in addition to accounting for the increase in theoretical pro capita income, and without, for the moment, establishing priorities, we can observe that:

- 1) the savings of Americans, in spite of the increase in theoretical income per capita, are in constant decline. From 8% in the 60's, they fell to minus 1.8% in the first months of 2000, but an acceleration is visible from the mid-90's onward;
- 2) to the increase in median income and the decline of savings, we must add the increased use of credit, i.e. the increase of indebtedness, which from 1995 to 1998 grew, according to the OECD, for all private debtors, by 35.64% and for families by 34.02%. Companies continued to invest consistently but sank deeper into debt. The average American family, which has not seen all this increased income,⁸ spends more than it earns and ca. 11% of disposable income goes to personal debt service;
- 3) public expenditure, in spite of the necessity of reducing the budget deficit, grew between 1992 and 1999, according to the IMF, by 6.96%, concentrated totally in the second half of the 90's;
- 4) the performance of the Dow Jones and the Nasdaq greatly increased extra profits, and the latter, realized or potential, were transformed into credit for

8. 80% of families saw a progressive decline, from 53.4% of income in 1990 to 50.8% in 1998.

expenditure: for families, in particular, in residential construction, which for example in 1999 showed an increase of 6%. Whatever one might say about the "New Economy", the continuous growth of expenditure on housing still represents an excellent spur for all kinds of industrial production, from steel to furniture, by way of domestic electrical appliances and luxury goods.

These are the main causes which, interpenetrating and complementing one another, have created the euphoria of American consumption, with the increase in profits leading to yet another increase in consumption, in a circle both vicious and virtuous, based first of all on the increase of an *artificial and pumped-up demand, essentially derived from credit*.

The Speculative Bubble

Without forgetting international factors – and as a starting point of this cycle in the American economy it is necessary once again to emphasize the importance of the Gulf War in 1991 – and the increased U.S. indebtedness to the rest of the world, with which it financed its growth, as we have indicated above, most decisive in the U.S. boom have been hyperspeculation on the stock market and credit, the latter underwriting not merely consumption but speculation itself.

The American speculative bubble, to whose existence even a blind man can attest, began a long time ago, effectively from 1982 onward, but its real acceleration began in 1987, though with a correction in the same year. Beginning in the 90's and, in particular, in 1994 it has become gigantic, and, with a few quickly forgotten pauses, has continued its dizzying ascent. The Dow Jones Index rose from 3,012 on April 17, 1991 (the day it surpassed the previous high prior to the fall caused by the invasion of Kuwait) to 11,523 in January 2000.⁹

It is superfluous to recount the chronicle of speculative fever, first set off by mergers, and then by Internet stocks, which shows how stock values have become detached from any relation to production or real prospects of solid dividends (for example many "dot.coms" have never shown a profit and have no prospect of doing so in the short term, but their entry into the stock market has been stunning, with share price increases of as much as 700% in a single day). Increasing American imports have distributed billions of dollars throughout the world, which have returned to the U.S. through the bond and stock markets.

The various financial crises (Japanese, Mexican, Asian, Latin American, Russian) which have followed one another throughout the 90's have been a further, torrential spur for hyperspeculation on the American stock exchange.

On one hand, money capital, which is increasingly concentrate, does not seek out modest gains, but rather large returns which only high risk i.e. intensified speculation can provide (the overproduction of capital is nothing but the form of the overproduction of commodities, and it is overproduction itself which is the basis for hyperspeculation, and helps increase it). On the other hand, the number of small shareholders has increased and for now such people have reaped considerable profits. The continuous rise of stock values creates great expectations for the future: in addition to investing savings, people have mortgaged their homes or taken out loans to acquire stocks... and the guarantee provided by growing stock portfolios has made possible further indebtedness.

To understand the impact of the "speculative bubble" it is sufficient to observe that:

- 1) the Dow Jones Index took roughly a century, from 1885 to 1992, to pass 1,000. It took 17 years, from 1982 to 1999, to increase ten-fold;
- 2) in 1987 the New York Stock Exchange was capitalized at \$2,216 billion; in 1993 at \$5,260 billion. Today it is capitalized at more than \$12,000 billion.

The increases in American productivity fade away when set against these fig-

9. The Nikkei rose from 4,350 in 1975 to 38,916 at the end of 1989, increasing 7.94 times in 14 years, followed by collapse. The Dow Jones rose from 780 in 1982 to 8260 on Aug. 7, 1997: an increase of 9.58 times in 15 years (quoted in Ravi Batri, *The Crack of the Millennium*).

10. When we speak of the average rate of profit we are referring to a magnitude which is valid for the whole capitalist class, i.e. for the total social capital.

11. Marx, *Capital*, Vol.III (International Publishers, New York 1973)

12. *Ibid.* Vol. III, Part One, Ch. 3, p. 50.

ures, and they are not, with the prospect of such unhinged profits, what has sent the Stock Exchange skyward.

Parenthesis On The Average Rate of Profit

At the beginning of this article we pointed out how the present American expansion, independently of the causes which determine it, represents a temporary reversal of the tendencial fall in the average rate of profit.¹⁰ In fact, the increase in production, with all other conditions of the productive process remaining equal, increases the mass of profit and the result of the relationship between this mass and the capital invested, and thus the rate.

Using this point of departure, we must consider countervailing factors, as well as those which are favorable.

The growth of productive capacity (*Table 2*), which presupposes investments in fixed capital, determines a variation in the organic composition of capital which turns out in a relative increase in constant capital (factories, machinery, raw materials and tools) relative to variable capital (wages) and, therefore, with the rate of exploitation of labor remaining unchanged, in a decline in the rate of profit. This variation in the organic composition of capital, to whose continuity over time capital is in thrall, is "but another expression for greater productivity of labor".¹¹ In other words, the progressive tendency for the rate of profit to fall corresponds to the progressive increase in the productivity of labor. To this is added, in our specific case, a lowered utilization of plant and equipment which, set against an increased mass of invested capital, produces a situation in which the mass of profit, while increasing in absolute terms, is lower than that attainable in the hypothetical case of full capacity utilization.

Among the causes for the reversal of the tendencial fall in the rate of profit, we can therefore rule out the growth of the productivity of labor which, in general, acts in the opposite direction, even if in a specific case "productivity of labor may also exert a direct influence on the rate of profit, at least of an individual capital, if, as has been demonstrated in Book I, this individual capital operates with a higher than average social productivity and produces commodities at a lower value than their average social value, thereby realizing an extra profit".¹² And this can well be the case for "New Economy's" productive sector, as spelled out above, moreover operating in the conditions of a global semi-monopoly.

This particular aspect, whose influence on the general rate of profit cannot be determined exactly, supplements other more generalized factors, i.e. the true causes, as defined by Marx, antagonistic to the fall of the average rate of profit.

- a) Increase in relative surplus-value. The wage of the average American worker has declined progressively and nevertheless the increases of recent years remain at the levels of the 60's, while on the other hand both the intensity and the productivity of labor have increased.
- b) Increase of absolute surplus-value, through the lengthening of the working day. From the data in *Table 3* we observe that we can verify the following conditions only in the U.S.: 1. the increase of hourly production is less than the growth of production as a whole – which implies an increase in the number of hours worked; 2. the production per operative is higher than both hourly production and total production – which presupposes an absolute decline in the number of operatives (manufacture) which, in turn, in relation to the increase in the number of hours worked, implies an increase in labor time per operative. This is confirmed as well by other sources, which show that in the U.S., in counter-tendency to the world trend, the work week has increased by 4%.

Further, while we are not in a position to generalize from the following trends, we should also consider: the lowering of the costs of circulation for commo-

13. The immigrants are approximately 10% of the population. The annual inflow, including both legal and illegal immigrants, is estimated at ca. 2 million.

14. Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, 1998, p. 23.

ties through the Internet economy (E-Business or B2B); the “free” labor of the prison population, which consists of a continuously-growing army of ca. two million sub-proletarians, not to mention the flood of cheap immigrant labor,¹³ even if the two latter phenomena, in different degrees, were also present at the beginning of the 90’s.

Given the degree of increases in production and what we have highlighted in this point, we can conclude that the temporary reversal in the fall of the average American rate of profit, and thus its increase relative to the previous short cycle, does not imply any boom in profits and, liked the average increase in production, has remained below the level of the 60’s.

Conclusions

Our formulation of the problem compels us to conclude that the current phase represents, on a world scale, a deepening of the crisis phase into which the capitalist economy has plunged. Further, the development, almost *contra natura*, of the American economy can be explained with the elements we have elaborated above and in the not negligible factor of the dollar’s primacy as the international reserve currency. This primacy was increasingly called into question in the last quarter of the 20th century, and in the medium to long term its exchange rate has deteriorated, although it has currently been reinforced through the ongoing crisis and through the link between the dollar’s value and the price of raw materials, beginning with oil. Such an assessment does not even take in account the weakness of the mark due to its current and ongoing dissolution into the euro, which is the currency of a non-state and without “political” autonomy. The dollar today is strong but its strength is being undermined by a net overseas indebtedness which has increased in five years from \$174 billion to more than \$2 trillion, and which is due first of all to the growing deficit in the American balance of payments. The so-called “foreign” sector today holds \$8.3 trillion in U.S. financial and real assets.

We remind the reader that in our 1947 text (*La dittatura mondiale degli Stati Uniti: “The U.S. as a World Dictatorship”*) we emphasized, as the basis of the world political and economic dictatorship of Yankee imperialism, the enormous positive balance sheet and creditor position of the U.S. in relation to the rest of the world, which underpinned the “usurious” role of the dollar.

In the framework we have established, finally, we cannot fail to mention another factor of real importance. American domination is now almost a century old. Military power corresponds to economic power; the latter is a product of the former and then becomes its prop, and Marxism has always highlighted the fact that violence, potential or actual, constitutes an economic factor of the first order. “Not only does the United States control all of the world’s oceans and seas, but it has developed an assertive military capability for amphibious shore control that enables it to project its power inland in politically significant ways. Its military legions are firmly perched on the western and eastern extremities of Eurasia, and they also control the Persian Gulf. American vassals and tributaries, some yearning to be embraced by even more formal ties to Washington, dot the entire Eurasian continent”.¹⁴ It suffices to think of the Gulf War and to the duration of the embargo against Iraq (both directed against the Old Continent, and in particular against Germany and Japan) to understand the importance of military power for sustaining and affirming “national interests”.

In conclusion, we should also comment briefly on the relation between American growth, overproduction and chronic world crisis.

Marx and Engels, in the last years of their correspondence, noted and emphasized how the tendency toward a shortening of the cycle was an aspect of the chronic character of overproduction, which at first appeared only in the last phase of the boom. Does this mean that the cycle has disappeared? Not at all. It simply means that the dynamic of capitalist development tends to be more and more lifeless and jaded, with short recoveries within a cycle in which crisis and relative stagnation have lasted much longer.

This inference does not contradict the condition of overproduction in general, but rather represents a temporary safety valve which prolongs the incubation time of the crisis. World overproduction has produced a speculative bubble which is especially concentrated in the U.S., where the factor of “indebtedness” has acted both to channel and as a multiplier. It is

moreover well known that (cf. letter of Marx to Sorge of Sept. 27, 1873) that “*general periodic crises are always preceded by such partial crises. If they are too serious they only attenuate the general crisis and blunt its force*”.

The elements which, in the classical mechanism, individuate the crisis are the increase in the volume of inventory, the collapse or the slowdown of wholesale prices (also because of the fall in luxury consumption), the difficulty in payments tied to increased competition and to the collapse of extra profits. There is a reduction of profits, a plethora of capitals, a selecting out of enterprises and a devalorization of capitals which make possible the successive upgrading of factories. As a consequence, there is a fall in employment and a further fall in consumption, as well as in revenues (concentration, even if not immediately, of land); a palpable fall of the prices of raw materials; intensified creation of monopolies in sources of raw materials; then a decline of the rate of profit in commercial capital. Difficulty in payments induce bankruptcies, business failures and reductions of credit, forced sales and a rise in interest rates (which otherwise tend to fall because of the action and dynamic of the general rate of profit) and thus a collapse of the stock exchanges. Finance capital is under further pressure to concentrate by acquiring corporate stock and through the consolidation of their debts (tendency to generalize the “universal bank”); if the demand for means of payment is too intense and too great the system falls back on credit creation and thus sets off inflation (which also prompts a rush into gold).

It is obvious that this “abstract scheme” remains valid, but it calls for an attentive study of the specificity of phenomena – the so-called “interferences” which cannot be explained by mechanistic recourse to the abstract model itself, phenomena which, nevertheless, cannot be adequately explained without the help of the abstract scheme (letters of Engels to Schmidt of 2/4/1892 and 3/12/1895). The accentuation of the elements of imperialism do not modify the abstract schema, but only accentuates some characteristics to the detriment of others (role of credit and of public and private debt in artificially prolonging the faint phases of recovery or in slowing down the velocity of the negative effects of the crisis).

The destruction wrought by crisis represents the objective basis for a new phase of recovery, and for this no 1929 by itself is sufficient: the transmission mechanism of the crisis and its political and military extensions should not obscure the fact that the relation between economic crisis and revolutionary crisis is dialectical and not mechanical.

On the other hand, as Marxism has always insisted, crisis always erupts first on the periphery, at the weakest links, and then in the heart of the system where the safeguards are stronger, and this is even truer in the imperialist era, when the integration between finance and industry is closer and when capital exports are also a way to promote the exports of commodities.

The “next” wave of crises can only begin where the last one left off: from the plethora of capital in search of valorization, for which the productive cycle no longer offers an adequate guarantee. In each case the growth of the organic composition of capital resulting from the obsessive search for extra profits or, more exactly, for profits higher than the average, only prepares even more violent shocks, while it at the same time renders more flagrant the contradictions between, on one hand, bourgeois and private social relations and, on the other, the development of the ever more social productive forces.

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WHERE WE COME FROM

A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY

Our party, the International Communist Party, comes down from afar and has nothing to do with '68, the youth movements, the infantile reaction to Stalinism that calls itself "extremist," "spontaneist," "movement-oriented," "worker-centered," etc. Let us add that this is a matter of radical, even genetic, difference. No matter how small today, with little influence and of limited membership, our party represented and represents, through the highs and lows of a tremendously counterrevolutionary period, the uninterrupted continuation of the grand tradition of the international communist movement. It's comparable to an underground stream that had (or was able) to course below the rocks and sand and through the mire and landslides. Let us retrace this long march by means of a simplified outline.

1892 - The Italian Socialist Party (PSI) was born. Arising from the conjoining of various currents, not all revolutionary and internationalist, the party was led by reformists (although, in contrast to those who followed in the so-called "Left" particularly after the Second World War, the former were, so to speak, at the very least... possessed of dignity!). Those turn-of-the-century years witnessed huge working-class struggles in Italy, Central Europe, and in the U. S., and the reformist leaderships of the PSI and of the large labor confederations often found themselves in conflict with the more militant masses.

1910 - A clearly left current, the *Sinistra*,¹ emerged at the PSI's Congress of Milan in opposition to the reformist leadership of the party and the trade unions, and soon took a leading position in labor struggles. This Left, the *Sinistra*, made clear its internationalism by strongly opposing the Libyan War (1911), and organized itself nationally as the Intransigent Revolutionary Fac-

tion at the Reggio Emilia Congress of 1912. A similar conflict broke out in the Socialist Youth Federation against those who wanted the body to become largely a culture-dispensing organization. By the *Sinistra*, both party and Young Federation were seen as organs of struggle. The militant youth were to receive their revolutionary inspiration and stamina from the whole life and experience of the party as it guided the working class on the road to revolution, and not from some banal "party school" education. Amadeo Bordiga (1889-1970) and the "Revolutionary Socialist Club Carlo Marx" of Naples were decisive influences amongst the Intransigent Revolutionaries, and have remained fundamental references points in the history of the *Sinistra*.

1914 - With World War I the *Sinistra* proclaimed the need for revolutionary defeatism, which was in full agreement with Lenin's theses, hardly known at the time in Italy. With a background tragically highlighted by the failure to oppose the war when most Socialist parties voted war credits and solidified with their respective national bourgeoisie, the PSI, notwithstanding the efforts by the *Sinistra*, approved an ambiguous slogan, "neither support nor sabotage," which meant no support for the war, but no fight against it either. With Mussolini at their head, the interventionists had earlier abandoned the party.

1917 - At the outbreak of the October Revolution, the *Sinistra* aligned itself unhesitatingly with Lenin and Trotsky, greeting the event as the opening phase of an international revolution. "Bolshevism, A Plant for Every Clime" was the piece written by Bordiga which warmly greeted the revolution. Antonio Gramsci and Palmiro Togliatti, who would form the group publishing *L'Ordine Nuovo* in 1919, were ini-

¹ The term "Left" has unfortunately undergone so many manipulations that it has become ambiguous. While "Communist Left" is a rather common and accepted way of referring to our current and tradition in Italy and elsewhere in Europe, it may not be so elsewhere. In order to make clear that when we speak of "Left" or "Communist Left", we are meaning a specific current, and not the amorphous ectoplasm (not "leftist" at all!) that sometimes improperly uses those expressions, here and elsewhere we resort to the Italian word *Sinistra* (meaning "Left"). However, if and when – for brevity reasons – we speak of "Left" and "Communist Left", it must be clear that we mean our current.

tially under the influence of a non-Marxist idealism and displayed a somewhat confused and ambiguous understanding of the event. In the article "The Revolution Against 'Capital'," Gramsci erroneously asserted that the October Revolution negated Marxist materialism. In Italy, the *Sinistra*, the only faction in the PSI with a national network, was able to convoke the party to a meeting in Florence in 1917 that led to the reaffirmation of intransigent opposition to the war. Beginning in 1918, with the nation seized by mounting social tensions resulting from the war and indicated by the increasing strikes and malcontent, the *Sinistra*, in possession of its own organ, // *Soviet*, from December of that year, took the lead in getting the PSI to support revolutionary Russia and openly recognize the international significance of Lenin's strategy.

1919 - This was the crucial year for all of Europe: the year of the great strikes in Italy and revolutionary attempts in Germany and Hungary, the year Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were massacred, and the year of the birth of the Third International as the party of the world revolution. In Italy, a polemic broke out between the *Sinistra* - pressing for the creation of an authentic communist party able to apply the experience of the Russian Revolution to the West and stressing the social and political novelty of the soviet as an organ of sovereign power in the revolutionary process - and Gramsci's *L'Ordine Nuovo*, that insisted in identifying the factory council as the equivalent of the soviet, portraying the council - normatively a subsidiary organ operating within the social and political functions of capitalism - as "the embryo of the future society." Still in 1919, thanks to the theoretical and practical actions of the *Sinistra*, a Communist Abstentionist Faction was founded in the PSI, the nucleus of the future Communist Party of Italy (*Partito Comunista d'Italia*). One of the views characterizing the faction was the belief that in the nations of established democratic rule - Western/Central Europe and the US - the parliament was no longer the site where important political and economic decisions were taken, an axiom drawn from the classical texts of Marxism. It had ceased to be a usable tribune from which to make known communist views, and for the longest period served to lead astray and dissipate revolutionary forces. Hence the parliament

was to be opposed: with a democratic government, opposition to the bourgeois system was rendered most dramatically by boycotting political elections. A second tactic advanced by the *Sinistra* was the concept of "united front from below": this meant avoiding the confusing political convergence of parties and organizations having disparate if not conflicting programs, while drawing all workers of whatever political, ideological or religious conviction into a common struggle for clear economic and social objectives and in defense of their conditions of life and work.

1920 - At the Second Congress of the Third international, the *Sinistra* played a determinant role in stiffening the conditions of admission. In so doing, at a time of continued and considerable social ferment, it hoped to bar admission to groups and parties whose acceptance of a revolutionary program and discipline would prove rhetorical and their actions detrimental, particularly if the postwar verve and revolutionary conditions receded, as was soon the case. In seeing the International as a true, authentic world party rather than a formal arithmetic summation of national parties, which later would be free to go on and "make politics" as each saw fit, of all the European communist groups the *Sinistra* was the clearest on the question of internationalism. Even as it was involved in founding a communist party in Italy, the *Sinistra* in the International stood for the reaffirmation of Marxism's integrity and for an internationalism strategically and tactically binding the working classes of the West with the rebellious people of the East. It believed that a revolutionary communist party must seek the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie leading to the establishment of the class dictatorship as a bridge to a classless society. Strongly favoring internal discipline, it maintained that, within both the national parties and the International, obedience must rest on the voluntary acceptance and understanding of the revolutionary program by each and every adherent, and not on bossy compulsion.

1921 - At the PSI's 1921 Congress of Leighorn (Livorno), the Communist *Sinistra* broke away from the old reformist party and founded the Communist Party of Italy (CPI), a Section of the Communist International. Regardless of the subsequent assertions of a Stalinist histori-

ography, the leading offices of the party were staffed entirely by *Sinistra* representatives and by Bordiga. At this time, Gramsci and Togliatti were in total agreement with this leadership. For two years, in a Western Europe where revolutionary elements were seeking a road to revolution to provide decisive aid to the USSR, the *Sinistra*-led CPI was the foremost edge of the politics of "Bolshevism, A Plant for Every Clime." Amongst the trade unions, it carried out a strenuous campaign to construct a real united front - not of parties - of the working masses whatever their political loyalties; it fought no less strenuously against social-democratic reformism that misled the workers with its illusory pacifism and legalism; it openly confronted fascism, which it described as the reaction of industrial and agrarian capital to a worldwide economic crisis and the militancy of the proletariat, and not a feudal phenomenon as would be averred later by Stalinists; it built a defensive military apparatus against reaction and did not have to rely on such organizations as the "*Arditi del Popolo*," a formation of spurious and uncertain nature; and during all those years marked by the reflux of the postwar revolutionary wave, the party maintained an international and internationalist stance, criticizing from the outset the rise of localism or autonomous actions and, above all else, the moves subordinating the International itself to Russian national needs.

1923-24 - After the arrest of Bordiga and a good many of the party's leaders in early 1923 - although they would be released by year's end following a successful defense leading to acquittal - leadership passed to a secondary group more open to manipulation by the International. Despite a national conference of the party held in Como in May, 1924, at which the delegates voted overwhelmingly for the *Sinistra*, the party leadership was given by Moscow to a new Centrist grouping formed under Gramsci and Togliatti. The *Sinistra* was thus barred from leadership. Employing means, methods and language correctly identified with Stalinism, in the course of the next two years the *Sinistra* was crushed and its influence eradicated: *Prometeo*, a journal speaking for the *Sinistra*, was suppressed after a few issues, party sections with *Sinistra* majorities were dissolved, *Sinistra* spokesmen were removed, their articles and views censured or not published, and the party put under a regimen of intimi-

dation, suspicion, and discipline that was ever bossier and bureaucratic.

1926 - Archival evidence has shown that the III Party Congress held outside Italy at Lyons, France, met before an assembly stacked by the Centrist leadership; two examples of the methods used will suffice here: 1) in the pre-congressional congresses, the votes of absentee *Sinistra* followers were automatically given to the Gramscian Center; 2) at a final meeting in Milan, delegates to Lyons were winnowed to eliminate *Sinistra* representation. At that congress, the *Sinistra* was completely marginalized and no longer able to act or have its views known. At the VII meeting of the Enlarged Executive Committee of the Communist International held in Moscow between February-March of that year, Bordiga opposed "Bolshevization," that is, the reorganization of the party on the basis of the factory cell that, under the pretense of increasing the workers' influence, had the effect of enclosing the base within the narrowness of the factory or shop, to which the person of the functionary-bureaucrat became an indispensable source of "the line to be followed" and the embodiment of leadership. At that incandescently dramatic session of the VII Enlarged Executive Committee, Bordiga, who openly confronted and questioned Stalin, was the only delegate amongst all present to ask that the grave internal crisis extant within the Bolshevik Party - the prelude to the emergence of the faux and lying theory of "socialism in one country" - be posted as the order of the day for the next world congress. To quote his words: "the Russian Revolution is our revolution also, its problems our problems, and [therefore] every member of the revolutionary International has not only the right but also the duty to labor in its resolution." Meanwhile, the Fascist authorities saw to it that Bordiga and the entire Italian Communist leadership were arrested long before the next world congress. In the USSR, Stalin isolated the United Opposition. Between 1926 and 1930, the *Sinistra* followers were expelled from the party, and thus given over to Fascist repression or forced to emigrate. The campaign against the *Sinistra* was undertaken in parallel with the persecution of Trotsky and his supporters, although between the two currents there were dissimilarities of views - which did not prevent the *Sinistra* from defending Trotsky in the crucial years of 1927-1928. Bordiga himself was expelled in 1930 on the

charge of "Trotskyism." Meanwhile, first with the betrayal of the English General Strike in 1926 and then with the subordination of the Chinese Communist Party to the Kwomintang during the Chinese revolutionary year of 1927 resulting in the massacre of the Canton and Shanghai Communards by the Nationalists, Stalinism, a degenerative manifestation indicative of the rise of a bourgeois force within a USSR isolated by the absence of supportive workingclass revolution in the West, undertook the complete reversal of the principles of the communist program.

1930-1940 - With Bordiga under continuous police surveillance and isolated in Naples, the *Sinistra* suppressed and hounded by Fascism and Stalinism, its members dispersed through emigration to the West where they had also to fight and oppose the growing illusions cast by bourgeois democracy, there began a phase of our history best described as heroic. The *Sinistra* reorganized in France and Belgium under the name of the Faction Abroad (*Frazione all'Estero*) and published the periodicals *Prometeo* and *Bilan*, thus returning to the political battle. The situation was very difficult for this handful of scattered comrades. Theirs was a battle waged on three fronts: against Fascism, Stalinism, and bourgeois democracy. They continued the criticism of Moscow's policies - the "united fronts," the illusion about the efficacy of democracy, the continuous political somersaults that bewildered the working class, the Nazi-Soviet Pact, and Togliatti's appeal to "the brothers in black shirts." They worked vainly during the Spanish War to get the uncertain left groups to orient themselves on a class basis. They carried on the struggle against Fascists and Nazis in occupied France, even spreading defeatism amongst German troops. With the myths of democracy penetrating ever deeper in the international workers movement, the *Sinistra* responded with critical analyses. At the onset of war in 1939, they pointed out its imperialistic character. It was already clear to them that Stalinism represented the worst of counterrevolutionary waves. With insufficient forces due to their isolation, they began the analysis of what happened in the USSR. It was this tenacious resistance, this determination to not allow a break in the "red thread" that led to the rebirth of the party in 1943.

1943-1952 - Thanks to the repatriation to Italy of a number of comrades, the work to

reweave a real and viable organization was begun. At the end of 1943, the first issue of *Prometeo* appeared clandestinely. Contacts were made with Bordiga; the first political work was undertaken among proletarian elements deluded by the resistance movement. The effort was made to give a class basis to the strike wave in the last years of the war. By working in contact with the proletarians, significant gains were made in the North, and often internationalists were elected shop stewards in the factories. At last, the Internationalist Communist Party was born having as its journal *Battaglia Comunista*. The clash with the Stalinists emerged into the open. While Togliatti as Minister of Justice decreed a general amnesty of fascist leaders and rank-and-file members amidst paeans to "the new man" and "the reborn democracy," his party denounced the Internationalists as "fascists," inciting a policy calling for their physical elimination. The culmination of this defamatory campaign was the assassination of two comrades, Mario Acquaviva and Fausto Atti, and others massacred by Stalinists but whose fate has remained shrouded in anonymity. In this initial period, party life was still characterized by theoretical uncertainties and doubts brought home by repatriates from the Faction Abroad. Matters came to a head in 1952 with the need to reestablish the party solidly on the corpus of a Marxism cleansed of all Stalinist distortions and freed from the imperative of an immediate activism. This led to a first split. The periodical *Il programma comunista* began publication in 1952. Until his death in 1970, Bordiga devoted himself to the enormous task of reconstructing the theoretical and political basis of the party, which became truly *international* in fact as well as name in the 1960s. The "Fundamental Theses of the Party" (1951), "Considerations on the Organic Activity of the Party in a Situation which is Generally and Historically Unfavorable" (1965), "Theses on the Historic Duty, the Action and Structure of the World Communist Party" (1965), and "Supplementary Theses" (1966) gave the party its theoretical, political, and organizational structure.

**For a more complete presentation of our history and positions, read "What Is the International Communist Party", in *Internationalist Papers 9* (Spring-Summer 2000).
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THE LABORATORY OF COUNTERREVOLUTION

“Stalinism as counterrevolution” was a central issue in our theoretical and political task of restoring Marxism to its unadulterated origins, and this ever since 1926, that historical divide after which the internationalist revolution

ary perspective was lost and destroyed everywhere and USSR (till then its political avant-garde) entered its own road of capitalist development. Our current – albeit small and defeated in those years and their aftermath – was the only one to consistently fight Stalinism and to understand the outlines and substance of what was happening to the international working-class movement. And thus to draw the “lessons of the counterrevolution” – a counterrevolution to which Stalinism, Nazi-Fascism, and Democracy (each in its own way, but all firmly and savagely anti-worker and anti-communist) lent more than one hand. A major contribution to the Stalinist counterrevolution came from such non-Marxist positions as Gramsci’s. Today, in the English-speaking world and in the Americas, Gramsci seems to be the last hope of a variegated array of university professors, disillusioned workers, former Third-World guerrillas, anti-globalization intellectuals, who want to “po-

In memory of all our comrades who gave their lives for the proletarian revolution, fighting against Stalinism, Nazi-Fascism, and Democracy

sition themselves”, but do not want to accept the iron laws of Marxism in the fields of theory and organization, political program and strategy. To these, Gramsci gives a kind of ideological cover. And it is understandable: as we never ceased to denounce, in

those very mid-1910s when historically and politically murder willed out (WWI and the October Revolution), the roots of Gramsci & Co. were not in Marxism, but in those currents of bourgeois thought which took their name from Sorel, Bergson, Croce – i.e., idealist, anti-Marxist ideologues if ever.

The two following articles do not presume to exhaust such a complex argument. Our analysis of the Stalinist counterrevolution, our critique of Gramsci (his thought and political practice: our polemics are never “personal” or “personalized”), are contained in several, different texts, which we will reissue, little by little, in our international press. The two following articles simply want to be a first contribution towards the re-establishment of a correct Marxist position, by showing what Stalinism did in Italy and elsewhere and the key contribution Gramsci gave to the betrayal of Marxism and the international revolution.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF STALINISM IN ITALY (AND ELSEWHERE)

BETWEEN PAST AND FUTURE

A review of the various victories and defeats that occurred in the history of the workers’ movement is for us Marxists never an exercise in historiography or simply yet another “contribution” to its “science.” Rather, it is the necessary practice of our revolutionary work, the necessary link of present and future with our past strug-

gles. Our doctrine in its entirety is an immutable part and parcel of dialectical materialism. Born as a total entity 150 years ago, it was tempered in the first and great battles fought by the proletariat against a still-young bourgeoisie and its progressive approach to society and the economy. There is therefore nothing that we have to change or discover anew today, in terms of so-called “new doings” of histo-

ry, as compared to what Marxism, from its very birth, has established.

Still, this past history has been for us full of lessons that we must fix well in our minds and actions: 1848, on whose barricades *The Communist Manifesto* was born, the very flag that we will raise one day over the ruins of present society; 1871, the epochal event of the Paris Commune that clearly marked once and for all the end of alliances between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie; and finally 1917, that is, the destruction of the myth nurtured by Western social-democracy of a gradual conquest of power within bourgeois society, and the birth of the dictatorship of the proletariat under the guidance of its political party and on an international scale – without and against any democratic or parliamentary solution.

This immense enterprise, achieved only in so much as Marxism had been restored to its origins, was undermined when the Bolsheviks found the road blocked in the West by enemies worse than the Cavaignacs, the Thiers, the Kornilovs, and the Kolchaks (the destroyers or would-be destroyers of all proletarian attempts to “reach the sky”). From the ruins of a World War enthusiastically backed by so many socialists in the name of “defense of the motherland,” there emerged a whole gamut of pseudo-Marxist tendencies. If only on paper, they often embraced revolutionary stances impeding in effect the necessary theoretical clarifications that could have assured the bases for victory. In reality, these spurious tendencies were all deeply rooted in parliamentary democracy, in a non-violent gradualism, in a sort of “immediatism,” and in the vilest form of “economism” that with the first indications of revolutionary actions did not for an instance hesitate to defend at all costs the state apparatus and the productive relations of capitalism.

In Germany, Hungary, and Italy the proletariat was militarily defeated at the very time this theoretical clarification was taking place everywhere, but too late to be of any immediate use in the process of abandonment of the Second International

and birth of the numerous communist parties. On the international level, this defeat had its echo in the gradual subsiding of the revolutionary impulse in USSR, the isolation of the latter, and the sacrifice of its heroic proletariat to the horrors of a capitalist accumulation visibly evident in the Stalinist five-year plans. Any Marxist worth his salt in those years would never have claimed that “socialism was being built there.”

The military defeat was painful, and would for many years bring about stagnation in the international arena. Much worse in terms of future perspectives, though, was the abandonment of their ultimate objectives on the part of the European parties. This occurred gradually through tactical side-steps such as the united fronts whose enactments were predicated on the vain hopes of keeping in touch with the working class at all costs—a contact that had been tragically cut during the defeats of 1918-1923—and in reality resulted instead in a retreat from all revolutionary platforms. A retreat (be it noted) backed by the authority of the Third International, which by then was becoming thoroughly Russified (via the non-Marxist theory of “socialism in one country”).

In those years after 1921, very few were able to discern the danger signals that stymied the international movement. Amongst them was the “Italian” Communist Left, or *Sinistra Comunista*, the very movement that had led the PCd’I (Communist Party of Italy) from its birth in 1921, and the only one to pursue a consistent and coherent Marxist-based polemic against the new “passwords”—Bolshevization, workers’ government, the united political front—up to the IV and V Congresses of the International in 1922 and 1924. By then, the counterrevolutionary impetus was everywhere taking place. In June 1923, the Central Committee (CC) of the Italian party was substituted through a “coup” carried out by the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI). Gramsci was given leadership of the party on condition that he hasten the alliance with the Socialists who on paper had given their full adherence to the directives imposed by the International. For the latter, there was a felt need

1 On the birth of the Communist Party of Italy, see above the article “Where We Come From – A Brief Chronology”.

to “re-stitch” – better, to rescind – the secession at Livorno which had finally brought some clarity to the workers’ movement.¹ Such a policy was predicated on the absurd hope of bringing into the International “revolutionary workers” still in Socialist ranks. In 1921, the CC of the party had calmly explained in detail to the ECCI (Zinoviev) how the gain on the right would not offset the possible loss on the left, that is to say, amongst revolutionary workers who backed the intransigent revolutionary stand of the party.²

A spurious tactic calling for the “hunt for membership” was introduced into revolutionary practice, as would be the case later in “liberated” Italy of the second postwar years, under the claim that the practice would strengthen the party. Back in the mid-twenties, the menacing shadow of Stalinism, the worst example of counterrevolution, had fallen everywhere on the movement, derailing the march of great battles. Today, more than seventy years later, those events still remain the only sure point of reference for a revolutionary reprise.

STALINISM

In our interpretation of the history of the revolutionary movement, we discern three degenerative phases against which Marxists have always vigorously struggled.

The anarchist degeneration, that intersected with the history of the First International. A critique of this movement is amply developed in the writings by Marx and Engels, who, on the bases of the 1848 revolutions and the Paris Commune (1871), argued that a unitary direction of the struggle not only is needed for success, but becomes essential *after* the seizure of power, in order to exercise in the name of the proletariat an iron-fisted dictatorship

against all enemy classes.

The degeneration of the Second International, that arose from the idea that the class struggle consists of a gradual process of small economic and political gains, eventually leading to the entrance of the workers’ party into parliamentary governments in coalition with bourgeois parties. By so theorizing, the Second International arrived at a complete betrayal of principles, which climaxed in the participation in the imperialist war of 1914-1918. Against this degeneration, that would take even worse forms in 1939 and in the second postwar period, the theoretical point of reference inevitably had to be the restoration of revolutionary Marxism effected by Lenin and the Bolsheviks, and independently by the Italian *Sinistra*; and, on the level of practical steps, the events and developments of the Russian Revolution.

The degenerative process that accompanied capitalist accumulation in the industrialized countries following the first World War and the phase of forced industrialization in the USSR. In the Western countries this degeneration took the form of political alliances—blocs, united fronts, workers’ governments—between parties representing opposing class interests, in the name of national “reconstruction” carried out in a coercive or strongly centralized program, equally evident in “fascist” as well as “democratic” states. In the USSR, the degenerative wave began by successfully eliminating the workers’ party in power, and then went on by inculcating the international proletariat with two monstrous lies: a) that the USSR had become the “guide-state” of international revolution, and would be able to “construct socialism” within its borders, *even in the absence of an international communist revolution*; b) that the passage to a finished socialist economy would be demonstrated by ushering

² See our *Storia della sinistra comunista* [History of the Communist Left], Vol. III (Milan: Edizioni Il programma comunista, 1986), p. 468.

3 See J.V. Stalin, *Economic Problems of Socialism*, 1952. A Marxist-based analysis of his falsifications can be found in our text *Dialogo con Stalin* ("Dialogue with Stalin"), published in our Italian journal "Il programma comunista", n. 1-4, October-December, 1952.

4 *Dialogue with Stalin*, "Il programma comunista," n. 2, 1952.

5 On the theory of "socialism in one country," a real curse word in the Marxist lexicon, Marx and Engels wrote pages of fire. Analyzing early as 1874 the particular historical moment in the German workers' movement, Engels indicated the revolutionary duty "to keep clean the pure sense of internationalism that does not tolerate one scintilla of patriotic chauvinism and greets with joy every advance of proletarian movement, without distinction amongst nationalities. If the German workers behave in such a fashion, not for that reason will they be at the head of the movement; in fact it is against the interest of the movement that the workers of one nation marches at the head, but all must occupy a position of honor in the line of combat." Preface to F. Engels, *The Peasant War in Germany* (trans.) (Edizioni Rinascita, Rome: 1949), p. 26.

in a series of exceptional measures in industry and agriculture that would spur production to grow at a rate immeasurably superior to capitalist countries – a "theory" that would be transmitted through the "Communist" International and its national parties. This two-faced opportunism of the Twenties and Thirties (that is, the "conquest of the masses" on the basis of an unprincipled fusion of parties, and the theory of "socialism in one country"), flowed into that heterogeneous mishmash of beliefs and practice which came to characterize Stalinism on the political level—to wit, the abandonment of proletarian internationalism, the "corridor maneuvers" in politics, the substitution of former leaderships not disposed to accept guidance from an International that was becoming ever more "Russified", the isolation of proven comrades, and successively, the false charges and physical extirpation of critics and opponents.

In 1923, the *Sinistra* battled against this most destructive of all deformations, in the name of revolutionary Marxism: initially together with the Left Opposition in the USSR led by Trotsky, and then from the 1930s alone – deformations that led the small but tempered communist parties to shift goals from the conquest of power to a defense of the "superior interests" of the Soviet state, and continued up to Stalin's assertion in 1952 that the *production of commodities* in the USSR did not in any way contradict the socialist character of Russian production and that the *law of value* was compatible with a communist economy!³

Today, we can note the full dimension of that tragic outcome: a complete break with past revolutionary struggles and a total incomprehension of the final objectives of the struggle. It bears repeating: those objectives had nothing to do with defense of a fatherland, or the restoration of democratic institutions menaced by this or that "fas-

cist" danger, or the improvement of conditions under which labor time is sold to capital. On the contrary, now as in the past, the aim of the workers' movement has to be the violent destruction of the bourgeois state whatever its form, and its substitution with the dictatorship of the proletariat. Only such a state will permit the introduction of an economy in which, along with *the diminution of the work effort and the increase of the free time*, there will be implemented "a plan to increase the cost of production, reduce the workday, disinvest capital, level consumption quantitatively and above all qualitatively,"⁴ the necessary prelude to a society without state, classes, commodities, money, and the law of value.

Finally, so as not to create misunderstandings, we want to underline that Stalinism was not the product of some evil man or the imposition of this or that devil of power. Stalinism was an outcome of the degeneration of the international communist movement whose causes were to be found in post-revolutionary USSR (its curling in on itself, its being forced to create an internal market in order to survive) as well as in postwar Europe, unable to give a revolutionary outlet to the militant wave of revolutionary struggle, in the years 1918-1923. Therefore, Stalinism was the evil fruit of the pressure of material economic and social forces, a product of contradictions fermenting in the underworld of economies ruined by war and searching for the maximization of profits, against which the last heroic battles were fought and lost, costing the physical destruction of a generation of revolutionaries.⁵

THE CONGRESS OF LYONS AND THE INTERNATIONAL TRIUMPH OF COUNTERREVOLUTION

After the 1921 Congress of Livorno, when the Communist Party of Italy (PCd'I) was born, the II Congress the

following year laid out the party's tactics strictly in the line of revolutionary internationalism ("Rome Theses"). The party then came to the III Congress, held clandestinely in France, at Lyons, in January 1926, in a situation of great difficulties within the organization and, without, as regards the relationships with the working class, due to fascist repression.

Moscow had imposed in 1923 a change of leadership: Bordiga, the principal founder of the party, was removed along with Fortichari, Repossi, Grieco, and Terracini. In their places appeared a new set of leaders more compliant with Russian demands: leading the new EC was Gramsci, aided by Togliatti, Ravera, Scoccimarro, Leonetti and Terracini, the last hopping shamelessly from one stance and faction to another. In effect, this was the original *Ordine Nuovo* group that during the period of intense working-class struggles, 1919-1920, had voiced out loud the need, *not* of founding the communist party, but of creating factory councils as the organs of the immediate seizure of power. With the substitution of the old leadership and the enactment of Bolshevization in all sections - also demanded by an International ever more tied to the apron strings of the Soviet state - the political turn did not leave untouched any of the earlier theoretical and organizational features.

Nonetheless, it was not easy for the new direction to get the party to approve the new tactics of "winning a majority", of the "united front from above", of the "workers' government", of "winning the masses" at whatever cost, of the fusion with that portion of Socialists considered more "advanced", together with the reorganization of the party on the basis of factory cells (Bolshevization) replacing the territorial sections.

The steps through which the International came to thoroughly

reverse the earlier political lines were the following:

the transformation of the party from a class party to a mass organization by means of fusions with other political groups with a different nature and through a block with different social strata - tenant farmers, Catholics, petit bourgeois, generic anti-fascists, etc.;

Bolshevization, that is, the replacement of the party's organizational structure with factory cells, copying the model developed by the Bolsheviks in the specific social conditions of Russia at the beginning of the century, which had no basis in the West. The generalization from that practice introduced a grave distortion of a basic Marxist postulate—that the revolution is not a matter of organizational form, and on the other hand, that there is no organizational form valid for all times and places. Moreover, by tying the party organization to the various categories of production, Bolshevization obstructed the vital process of unifying the struggles, a task which only a party standing above all divisions can bring about; a crushing of all opposition or criticism to the directives coming out of the Stalinist center. From 1924, in the USSR, this took the form of a series of attacks on Trotsky; in the Western parties, all left opposition was equated to Trotskyism, branded as "*Bordighismo*," and declared anti-Bolshevik; a ferocious campaign was undertaken in the press, the International, the national parties, and even in the branches, to prevent the formation of an international movement opposed to Stalinist Centrism; the use of administrative measures - expulsion and removal from position of authority, up to spying and threats - against anyone who did not display a rigid loyalty to the new leadership. Under the false charge of "left-wing factionalism," the Gramscian Center used all measures at hand: "It is a matter of politically mobilizing the

6 See P. Spriano, *Storia del Partito comunista italiano. Vol.I: From Bordiga to Gramsci* (Turin: Einaudi, 1967), p.455. This is considered the official history of the Stalinized PCI.

comrades to conduct an exhausting campaign of clarification, but it is also a matter of *policing the party*,” one can read in a revealing circular from those years.⁶

Notwithstanding the frightful disbandment that the PCd'I would undergo beginning from 1923, the party base did not easily or willingly surrender to these new passwords, behind which grave theoretical breakdowns could be detected. At a 1924 clandestine meeting in Como, a true *sondage* of party feeling staffed by representatives from all over Italy, the great majority of delegates voted for the *Sinistra*; and less than two years later, at Lyons, Gramsci's victory was only made possible by the harsh conditions in fascist Italy that prevented an open consultation of the rank-and-file, and by the use of fraudulent practices in vote-counting, resorted to by the new leadership in order to assure itself a majority. In fact, the actual strength of the two camps in the party was about equal—the Centrists and their rightwing allies on the one side and the *Sinistra* on the other. But Gramsci and his leadership “padded” their mandate to the congress by counting any absent *Sinistra* ballot as a vote for the Gramscian Center. Under the difficult political condition of Italy in late 1925 and the measures used by the leadership against the communist Left, this assured Gramsci a majority of delegates. Gramsci then sought to mollify the *Sinistra* by giving them two seats on the CC, a maneuver that suggests the fragile nature of “internal party democracy.”⁷

Although the outcome had been determined beforehand, the clash that took place at Lyons constitutes one of the highpoints in the history of Marxism, and it is from there that the reconstitution of a world communist party had to begin. For that reason, to examine accurately the opposing stances is an imperative for any Marxist. The platform presented by the Gramscian leadership⁸

eliminated the very precepts upon which the 1922 “Rome Theses” had been founded: the party was now declared *a part* of the class, and no more *an organ* of the class — thus substituting a substantial and political concept with a purely statistical one. Moreover, the platform affirmed that Bolshevization, the reorganization upon factory cells, would constitute the new structure of the party. The dominant role of the Russian party within the Communist International is then acknowledged, and the united front tactics is validated along with ambiguous political formulations—the so-called “Anti-parliament”, or the “Republican Assembly”—at the same time recognizing the need to use them against (bourgeois) democratic parties.

The *Sinistra* theses⁹ included the following: **1.** The communist movement must rest on a permanent well-defined theoretical and programmatic basis, consisting in a renunciation of all ideologies alien to historical materialism—idealism, positivism, pacifism, syndicalism, anarchism, “workerist” ideas, etc.; **2.** As a consequence, tactical measures must be delineated which be indissolubly tied to the principles and provisions, according to the criteria illustrated by Lenin in *Two Tactics of Social Democracy* (“The elaboration of sound tactical decisions is of great importance to a party that wants to lead the proletariat in a spirit *vigorously consistent with the principles of Marxism*, and not simply drag itself behind events.”); **3.** Finally, it is indispensable to keep to sure principles of organization, which the *Sinistra* saw solidly contained in the “Twenty-One Points of Admission”, discussed and approved by the II Congress of the Communist International, in 1920.

A fundamental point of contrast was the interpretation of the nature of the party. For the *Sinistra*, “the organ leading the class to victory is the political class party, the only

7 The reasons for the defeat of the *Sinistra* were of course only partly due to electoral manipulation. But on this manipulation, by now amply acknowledged by “official historiography” as well, see the article, “The Marxist Verification of the Modern-Day Decomposition of Capital in the West and in the Degrading Russian Economic Structure. War without Quarter from 1914-1961 against the Sickly Growth of Opportunism,” in Italian in “Il programma comunista,” no.12, 1961.

8 Largely edited by Gramsci and Togliatti, the Theses are found in *Trent'anni di vita e di lotte del PCI* [Thirty Years in the Life and Struggles of the PCI], “Quaderni di Rinascita”, no. 2, 1951.

9 They can be read in *In difesa della continuità del programma comunista* [In defense of the continuity of the communist program] (Milano: Edizioni Il programma comunista, 1989). Subsequent quotations are from this edition.

possible instrument first of revolutionary insurrection and then of government.” Only through the party does the class come to understand its own role in history: “hence, during the successive phases of struggle the party historically represents the class, even though its membership be composed of a more or less sizeable number.” Of the party and its function and action, the *Sinistra* rejected both the fatalist view (arising from a misunderstanding of determinism) and the voluntarist one (believing that historical phases can be forced into revolutionary directions, thanks to organizational formulations discovered or invented by some brilliant leader). It affirmed that “one must consider erroneous the tactical statement averring: every true communist party must know how to be a mass party *in every situation*, that is, it must have a very numerous membership and a major influence on the proletariat, at least to the point of being larger than those of the other so-called labor parties.”

The abandonment of those perspectives by the Gramscian leadership of the party was at the center of the great debate at Lyons. The victors did not hesitate to threaten measures to isolate the *Sinistra* by resorting to those well-known means employed in Russia against the Left Opposition. In so doing, they were strongly supported by Jules Humbert-Droz, Moscow’s representative in Italy from 1921, a man who was always ready to stand on the right on all the principal theoretical and tactical questions raised in the international movement.

The theses approved at the Lyons Congress, written by Gramsci and Togliatti, moved quite in the opposite direction from that followed by the party from its birth. To quote Gramsci:

“The ideological struggle against left extremism must be conducted by counterpoising to it the

Marxist and Leninist view of the party of the proletariat as a mass party, by demonstrating its need to adapt itself to the various situations in order to modify them, not lose contact with the masses and acquire ever new influences.”

¹⁰

A year before, a member of the CC, Scoccimarro, had written in *L’Unità*, the newspaper expressing the view of the new leadership, that the point of view of the *Sinistra* was part and parcel a consequence of

*“the international political situation and the slow down in the development of world revolution. [It is based] on the prevision of an opportunistic degeneration of the party and the International [...] But our [i.e., the Gramscian leadership’s] previsions on the future of the Communist International is completely at variance. We do not share this pessimism.”*¹¹

As we note, the theoretical divergence by now implied different evaluations and expectations as regards the role of the parties, and their internal and international action. A few years later, this would lead to the expulsion of the *Sinistra* and the formation of a Left Faction outside Italy; and, for the Center, to the total submission to an International that had become thoroughly Stalinized. It was against this background that the search for “margins of maneuver”, conducted within the scope of a “national particularity”, were acclaimed in full voice, at the very moment when the directives from the International were moving in a direction directly opposite to the theses proclaimed by the first two congresses of the Communist International. Once again, let us listen to the words of Humbert-Droz:

“our party must continue to approach the Maximalist workers [within the PSI], applying those appropriate formulas not only as far as the rank and file is con-

10 “La situazione italiana e i compiti del PCI” [Italian Situation and PCI Tasks], now in A. Gramsci, *La costruzione del Partito comunista* [The formation of the Communist Party] (Turin: Einaudi, 1971), p.503.

11 Article published in the issue of June 28, 1925.

12 Quoted in Spriano, c. it., Vol. II, p.509.

cerned, but from on high as well, i.e. the united-front tactic.”¹²

Here is the voice of an invariant opportunism that had lain latent in the questions of the organizational structure. From 1921, it was insisted that, *since the situation was revolutionary and the masses were “with us”*, instead of separating from the PSI, we must remain close to the social-democratic parties in order to drag them to power; later, it was stressed that, *since the situation was counterrevolutionary and the masses were “not with us”*, we must fuse with the social-democratic parties.

On the bases of these footings, the Centrists at Lyons developed the concept of the “popular anti-fascist revolution”. From now on, the party would wage a struggle to conquer hegemony for the proletariat in the fight against fascism. Such a goal could not be limited to economic demands, but must have partial political connotations, necessarily of a democratic kind, such as the restoration of suppressed rights in the political as well as trade-union field.

“The struggle for democratic demands is, in the Italian conditions, an integral part of the proletariat’s class struggle.”¹³

The above policy was well embodied in the 1925 slogan, “a republican assembly based on worker and peasant committees.”¹⁴ By some unknown fashion, the “popular revolution,” already democratic and anti-fascist, would become a “proletarian revolution.”

**THE LAST BATTLE IN THE
INTERNATIONAL: FROM THE
VI ENLARGED EXECUTIVE
TO EXPULSIONS AND EMIGRATION**

To fully grasp the internal events in the Communist Party in the second half of the 1920s, one must rapidly review the international situation

that in large degree conditioned its practical and theoretical activity.

While the Communist International inexorably developed the policy of subordinating the national parties to the needs of the new Soviet state, thus destroying the international unity of the European proletariat that had guided the first two congresses, the resistance to these new directives became acute in a number of areas leading to factions which developed along diverse lines and ideas. “Workers’ oppositions” arose demanding greater internal democracy within the parties, and anarcho-syndicalist groups broke away behind charges of dictatorship. Soon “workerist” factions appeared, and some explicitly denied the party’s right to organize and guide the class.

The only opposition in the International that based itself on rigorous Marxist doctrines was the one gathered around the former leadership of the PCd’I, the Communist Party of Italy. Passed over in 1923, and still commanding a major following the ranks, it never ceased to criticize the progressive abandonment of Marxist orthodoxy on all major questions. A few days after the end of the Lyons Congress, the last challenge to the new policies took place during the VI Enlarged Executive of the International held between February-March, 1926. From the platform, the speaker, Bordiga, declared that the time had come for the International to give back to the Bolshevik Party the help in terms of theory and practice that the latter had rendered earlier to the European parties. For this help to be enacted, the internal Russian question had to become the focal point of discussion for all the parties. In a few words, the pyramid (the Russian party at the top, the International at the basis) had to be turned upside down, with the Russian comrades having to listen to the views of all the member parties.¹⁵

13 See A. Agosti, *Togliatti*, (Torino: UTET, 1960), p.106.

14 According to G. Berti, these words, which “led to four years of endless internal discussions”, arose from the need to wed a democratic anti-fascism struggle to the perspective of a “soviet solution to the Italian crisis.” See G. Berti, *I primi dieci anni di vita del PCI* [The First Ten Years of the Life of the PCI], in *Annali Feltrinelli*, (Milan, 1966), p.159.

15 The speech may be read in “La crise de 1926 dans le PC russe e l’Internationale: VI Executif Elargi de l’IC,” in *Programme Communiste*, no. 69-70, May, 1976. It must be noted that the issue of “discipline” and of the organizational forms had already been dealt with several times, in articles of the communist press in Italy and at previous congresses of the International.

In reality, in the national sections and in the international camp, the move away from internationalism was well advanced. For years, the policy of the International had been in favor of *noyautage*, that is, political agreements amongst the leaderships of the parties and trade unions. In this manner, principles were sacrificed to achieve flashy tactics that claimed to be Leninist and meant to re-connect ties with masses sundered by the first violent waves of counterrevolution. *Raison d'état* in defense of the Russian state now took first place over internationalism even in the remarks of Bukharin at the May 1927 Executive of the Communist International. By invoking the “diplomatic interests of the Soviet Union” as a primary concern over any return to the class struggle, he rationalized the wretched tactic adopted by the International in the great English General Strike of 1926.¹⁶ In coherence with the above, the International endorsed an agreement between the ultra-conservative leaders of the British Trade Unions and the Anglo-Russian Committee that sanctified the defeat of the enormous 1926 strike of the miners. The Executive of the International fully upheld this accord that stipulated, amongst other agreements, “a non-involvement in English internal affairs,” as if the matters of class struggle had no significance for proletarians of other nations! By then, the demands of the Soviet state prevailed over all political internationalism

In the USSR, the opposition, often divided over theory, organization and tactics—industrialization, intra-party democracy, rapports with the class, mobilization of the masses, Bukharin’s alliance with Stalin—was unable to establish an effective organizational net, and was easily destroyed at the opportune moment. Gradually within the International, a thesis emerged that the salvation of the USSR did not depend on the success of revolutions

in the West, but on the international working classes’ ability to defend the social and economic gains in the USSR. At the VII Enlarged ECCI and at the subsequent XV Congress of the Russian Party, December 1927, the line was laid down: whoever does not believe in the possibility of “socialism in one country” cannot remain in the International or in the party.

THE DEFEAT OF THE WORKING CLASS ON THE WORLD SCENE: FROM THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN COMMITTEE TO THE CHINESE REVOLUTION AND THE THEORY OF “SOCIALISM IN ONE COUNTRY”

In 1926-1927, the results of the dissolution on the theoretical field and the degraded tactical maneuvers came to a head with the “Chinese question” and the failure of the great General Strike in England. For the point of view of world revolution, the outcome was disastrous. In keeping with the International’s preaching on the tie amongst parties and between party and class, the policy of *noyautage* in England led to a shameful compromising by the International of the revolutionary of rank-and-file impulses with the ultra-reformist policies of the trade-union leadership. This produced the only possible—and foreseeable—outcome: the entombing of a strike movement that had involved millions of workers, and against which “His Majesty’s Government” was compelled to mobilize the army, the war navy, and loads of saboteurs and strikebreakers—“scabs,” in the proper parlance.¹⁷

The *Sinistra* continuously battled against those tactics for years, conducting these struggles especially in the international arena in the name of a “united front from below”: that is, the uniting of all basic working-class defense movements on the eco-

16 An analysis of the retreat of the International in the biennial, 1926-1927, crucial to understanding Soviet rapports with the West, was undertaken by our party shortly after the Second World War, in a work by Vercesi, *La tattica del Comintern dal 1926 al 1940* [The Tactic of the Comintern from 1926-1940], in what was then our theoretical journal, *Prometeo*, nos. 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8.

17 See a detailed reconstruction and comment in “Lo Sciopero Generale inglese del 1926 [The English General Strike of 1926],” in “Il programma comunista,” no.11, 1996.

conomic level, regardless of organizational affiliation, but always where possible under the guidance of the class party.

Notwithstanding all this, the International soon applied the same tactic to the situation in China, leading to the tragedy in which millions of Chinese proletarians were politically “disarmed” and handed over to the inter-class policy of the “bloc of four classes” (bourgeoisie, peasantry, small bourgeoisie, and proletariat) imposed by the Stalinized International. The outcome was one of the worst massacres in the history of the modern working class.

Hence what was urgent and necessary in 1927 were a strengthening in theory and a radical change in methods, as already made clear in 1925.¹⁸ There was no reason to seek the “conquest of the masses” at all costs, and by means of contortionist tactics that were guaranteed failures the moment the class party lost its autonomy of action, tactics falsely labeled “Leninist.”

In the face of the severe disorientation on the international level and the attacks against the party organization undertaken by a fascism in power now four years, the leaders of the PCd’I instead turned their entire attention to boosting the proletariat into a hegemonic leadership of the anti-fascist movement. This perspective would not be limited to economic demands, but would necessarily imply the democratic goal of a return to bourgeois liberties. In his statement to the VII Plenum of the ECCI (November-December 1926), amidst the struggle of the Stalin-Bukharin faction against the United Opposition of Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev, Togliatti did not hesitate to throw himself against the United Opposition and those international forces supporting it, thus confirming the full support that the Italian Centrists gave to the group led by Stalin, and to the ancillary implications flowing from the policy of

“socialism in one country”—the abandonment of workingclass internationalism in favor of “defense of the socialist motherland”:

*“The problem [of socialism in one country] has to be seen from the point of view of the influence of the Russian Revolution and the action of the Russian party on the revolutionary forces of the world [...] The conviction exists in the working class that in Russia, after the revolution, the proletariat can construct socialism and is today constructing socialism.”*¹⁹

In fact, early in 1928, thus a few months after the massacres in Canton and Shanghai, Togliatti speaking in the same vein would propose the “slogan of the struggle for peace,” giving voice to the frontist perspective that would henceforth characterize the future anti-fascist stance of the PCI. For the same reason, upon returning from the VIII Plenum in Moscow, he wrote in defense of Stalin’s policy in China as follows:

*“[If] we had isolated ourselves from the national revolutionary front [the very same whose betrayal on their part had led to the defeat of the revolution!], we would have cut ourselves off from the masses and the movement would not have developed [!] under our prevailing influence [!]”*²⁰.

Part and parcel of the open betrayal of class position was the affirmation that the future action of the PCd’I must limit its political objectives within the anti-fascist parameters, without exhausting itself in purely economic demands. In fact, the social content itself of such struggles is viewed from the perspective of the “double revolution” (a two-phased revolution as in Russia). Under fascist oppression, there would occur

“a radicalization of the backward peasant masses that will bring about objective conditions more

18 We cite here Bordiga’s articles in “L’Unita”, “Il pericolo opportunista e l’Internazionale [The Danger of Opportunism and the International]” and “La politica dell’Internazionale [The Politics of the International],” issues of September 30 & October 15, 1925.

19 Cited in G. Berti, *op.cit.*, p. 325.

20 “Sulla tattica comunista nella rivoluzione cinese [On the Communist Tactic in the Chinese Revolution],” in “Lo Stato Operaio,” July, 1927. Be it noted that the massacres had taken place in April that same year!

21 Letter of Togliatti to Germanetto, cit. in Agosti, *Palmiro Togliatti* (Torino: UTET, 1996), p.125.

favorable to the formation of a revolutionary worker-peasant bloc."²¹

In parallel with the explicit recognition of "socialism in one country," in support of which no falsity or exaggeration was too much ("Remove the possibility of Russia's progress toward socialism, deny the possibility of a victorious socialist construction in Russia, and all the historical and political conceptions that underlay the construction of the Communist International would collapse")²², an international campaign against all opponents was unleashed which followed the pattern developing in the USSR, the "guiding country".

THE "TURN TO THE LEFT" AND THE THEORY OF "SOCIALFASCISM"

While fascist persecutions tore the workers' organizations apart and police spies sent numerous militant workers to prison in Italy,²³ the liquidation of revolutionary Marxism continued abroad, replacing it with the tactics associated with "socialism in one country." Declaring fascism to be the main enemy, and using that stand to justify a rapprochement with the "left wing" of reformist and opportunist parties (and, in Italy, to attack the *Sinistra*), between the VI World Congress of the Communist International in 1928 and the X Plenum of the ECCI in 1929, the theory of "socialfascism" suddenly exploded onto the scene.

The theory proclaimed that the "masses of all capitalist nations were being uniformly radicalized," and this called forth a policy of assault everywhere. It declared reformist social-democracy (with its base in the small bourgeoisie and the support given by "working-class aristocracy") as much a danger as fascism: both were thus to be fought. This conclusion echoed the positions of the *Sinistra* (previously so criticized), i.e. that bourgeois rule makes alternative use of the methods of

fascism and democracy in its own interest. However, in the sudden rush of the International to this position after years of courting opportunistic organizations, the "Italian" *Sinistra* espied, not a return to a correct stand, but an additional element of confusion, which only added to the faux policies imposed by the International to all its sections.

At the same time, face to the new tactic, the Italian party leadership itself was on the rocks. Togliatti, by now quite adept at shifting tactical stands overnight, quickly adapted himself to the "reversal of the positions on all the key-points which in the previous years had characterized his positions" and came to "embrace without reserve the decisions of the X Plenum".²⁴ Others, instead, such as Leonetti, Ravazzoli, Tresso, and Silone, thought that the Italian situation was far from being insurrectional, as described by Togliatti and the majority of the CC. They ascribed the "turn to the left" to new factors - the "crisis" in fascism, the inability to form an anti-fascist coalition with the bourgeoisie, and the disappearance of intermediate positions. They believed that "the critical element would be indicated by a revolt, an insurrection, a civil war in which the proletariat would lead the working masses against the ruling capitalists". Their stand was the occasion for the CC to expel them from the party in 1930, but not before a violent exchange of views.

The menace of expulsion and the use of police methods under the accusation of factionalism had already been used by Gramsci against the *Sinistra* during the previous process of party Bolshevization. But now that open season had been proclaimed against "Trotskyism" in the USSR, and against all opponents to the right or left in the European movement, the Italian leadership piped in with their own mimicry:

22 P. Togliatti, "Rottura necessaria [Necessary Rupture]," in "Lo Stato Operaio," 14 November 1928

23 The reader can here be referred to M. Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'OVRA* [The Tentacles of the OVRA] (Bollati-Boringhieri, Turin: 1999).

24. Agosti, *Togliatti*, cit., p.136.

*“Against those who have reached this point there is only one thing to do, battle, open battle without quarter, the mobilization of the entire party and of the working class against these traitors to party and class”*²⁵

The first to be thrown out was Angelo Tasca, a right-wing member of the CC from the early years, guilty of having criticized Stalin when in Moscow as the party’s delegate to the International. In January 1930, he was followed by Bordiga, as thousands of worker activists fled to France and Belgium to escape the fascist police. Amongst them, some loyal to the founding program of the party met secretly at Pantin, near Paris, in 1928, and founded the Faction Abroad of the Communist *Sinistra*. With Gramsci and Terracini in captivity, even the party’s CC had been decimated by the arrests: the CC was reconstituted in France amidst a not large number of activists, and the contact with Italy became ever more tenuous until the coming of the war.²⁶

Although adhering to the “theory of socialfascism,” the Stalinized leadership undertook a number of initiatives in the 1930s to recruit followers from amongst existing social-democratic groups, amongst them “Giustizia e Libertà” (Justice and Liberty), a small group of anti-fascist intellectuals. From 1931, the party created a sub-committee in the CC, “Section Allies of the Proletariat,” which evaluated the possibility of a common action in the ambit of a larger united front. Togliatti himself provided the basis proceeding from the view that the proletariat is not the only authentic revolutionary class:

“Italian socialism was not simply proletarian. It was also artisanal and petit bourgeois, peasant, anti-feudal and anti-clerical. It was a reawakening, the revolt of a whole people against all that oppressed it, that exploited it,

*that prevented it from living: against the police and against the tax agent, against the boss, against the hypocrisy of priests and nuns, against the state”*²⁷

No wonder that in March 1933 the Political Office of the party decided to approach the Socialist Party, the Maximalist Socialists, and the Republican Party with the proposal to establish an anti-fascist united front. Agreement was secured only with the second, and only on the basis of limited, immediate goals - less hours, higher wages, etc.

The VII Congress of the Communist International in 1935 put an end to “socialfascism” and initiated the beginning of the anti-fascist united front, a policy that the PCI had already undertaken. The premises of the tactic were: the imminence of an imperialist war led by the Anglo-Americans against the USSR; the radicalization of the class struggle; the transformation of social-democracy into “socialfascism.” None of these came to pass: the war was not imminent; after it began, it saw the Anglo-Americans and Soviets fighting in the same camp; the offensive came from the bourgeois class, not the workers; not “socialfascism” but fascism in its “democratic” version (militarization; economic planning; strong anti-working class measures) took hold in the Western countries; and it would rake up “social-democracy” at the break of war, or at the war’s end.

FROM THE UNITED FRONT TO THE POPULAR FRONTS

Employing calumnies and force where needed, the period from 1930 to the coming of the war (1939) was taken up by an incessant effort in Italy to isolate the *Sinistra*, which in 1928 had organized itself as the Left Faction of the PCd’I.

The nefarious theory that would

25 “Verbale CC PCI [Minutes of the CC, PCI], June, 1930, in Spriano, *op.cit.*, Vol II, p.259, n3.

26 On the exiles in Belgium, see A. Morelli, *Fascismo e antifascismo nell’emigrazione italiana in Belgio (1922-1940)*[Fascism and Anti-Fascism in the Italian Emigration in Belgium, 1922-1940] (Rome: Bonacci, 1987).

27 P.Togliatti (Ercoli), Preface to G. Germanetto, *Memorie di un barbiere* [Memoirs of a Barber] (Rome: Ed. E.GI. TI., 1931). The name change - from PCd’I (Communist Party of Italy - Section of the Communist International) to PCI (Italian Communist Party) - was significant, because it expressed and underlined the purely national (and nationalistic) perspective of the Stalinized party.

lead to the partisan blocs of the Resistance and the class party's loss of independence may be traced back to the III Congress of the International (1921), whose directions were now used by the Centrists to justify the formation of an anti-bourgeois front of "workers' parties" and to hypothesize fascism as an independent, "unnatural" and transient state of barbarism against which even the "progressive" bourgeoisie would be welcomed to join in a coalition to restore the violated democracy. A totally contrary point of view was expressed by *Prometeo*, the organ of the Left Faction operating outside Italy, when it cited the following from the charter of the PCd'I founded at Livorno:

*"The actual conditions of production are protected by the power of the bourgeois state that, based on the democratic representative system, constitutes the organ that defends the interests of the capitalistic class. The proletariat can neither break nor modify the capitalistic rapports of production without the violent overthrow of bourgeois power."*²⁸

These were counterpoised to the new programs of the Central Committee of the Party ("The struggle for partial gains, the struggle for democratic gains, the struggle for liberty are identical with the overthrow of fascism and the capitalistic regime"). And this, we noted, coincided with the transitional program of Trotskyist origin that mixed democratic demands (defined of "proletarian democracy") with others that were pre-Marxist and totally erroneous in the existing conditions (of advanced capitalism) of Western Europe and America (national independence, revolutionary constituent assembly, separation of church and state, etc.) – a position that would lead to the final separation of the Left Faction (the *Sinistra* abroad) from the Trotskyist movement as a consequence of differing analyses of the war in Spain.

In fact, 1933 was not only the year Hitler became chancellor. It was the year of the New Deal (democratic in its politics, fascist in its economy); the year of the remilitarization of Germany and the Soviet Union; the year when state-led and centralized/centralizing measures were enacted in a whole series of nations to emerge from the industrial and financial crisis, preceding the final resort known to capitalism: world war.

The "Spanish Question" settled issues and ambiguities that had arisen in the opposition movements, and served to delineate as traitors, without any further possibility of doubt, the Stalinized parties ever ready to genuflect to the needs of the Soviet state.²⁹

The fall of the long-term government of de Rivera (1923-1930, dictatorial, yes, but supported by Largo Caballero's socialists), the subsequent abdication of Alfonso XIII and the birth of the republic found a frazzled and completely Stalinized Communist Party perfectly aligned and in agreement with the Communist International's call for a "workers and peasants government." The newly-born republic, bent on defending without reservation its class role, repressed with blood and iron the strikes that during all of 1931 shook the nation. That notwithstanding, the Trotskyist Opposition did not cease to exhort the proletariat to uphold the new parliament and, far from declaring merciless war on the enemy, sermonized support for the republic on condition that once and for all it free "all society from the trash of feudalism," at the same time pressing for demands of a transitory nature.³⁰ It was precisely over these tactics that the *Sinistra* broke with Trotskyism – a break which was definitely sanctioned by the *Sinistra's* rejection of the "politics of entrism," a tactic according to which all revolutionaries expelled from the Stalinized parties were to enter the socialist parties to re-

28 *Prometeo*, n. 8, October 15, 1928.

29 On the war between Franco and the Republicans in Spain, other than the Vercesi article already cited, *La tattica del Comintern dal 1926 al 1940* [The Tactic of the Comintern from 1926-1940], in, *Prometeo*, nos. 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, see A. Guillaumon Iborra, *I bordighisti nella Guerra Civile Spagnola* [The Bordighists in the Spanish Civil War], *Quaderni del Centro Studi "Pietro Tresso"*, n. 27.

30 See L. Trotsky, "La rivoluzione spagnola e i pericoli che la minacciano" [The Spanish Revolution and the Perils that Menace It], May, 1931.

31 A thorough analysis of the International and an early criticism of the social and economic developments in the Soviet Union, totally unlike all other oppositional criticism, were made by the Left Faction beginning in 1934 and published in the French-language organ of the Faction, *Bilan*. See the article "Partito Internazionale Stato" [Party International State], now also in A. Giasanti, *Rivoluzione e reazione* [Revolution and Reaction] (Milano: Giuffrè, 1983).

32. Edited quote from Vercesi, "La tattica del Comintern...", cit., *Pro-meteo*, n.8.

33. Vercesi, "La tattica del Comintern...", *Pro-meteo*, n.7, 1947. The PCF perfectly carried out its role of "social pacifier", also labeling "Hitlerite" those few workers who followed the revolutionary line.

34: In "Lo Stato Operaio," n. 5-6, 1937. Whereas for Sereni, another leader of the Stalinized party, Bordiga, "having become a fascist spy [...], does nothing more than follow the career of a *guappo*, of a member of the Camorra [the Neapolitan Mafia]," in "Lo Stato Operaio," n.11, 1938.

35. Some examples: In Italy there are "some cliques which, by the name of Trotskyists or Bordighists, often with ambiguous elements, seek to disintegrate the party," in "L'Unità", February 3, 1933; "It is urgent that all vanguard workers give up any liberality that allows these Bordighist and Trotskyist agents of fascism to infiltrate workers' ranks", in "Lo Stato Operaio", n.11, 1938. There exists by now an ample, although incomplete, documentation on the persecution of Italian Left opponents in the

establish ties with the masses. In addition, these polemics between Trotskyism and us would become sharper in the course of 1936, and in connection with the question of the nature of the Soviet Union.³¹

The upsurge in working-class struggles that marked the course of that year in Belgium, France and Spain led the "communist" parties to seek an anti-fascist alliance at all costs with the socialists, the goal being a "national reconciliation" and a defense of democratic institutions and practices. Anyone who did not adhere to these goals was considered a lackey of the bosses or Hitler's agent, and as such liable to any consequence. The huge parade that marched through Paris in July 1936 led by the heads of the French "Communist" party, the SFIO (the Socialist Party of the Second International), and the leaders of the "communist"-led CGT trade union crowned the triumph of social democracy, and put an end to the last great spontaneous mass action of the workers' class struggle before the war. The policy was likewise followed by the "entrism" Trotskyists, convinced that by boring into the SFIO they would be able to "drag the party in the direction of revolution." Maurice Thorez, Secretary of the French "Communist" Party, baptized the occasion with these words:

*"One must be able to end a strike when it has achieved the essential goals. One must also know how to come to a compromise so as not to lose one's power and, above all, so as not to add to the panic felt by the reactionaries."*³²

And so, when in July 1936 the generals began the uprising in Spain, all the united-front groups in the International were ideologically aligned on the principle of the defense of "rights", of democratic "liberties", of the unity of the "Left" against the barbarism of fascism. On that occasion, they announced that the masses would save the

Spanish Republic; they remained silent about the fact that, as we wrote at the time, this republic not only had nothing socialist about it, but, notwithstanding some daring peripheral initiatives in social and economic areas, "it could move only in a counterrevolutionary direction, and at no time was the matter of a revolutionary dictatorship raised."³³

The PCI and all the other European communist parties directed by Moscow undertook an intense anti-fascist campaign, mindlessly pushing thousands of militant proletarians to fight in a war for "democracy" against fascism. Instead, one of the last forces in Europe that continued to defend Marxism, the *Sinistra*, urged a policy calling for the fraternity of the working masses: rather than a mutual massacre, it called for a common war against both camps, both democratic and fascist, in name of the communist revolution. In this difficult moment, the PCI, totally aligned on the "defense of the USSR," continued to insist on the anti-fascist thesis of "a defense of liberty." In this sense, the support of the International Brigades was the conclusive evidence that for this party all forms of class demands and perspectives had been abandoned, and that its historic role had become now that of preventing any theoretical or formal rearmament of the working class. Hence, amidst bacchanalian hosannas accompanying the physical elimination of October Revolution generation in USSR, during all the 1930s there unfolded the attacks against the *Sinistra* Faction, now lumped together as one with the Trotskyist Opposition.

Quoting Togliatti for this occasion,

*"Today, Bordiga lives tranquilly in Italy as a Trotskyist scoundrel protected by the police and fascists and hated by workers, as becomes a traitor."*³⁴

Whilst the party press and cadres sought to think up the worst insults

for their former comrades,³⁵ the main leaders launched in 1935 what appeared to be the “politics of national reconciliation.”³⁶ Some declared themselves disposable to participate in a government ready to defend “popular liberties,” “to beat back any return offensive by fascism,”³⁷ but Togliatti explained what was meant by the “popular front” concept: the union of *all* forces, outside or inside Mussolini’s fascism. Henceforth, the role of the working class was to be that of “guide of the popular anti-fascist revolution” (in the words of Luigi Longo), relying on the leaders’ ability “to unite the anti-fascist opposition to the opposition agitating within fascism” (in the words of Ruggiero Grieco). In keeping with this program, in May 1936, at the end of the Ethiopian campaign (one of the Italian *lumpen* imperialism’s exploits!), they affirmed:

*“Our soldiers, the Black Shirts, fought with courage, faced great sacrifices [...] they undertook an endeavor that demonstrated the self-denial and resistance of our magnificent people [...]. They fought for an unjust cause. They were misled [...] by fascism. They thought they were fighting to make the nation great, strong, and happy. And behind this admirable ideal [!!!] for which life was worth sacrificing, thousands of our brothers died, and thousands remained maimed or made ill for life.”*³⁸

In the name of a popular unity where there were now no limits to their betrayal, the leading cadre of the PCI decided to appropriate to themselves the initial fascist platform of 1919 – now described as a “program for peace, liberty, and the protection of workers’ interests”:

“We extend our hand to the Fascists, our brothers in work and sufferings[...]. We Communists want to make Italy strong, free, happy. Our hopes are your aspira-

*tions, o Fascists, Catholics, Italians of all political opinions, of all religious faiths.”*³⁹

Finally, from the apex of this shameful binge, in August 1936 “Lo Stato Operaio” published the article, “For the Salvation of Italy and the Reconciliation of its People!,” sadly known as “An Appeal to Fascists,” where one can read:

“Let us shake hands, sons of the Italian Nation! Let us extend our hands, o Fascists, Communists, Socialists, men of all opinions. Let us embrace each other and march shoulder to shoulder to gain the right to be citizens of a civil country such as ours [...]. The unity of all the people for liberty, for the realization of that 1919 fascist program. To you, Fascist worker!, we extend our hand because with you we wish to build an Italy of work and peace[...] we are your brothers, we have the same interests and enemies. To you, Catholic worker!, we give you our hand because together with you we wish to fight for a larger justice, for peace amongst men, for liberty.”

As is noted, the policies of the PCI – better to say, the policies of the few leaders who had reconstructed abroad the Central Committee of Gramscian origin – were completely and faithfully orientated to the decisions forthcoming from the Moscovite “Communist” International. These had to do with fighting the opposition on the Left, accepting the theory of socialfascism, subsequent changes relating to the united fronts, the defense of the democratic forms of the bourgeois state,⁴⁰ and, in time, even the eventual use of all the legal means provided within the fascist state with the aim of mobilizing the “brothers in black shirts.” In these circumstances, with the PCI cut off from its communist base in Italy, and the latter completely in the dark as regards what was going on in the Stalinist Axis – from the

USSR in the 1930s: from the first timid admissions on part of the PCI after the XXth Congress of the CPUS [see R. Mieli, *Togliatti 1937* (Milano: Rizzoli 1964)] to such books as – among others – R. Caccavale, *La speranza Stalin* (Roma: Ed. Valerio Levi, 1989), FR. Bigazzi and G. Lehner, eds., *Dialoghi del terrore* (Firenze: Ed. Ponte alle Grazie, 1991), E. Dundovich, *Tra esilio e castigo* (Roma: Carocci, 1998).

36 A. Agosti, *Palmiro Togliatti*, cit., p.202.

37 Ibid., p. 203.

38 In “Lo Stato Operaio,” n.5, 1936.

39 In “Lo Stato Operaio,” n. 6, 1936.

40 In Spain, this occurred with the pretense of the defense of the Republic. In Italy, aside from some period when the terms “democratic republic” were used in polemic with *Giustizia e Libertà* (Justice and Liberty, a socialist anti-fascist group; see above), the preference was all for Gramsci’s idea of a constituent assembly, that, in the words of Di Vittorio, “would not prevent the involvement of Catholics and monarchists”.

Central Committee in Paris to Togliatti in Moscow – it is understandable that the leaders could sign the Unity Agreement with the Socialists in 1937, with the goal of raising a popular struggle of the people that would use “whatever legal possibilities found in the fascist regime to achieve that end.”

41 These somersaults led to various expulsions of leaders – Umberto Terracini and Camilla Ravera, among the most famous ones – and to the distancing of others, amongst them Leo Valiani, and to a break of relations with socialists and other anti-fascist groups.

The successive summersaults undertaken by the PCI-leadership, necessitated by the need to always align itself with the strategic, political and military needs of the “guide-state” – the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of 1939 with Hitler being the most egregious example⁴¹ – require no further elaboration here. Simply stated, they

demonstrated (again) that the PCI had long since lost all right to present itself as a revolutionary party: 1) it usurped the title of “communist,” despite having betrayed the theory, principles and goals of communism, as well as all revolutionary commitments; 2) it entered open-eyed into social-democratic coalitions. By so doing in the early postwar years it would become the prop supporting the bourgeoisie in contending with the inevitable radicalization of the masses.

With that in mind, we are able to trace the line of development that unites the tactics of the “anti-fascist united front” emerging clearly in the first half of the 1920s with those coalitions encompassing bourgeois and petit-bourgeois parties in China, Germany, France, and Spain, leading inevitably to the formation of partisan blocs, and, as a direct consequence, to the defense of one of the two imperialist camps.

The history of the past half century has shown the correctness of our analysis at the time. The relationship of forces established by the victory of the Western democracies after the Second World War was extremely unfavorable to the development of class consciousness and the revival of the class struggle, both part of the groundwork for a change to socialism. Behind the hypocrisy of “free” elections, “free” parliaments, and “free” public opinions, there

consolidated those forces that had fed fascism. Totalitarian fascism was defeated, but what it stood for was reinforced in the economic, juridical, and administrative rule of bourgeois “democracies.”

This is seen more clearly than ever in the rule of capital that underlies the most dangerous of all imperialisms, the American hegemony that today dominates and threatens the world with worse destruction, military and ecological, than ever visited upon it before. It is the skeleton of modern imperialism, characterized by the concentration of monopoly in the economy, aided and guided by the fiscal and economic policies of the state. The political state that in the Marxist conception was the executive committee tutoring the interests of the bourgeois class becomes ever more the organ of control and direction either directly or indirectly through a delegation to extra-national bodies free of all popular control, supervision or awareness even. Basing itself on a consensus torn from the masses by a trade-union and political opportunism, by omnipotent organs of ideological formation and control – the media, schools, the main institutions of culture, major and minor public spokesmen – the system produces a regime of oppression and social controls. Hence, notwithstanding its appearance, the epoch of genuine liberalism and democracy is for ever over, and the democratic assertions that two centuries ago were truly democratic are today reactionary and conservative. What better example than the last (2000) American presidential election where the basic precept upon which the republic stood – popular sovereignty – was violated amidst the cheers of the few and the silence and incomprehension of the many?

Let us repeat. This united-front tactic, which has nothing to do with the march of the communist revolution, falls within the ambit of the theory of “socialism in one country” and the defense of the “guide-state.” Having subordinated the European proletariat to the military and diplomatic demands of the Soviet Union (in which five-year plans celebrated a capitalistic accumulation of saturnalian proportions, greater than in any previous process of industrialization), the working class that had been a player in the greatest revolu-

tion of modern times was forced into a murderous rhythm of work. This was another consequence of the Stalinization of the European communist parties.

For these reasons, the Italian *Sinistra* had no choice but to refuse any involvement with groups that from the early thirties a towering revolutionary of Trotsky's stature attempted to bring together through an act of organizational voluntarism destined, as has too often been shown by history, to experience the most bitter failure. Even with those who in a desperate effort to keep contact with the working masses arrogated to themselves the title of a IV International and preached to all and sundry the political tactic of *noyautage* – the practice of entering socialist parties in a vain attempt to win over the political heart of those movements – the Italian *Sinistra* saw the need to break all political contact. And for these groups the worst was yet to come: given the prospect of menacing war, in the place of a clear and definite defense of a class program, they advocated an “unconditional defense of the USSR”, which ended with the embrace of the democratic Allies, thus abandoning the grand tradition of revolutionary defeatism born at Zimmerwald.⁴²

THE WAR

When the Non-Aggression Pact was signed between the USSR and Germany on August 23, 1939, surprise reigned amongst the small group of PCI leaders. Then, a total acceptance of the new policy followed very quickly.⁴³ Unexpectedly, they went from a fight for democracy against fascism to the theory of non-support of either imperialist camps in a war against each other; nonetheless, the PCI leadership continued to denounce fascism as the principal enemy. Togliatti wrote from Basle on August 29, 1939:

*“If, despite all, war were to come, we will fight with all our means, with all our forces[...] to assure that the war will achieve the destruction of fascism [...]. To achieve that end, we will use every means given to us; we will enter, if we must, the French Army to fight fascists and help defeat them.”*⁴⁴

From the time in the 1920s when they first entered an anti-fascist united front, there is a deep and coherent linearity in the policies of the PCI. This clearly discernable stance, passed off as “revolutionary defeatism,” was emphasized by Togliatti a year later, when Italy had already entered the war:

*“The communists turn to workers [...] under arms and say: ‘Keep hold of the guns in your hands, [and] don’t drop them until you have cleared out the fascist plutocracy, until you will have given the nation peace and liberty.’”*⁴⁵

It doesn't pay to detail here the attempts to reorganize the party cadre in Italy. During the first two years of war, some cadre tried to return clandestinely from France; other groups formed in prisons and in places where political prisoners were confined, only to demonstrate unforgiving hostility to all communist prisoners who had remained faithful to the directives and programs of the party born at Livorno, now two decades in the past. There remains the bitter balance-sheet of a party that sought amidst the massacres of war to re-establish itself on the political basis of national defense and of national independence, for the return of democratic liberties and for anti-fascism, all of which on the tactical level could not but lead to the formation of partisan blocs and the betrayal and abandonment of proletarian internationalism, of revolutionary defeatism, and of the autonomous class struggle leading to the overthrow of international capitalism.

42 For the rapports between the Left Faction and Trotsky and Trotskyism, one may consult amongst other sources “Trotsky et la Gauche Italienne,” in “Programme Communiste”, n.51-52, April-September, 1972; “Trotsky, la Fraction de Gauche du PCd'Italie et les ‘mots d'ordre démocratique.’”, in “Programme Communiste”, n.84-85, October 1980-March 1981.

43 See A.Peregalli, *Il patto Hitler-Stalin e la spartizione della Polonia* [The Hitler-Stalin Pact and the Partition of Poland] (Rome: Ed. Erre Emme, 1989), p.145.

44 P. Spriano, *Storia del Partito comunista italiano* [The History of the PCI], cit., Vol.IV, p.16.

45 “Lettere di Spartaco [Letters of Spartacus]”, in *Ibid.*, p 21.

46 The fall of Mussolini was agreed to by large sectors of the “fascist” bourgeoisie and the Army, and voted democratically at the Fascist Grand Council on July 24, 1943. Proposals to remove Mussolini had been discussed with the French and English since 1943. With the arrest of Il Duce, the Fascist National Party, the Special Tribunal and the Grand Council were dissolved, that is, the most evident fixtures of the regime were removed. But the high political, administrative and economic officials remained in place transforming the crude “plebian” fascism of the prewar into an authoritarian regime merciless in its attitude towards the working class, as shown in the history of the subsequent months.

47 P. Togliatti, “Alla lotta, alle armi, per la formazione di un governo nazionale provvisorio di pace [To fight, to arms, for the formation of provisional national government of peace]”, August 3, 1943, from *Da Radio Milano-Libertà* (Roma: Rinascita, 1974).

48 P. Togliatti, “La nazione chiede al nostro governo una vera e formale dichiarazione di guerra alla Germania [The nation demands of our government a real and formal declaration of war against Germany]” September 15, 1943, in *Ibid.*

49 *Storia della Sinistra Comunista* [History of the Communist Left], cit., Vol. I, p. 97.

50 For a discussion of left groups, not politically tied to the PCI, opposing fascism at this time, see A. Peregalli, *L'altra Resistenza. Il PCI e le opposizioni di sinistra, 1943-1945* [The Other Resistance. The PCI and the Left Oppositions 1943-1945] (Genova: Graphos, 1991).

When the Italian *haute bourgeoisie*, big capital, decided, by July 25, 1943,⁴⁶ that the hour had come to dispose of fascism and betray yesterday's allies, it did not do so in the name of neutrality and peace, but in the name of democracy and continuation of the war under more advantageous conditions. Nevertheless, before carrying out the betrayal, it found it necessary to show the working class that the boss remains the same: whether fascist or democratic, it made no difference. To tamp down any attempt at revolt by the working class, the Badoglio regime that had been designated to substitute for the rule of the Fascist Grand Council, took some hundred proletarian lives during the 45-days leading up to the armistice with the Allies. The political stance of the PCI leaders was for full support to any government to the degree it broke ties with Germany and adhered fully to Western capital: “The war against the democratic nations, against England, the US, and Russia, is fascism's war and exclusively fascism's. It cannot be and never can be Italy's war, the nation's war.”⁴⁷

And, finally, when after September 8, the date of the signing of the armistice, and the flight of the king and government created the conditions favorable for the beginning of revolutionary conditions, the PCI, loyal to its decade-old betrayal of Marxism, demanded in its stead the immediate adherence to the war of nation against nation, in association with the small, middle, and *haute bourgeoisie*, in Italy and the Allied nations. “The declaration of war against Germany [...] will set relations between Italy and the other nations on a basis of loyalty and reciprocal faith leading to the defanging of German imperialism [...] On this our government must not hesitate. If it declares war against the Germans, takes into its hands and undertakes with audacity and energy to raise the sacred flag of national independence, all of Italy, conscious

of its duty, will march into combat.”⁴⁸

In analogous conditions, on the eve of the Italian intervention in World War I, the *Sinistra* had not hesitated one moment to declare its loyalty to its revolutionary program: “We were never neither neutralists nor pacifists; neither did we believe in permanent peace amongst states. We deplored the disarming of the class war, of the war of classes, in order to make way for the war of nations. Our alternative was never against suspending the legal class war, but to struggle in the direction of a war by the revolutionary proletariat that alone shall extirpate one day the roots of wars between peoples. We were the true class interventionists – interventionists for the revolution.”⁴⁹

The Second World War took the lives of several millions of Italian proletarians. Sent to their slaughter in Africa, Russia and the Balkans, without leadership from the PCI, these workers and peasants in uniform could not use revolutionary defeatism against their bourgeoisie. The only coherent Marxist voice raised against the war was by the Internationalist Communist Party that was constituted in northern Italy in 1942, a connecting center between the Faction outside Italy and the groups that had survived the twenty-year interregnum in Italy.⁵⁰ In the first issue of its organ, *Prometeo*, November 1, 1943, it pointed to revolution as the alternative to imperialist war, calling on each proletariat

to indicate the ideological and therefore political definition of both camps of belligerents as alternative visages of one bourgeois reality, both to be fought because of their intimate tie, despite their appearance, to the same iron laws of the preservation of the privileges of capital.

The official history of the PCI enjoys describing the return of Togliatti to

Italy in March 1944 as a major event – “the turning point of Salerno” – destined to modify and direct the strategy of the party to a new goal. Meantime, the USSR had reestablished diplomatic relations with the Badoglio government, and it was clear that the arrival of this Stalinist agent – hailed as “the only seer amongst the blind,” or as “a prodigious cavalier, a reborn Lohengrin,” even by old socialist mouthpieces – was accorded a plenipotentiary status by Allied politicians and their military, who saw in the PCI the means by which to navigate Italy, republican or monarchist would be immaterial,⁵¹ through the difficult reconstruction of the immediate postwar years. At the working class’ expense.

This individual, interventionist in the first hours of 1915, after Livorno an ally of the *Sinistra* and then of the Centrists (according to what was most convenient), falsifier of party documents and betrayer of his incarcerated comrades in the gulag, ready to kneel to any compromise with his superiors (with Stalin in person or, alternatively, with Manuilsky or Dimitrov), probably responsible for the death of hundreds of exiled Italians who ended up in Soviet camps, is the spitting image of the international counterrevolution, in its Italian image. Some days after his debarkation at Naples in 1944, this traitor of the international proletariat delivered a speech that immediately elicited much praise from his party comrades and later democratic historians of all political views. After having indignantly rejected all accusations that Communists were the enemies of property, instigators of violence, or defeatists, he continued:

“I dare anyone [...] to find one single act by our party [evidently, he spoke of “his” party which had nothing to do with the party of 1921] which may have been in contrast to or harmed the interests of the nation [...]. The banner of national interests that fascism

*betrayed and dragged through the mud will be gathered up and raised by us.”*⁵²

He could not fail to invoke the usual appeal to the Founding Fathers – founders, we must add, of the First and Third Internationals. But note the terms of his invocation:

“We are within the doctrine and tradition of Marx and Engels, who never denied the interests of their nation [?], defending them [??] as much against aggressors and foreign invaders as against reactionary groups that stamped on them. We are in the tradition of the great Lenin, who claimed to sense in himself the pride of the Russian [???], urging his own party to continue the tradition of Russian liberal [????] and democratic [????] thought.”

Then, in order to be precisely clear (there are always some hotheads about!), he pronounced:

*“Today we do not pose before the workers the problem [one notes his sensitivity in not pronouncing the word ‘revolution’] of doing as in Russia [...]. Heaven help us, if the working class, today, does not carry out its national role [...]. The program that we propose to the Italian people, at the end of the war, is that of founding a democratic and progressive regime [...]. In a constituent assembly [that may be convoked] on the morrow, we will propose that the people turn Italy into a democratic republic, under a Constitution that will guarantee all liberties to all: free -
dom of thought and word; freedom of the press, of association, and of gatherings; freedom of religion and worship; the right of small and medium to development without being crushed by the large and egotistical plutocracies, that is, of monopoly capitalism.”*

If, nevertheless, someone had not understood or would not accept the sub-

51. The Communist Party had always said, from the war’s beginning, that the matter of the monarchy could be set aside, if there was a need to save Italy from the catastrophe through the formation of a unity of all political forces.” M. and M. Ferrara, *Conversazioni con Togliatti* [Conversations with Togliatti] (Roma: Edizioni di Cultura Sociale, 1952), p.318

52 This and subsequent citations from Togliatti are found in *La politica di unità nazionale dei comunisti* [The Communist Policy of National Unity] (Roma: Edizioni Robin, 1999).

53. *Ibidem*, p.74.

54. F. Platone, „Vecchie e nuove vie della provocazione trotskista [The Old and New Ways of Trotskyite Provocation]”, *Rinascita*, April, 1945. Besides being a stalinist leader, Platone was the brother-in-law of Mario Acquaviva, a noted internationalist, member of our Party, who was assassinated three months after the publication of Platone's article.

55. Umberto Terracini, who in 1921 had presented (in a somewhat incorrect manner) the *Sinistra's* views at the I-IIIrd Congress of the Communist International, became president of the Constituent Assembly, along with the ex-fascist Enrico De Nicola (who in 1924 had refused a public debate with Bordiga) and the Christian Democrat, Alcide De Gasperi. See U. Terracini, *Come nacque la Costituzione* [How the Constitution Was Born] (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1978).

56. Giorgio Bocca, *Pal-miro Togliatti* (Bari: Laterza, 1973), p.458.

stitution that replaced the historic Marxist program, then with that person there could be no compromise:

*“Our party can fulfill its obligations only to the degree in which it is disciplined [...]. Be vigilant. Be disciplined [...]. Always keep your eyes open to uncover and kick out him who wants to infiltrate our ranks so as to raise discord, to divide us. Almost always you will uncover that he is an agent of the enemy. Unmask without pity the provocateur, the divider, the corrupter.”*⁵³

As the Italian proletariat was invited to align itself under the Anglo-Saxon flag and fight with the partisans against the Germans, the hunt for the opposition brought results – the assassination of valorous comrades who were depicted in the communist press as “agents of the enemy made up to appear as extremists with berets [...] directors of dens and clandestine gambling joints, unscrupulous criminals and enemies of the revolution [...] agents of the OVRA [fascist secret police] and of the Gestapo [...] adventurous acolytes who used anti-communism as weapon of choice.”⁵⁴

Eliminating working-class opposition, and in cahoots with other parties to immediately suppress any spontaneous class manifestation thus keeping the class shackled to the old social relations, the PCI leadership preened itself to become members of the government, participated in drawing up the Italian Constitution,⁵⁵ and sent its most representative figure, Palmiro Togliatti, to become the Minister of Pardon and Justice, twice under the king and a third time under the president of the republic. Clad in those robes, in June 1946, he signed a decree of amnesty so forgiving of the heinous political crimes committed under fascism that wrote a noted journalist-biographer, “all the sadists from the Republic of Salò [Mussolini's last two years], all the butchers of partisans were freed [by Togliatti].”⁵⁶

THE SECOND POSTWAR PERIOD

In 1947, the PCI and the PSI finally achieved what they never could under fascism – a signed pact establishing a unity of action. This “alliance” had the goal (and the effect!) of impeding the rebirth of an autonomous class movement that in the postwar situation could be perilous to the new order reset by the Italian bourgeoisie. The agreement lasted until the XXth Congress of the Soviet party, 1956, when, with the “revelations” made in the famous “secret report” by Khrushchev, the PSI leadership, sensing the favorable conditions created for political maneuverings, turned its back to the Togliattian party, and in a few years entered into a governmental center-left coalition.

In these circumstances, the PCI trotted out their theses about “an Italian way to socialism,” formulated already in 1947 but now given new credibility to staunch the loss of cadre and votes under the impact of dramatic anti-Soviet revolts, the Poznan uprising in June and the bloody and more serious Hungarian events in October. Amidst an unavoidable *obligato* of political maneuvers, there occurred within the party and its leadership a more apparent than real “showdown” with the PCI's “leftwing” – the old Stalinist partisans who loved to invoke their militancy and exhibit their rifles, but always in the name of a multi-class anti-fascism.

This cornering had begun in 1955: by carrying it to term, the party's right hoped to de-Stalinize with the least possible pain and damage. It must be understood that, beyond the flowery and at times truculent prose of both camps, there was the expectation of a political deal, one wing with the anti-fascists, the other with Christian Democrats, that in time would smooth the passage to the coveted offices of government. Always, a multi-class alliance underlay the policy of both.

The 1960s were the years of the “economic miracle” and of the Khrushchevian theory of “peaceful co-existence” - immediately adopted by the PCI. This was the beginning of the cycle of postwar accumulation and therefore of the rising demands by the working class, often violent and more often occasioned by the low wages and the mass unemployment. During those years numerous critical movements came to life within the PCI demanding “a return to Marxism.” In all, they were either unable to go beyond a “spontaneist” or “workerist” concept of development, reverting at times even to the councilism of the early 1920s (the journal *Quaderni rossi*), or they displayed an intellectual or idealistic bent tending toward a “cultural liberation” as a preliminary to a future political action (see *Quaderni piacentini*), while the old Stalinist stalwarts in the party generally maintained their silence.⁵⁷

The reaction of the PCI center to these and other groups of dissidents was one of caution and permissiveness, whereas it became one of intransigent hostility at the moment of the first signs of terrorism after 1968. Confronted with this spontaneist and adventurist form of struggle and drawing on its network of informers in the factories, the PCI did not hesitate to pass the names of hundreds of individuals, former party members, to the secret services of the state. In the meantime, Enrico Berlinguer, Secretary of the party from 1972 to 1984, elaborated the theory of “historic compromise”, which sanctified an alliance no longer with the Socialists alone, but directly with Christian Democracy, the ruling party of government from the end of World War II and the recipient of US backing and surreptitious forms of aid.

The doors to a coalition government were now ready to be thrown open, after the PCI abandoned the “Communist” name it had usurped decades before: from 1991, it became

known as the Democratic Party of the Left, only to be further shortened, as it moved ever more to the right, to Democrats of the Left (DS).

To follow here the various political and theoretical contortions undertaken by the PCI in the last 20 years of its history would seem futile. It is enough to add that the strategy of “historic compromise” was tactically modified between 1976-1978, when the party gave support in parliament to governmental coalitions “without communists,” – the concept of “government of democratic solidarity” that, at the beginning of the 1980s, became simply “of democratic alternative.” As we have seen, aside from these verbal sophisms, the permanent scope of the PCI’s political history for the entire postwar has centered on “national solidarity.”

The party’s strategy, under Berlinguer in particular, was dictated by what the Italian bourgeoisie considered emergency conditions: first, the international recession, with the hard conditions imposed by the IMF to qualify for loans; and in consequence of that, the exhaustion of monetary reserves (early 1976). With its strong electoral support, the PCI openly announced its goal to revive the economy, guaranteeing a defense the public and social order in view of “the politics of sacrifice” that would inevitably fall on the working class during the “emergency.” The formal disappearance of the party was the legitimate conclusion of a process of decomposition lasting as long as the Italian bourgeoisie found it necessary to use the PCI as a social pacifier.

In reviewing the history of Stalinism in Italy (that veritable laboratory of counterrevolution), we thus saw an introductory phase where there continued to be theoretical and organizational ties to the traditions of an international and revolutionary Marxism. We set the point of rupture at 1923, not so

57. Amongst the many “true confessions” from this time one notes the cynicism of Pietro Secchia, the old Stalinist leader of the PCI’s “left wing,” who was always free with truculent denunciations of critics to his left, whom he would refer to as “Gestapo agents”: “In everyone there is some opportunism. One cannot always shout the truth or what one takes for the truth [...]. To say to one’s party what one thinks of its politics is to be eliminated quickly. Some things must be said, they have to be said, but with discretion at the proper time and with some muffling [...]. Between two exigencies: to repeat the truth in a loud voice, or muffle, at times to remain silent, one must arrive at a compromise.” Quoted in E. Colletti, *Archivio Pietro Secchia 1945-1973*, in *Annali*, anno XIX, Feltrinelli, 1978, p.591.

58 On these terms, Bordiga expressed himself to Karl Korsch (who had invited him to take the lead of a “new” International in 1926), in a lengthy response which is free of all pessimism as to the future revolution, but bases itself on a lucid Marxist analysis of the world-wide ebb-flow that had begun in those years and that demanded a resistance founded on the invariant programs of Marxism. The letter can be read in “La crisi del 1926 nel Partito e nell’Internazionale [The 1926 Crisis in the Party and the International], in *Quaderni del Programma Comunista*, n.4, April 1980, pp.5-8.

59. For an ideological summation of Gramsci’s ideology in the fold of idealism, see Christian Riechers, *Gramsci e le ideologie del suo tempo* [Gramsci and the Ideologies of his Day], (Genova: Graphos, 1993). For a Marxist critique of voluntarism in Gramsci, see our text “I fondamenti del comunismo rivoluzionario marxista nella dottrina e nella storia della lotta proletaria internazionale” [The Fundamentals of Revolutionary Marxist Communism in the Doctrine and History of the International Proletarian Struggle], in “Il programma comunista,” n. 15, 1957, now also in *Tracciato d’impostazione. I fondamenti del comunismo rivoluzionario* [Basic Outline. The Fundamentals of Revolutionary Marxist Communism] (Milano: Edizioni Il Programma Comunista, 1974).

much from the fact that the old *Sinistra* leadership had resigned and the International imposed a new one without consultation of the PCd’I’s membership: but also because from that time there developed, under the guise of tactical changes, a new strategy of alliances and organizational contortions. Such a voluntaristic strategy was supposed to draw proletarian masses whose earlier combativeness, class solidarity and strivings had been severely blunted by the defeats in the “red biennial” of 1919-1921 and the counterrevolutionary triumphs of the bourgeoisie behind the terrorist violence of the Black Shirts.

The battle carried out by the *Sinistra* until its expulsion in the years 1928-1930 could only be conducted on an international level, and not merely within the confines of a relatively “miserly-small” Italy (and this is the reason why we always rejected the name of “Italian Left”, as if a national identity was implied in our tradition). This battle had little hope of safeguarding organizational structures, since it developed at the very moment when there beat down on the workers’ movement the blow-back of the degenerative process in the USSR and the fascist repression signaled by Italy and then Germany – two enormous facts which would (and did) drag with them what remained of the old working-class organizations and their militant defenders and push them toward the opportunistic vortex of “national defense”. As a matter of fact, we stated from 1926 that any attempt to oppose the “approaching storm” with organizational expedients – temporary

fusions with small oppositional organizations, factionist maneuvers, etc – were doomed to fail; and that, to the contrary, what was urgently needed was “a deliberately directed effort to work out the ideological politics of an international Left, based on the rich experiences undergone by the Comintern.”⁵⁸

Those who from 1926 to the beginning of the war [1939] – and they were a majority – preferred to embed themselves in the vortex of “socialism in one country,” in an anti-fascist struggle, in blocs of classes, and “alliances of action”, necessarily ended with preaching the need to defend the motherland to the working class, with making deals with Catholics and fascists. At war’s end, they would orchestrate the “reconstruction,” stressed a patriotism well related to the political liberalism and philosophical idealism of the *Risorgimento*, “for the defense of peace and economic development,” sentiments that could be endorsed today by the IMF and WTO.

Finally, that what they had done had long since broken any tie with Marxism was finally conceded by the followers of Togliatti, by the Longos and the Berlinguers of the years ‘70s and ‘80s, when the concept of Marxism as “absolute historicism” (that is to say, as something historically transitory and largely by-passed by contemporary reality) led them to a formal acceptance of Benedetto Croce’s philosophy of the spirit and to Antonio Gramsci’s masked idealism,⁵⁹ without, however, being able to work out a coherent version – such as was the case with the founder of *Ordinovismo*.

GRAMSCISM: AN AGE-LONG BANE OF COMMUNISM

INTRODUCTION

For good or bad, Antonio Gramsci is seen today as one of the spiritual fathers of a vast array of groups, political associations, and movements that in all industrialized nations place the emancipation of the proletariat in the hands of the working class itself through the direct taking over of the sites and means of production. They all assert that only when the worker sees himself as the *producer and owner of the products and instruments of production* does there arise the possibility of revolutionary victory.

This view reduces the problem of the organization of the workers' movement to the spontaneous act of creating "artificial Soviets, those 'hothouse flowers'", destined, in the absence of the revolutionary party, to compromise the very concept of the revolutionary state in the mind of the working class.¹ From the moment of its appearance at the end of the First World War and amidst the influence of the Russian revolution, that concept was branded as "spontaneist" and "immediatist" by the international Left of its day. As a point of fact, while it denies the irreplaceable role of the revolutionary party as an impersonal, collective, and centralizing will of the class, this view transforms the spontaneous body – the factory council, the Soviet, the trade union, the organized consumer group, etc. – into the organization *par excellence* that of itself guarantees revolutionary success. *Anti-Leninist to the core*, this view re-emerged in the second postwar, although propelled by a much weaker impetus, wherever social tensions became acute. Under the wraps of revolutionary slogans, historically it represents *one of the most destructive deviations* to appear in the revolutionary arena. In a time of struggle, it undermines the unitary

leadership, whilst eulogizing the model of spontaneous organization and local control, best exemplified by the events in Germany, 1919-1920, and Italy, 1920, which ended with the most bitter defeats of the European proletariat, and whose consequences are felt still at a distance of three-quarters of a century.

Nonetheless, from the standpoint of the role of the revolutionary class, the "imperfect (or "pre-Marxist) Marxism" found in Gramsci's original writings appears superior to the anti-Marxist interpretations that his followers voiced in the second postwar, by resorting to the most viscerally anti-communist stances – "socialism in one country," the complete deformation of the relation between party and the International, and, finally, the abandoning of all pretense of socialism and the embracing of the bourgeois order.

Theoretically too limited to grasp the extent of the gigantic forces unleashed by the counterrevolutionary wave that overcame the international workers' movement, and in part isolated by his own comrades, Gramsci missed the great occasion that history affords defeated revolutionaries: that of clarifying, if need be schematically and doctrinally, the invariant bases of dialectical materialism, that alone will assure the theoretical rearming of the proletariat during a future reprise. This grandiose task would be (and was) undertaken only by the *Sinistra* during the long decades of fascism and Stalinism, and the return to bourgeois democracy of the middle and late 20th Century.

We use the name of Gramsci neither from habit nor for purposes of being vindictive against a single individual. But, given the prospect of the return of the class struggle and the possible re-dedication by the proletariat to

1. This was the view of the II Congress of the Communist International. See *Theses on the Conditions for the Creation of Workers' Councils* (Theses X). See Jane Degras, ed. By, *The Communist International, 1919-1943. Documents* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), Vol.I.

achieving its historic goals, there is the obligation for a class party to reaffirm the reasons for its opposition to Gramsci and all his sundry camp followers. Namely: for the priority of the class party over all other organizational forms in the era of revolution; the reaffirmation that the revolution poses the problem of how to destroy forever the factory system, not of increasing production in any one factory or industry; and, finally, that without an integral understanding of and adherence to the precepts of historical materialism, there will be no way of avoiding an ideological compromise with the class enemy on the theoretical and as a consequence on the practical level – and so of avoiding defeat.

GRAMSCI'S IDEALISM

The intellectual *ambience* in which the young Gramsci developed, after moving from pastoral Sardinia to the great industrial metropolis of Turin, was influenced by the decisive philosophy of Benedetto Croce² and the socialism of Rodolfo Mondolfo,³ the former the primary exponent of neo-idealism in Italy, the latter a philosophical spokesman for reformism. In particular, Mondolfo's "educational lessons" informed the entire *ordinovista*⁴ movement. At the extreme, this influence will shift from the concept of "educating the general population," upheld from 1912 by Angelo Tasca, one of the spiritual fathers of *Ordine Nuovo*, to the genuinely Gramscian concept of "educating good producers," with the intent of raising and perfecting their technical and professional abilities.

One of the earliest struggles entertained in 1912 by the "Italian" *Sinistra* in the name of Marxism⁵ was precisely against "educationalism." Sadly, that successful struggle did not prevent the reemergence of this "cultural" pathology several years later, during the incandescent years of the first postwar, 1919-1920, which also witnessed the factory occupation. The seductive attraction of enlightenment as a fundamental tactic had

gathered followers in the parties of the Second International – and would be recurrent later. This view crowned education as the royal road to revolution. For Angelo Tasca and his rightwing followers, it became a matter of "elevating the soul, the mind, and the civic levels of proletarian youth by means of a more all-around education and higher scientific and literary exposures [...] of creating better organizers and producers through a lifting and improvement in technical/professional skills, without which the socialist revolution would not be possible."⁶

The rebuttal, then and now, rested on the arguments which can be found in *The German Ideology* by Marx and Engels: to wit, "culture" is a fearsome instrument for conservation in the hands of the ruling classes. We refused to support Tasca in his intents, which were adopted later by Gramsci and expressed in *Ordine Nuovo*. We declared that "our intent is to counterpoise to bourgeois education a youth intellectually free from all forms of prejudice, dedicated to transforming the economic base of society, and ready to sacrifice all personal interest in the revolutionary struggle [...]. Such an education is present only in a proletarian setting when the class lives in and through the class struggle with the goal of preparing for the maximum class conquests, thereby rejecting any scholastic goal for the movement and any consideration of the so-called *technical function*."⁷

It was in this "educationalist" school that the young Gramsci was immersed, and that provided the influences that informed his comments on the relationship between class and party. The effects of this influence were evident in his early development, from the unwillingness to break with the obsolete Socialist Party until well into 1920 to his obsequiousness to an International that had already moved to a multi-class stance, and for that reason *was seemingly backed* by a substantial populist following. In both instances,

2. Gramsci acknowledged this in a letter: "We all participated wholly or in part in the moral and intellectual movement promoted in Italy by Benedetto Croce." Antonio Gramsci, "Lettera a Tatiana Schucht, 17/8/1931", in *Lettere dal carcere* [Prison Letters] (Torino: Einaudi, 1965).

3. "Class consciousness [...] is a slow and difficult affirmation, because it's a question of removing a whole traditional attachment of sentiments and will; but without this psychological renewal [...] there can be no social transformation in history." [R. Mondolfo, *Il materialismo storico in Federico Engels* [Historical Materialism in F.E.] (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1952), p. 242.

4. From the name of the newspaper published by the Turin group within the Italian Socialist Party (Gramsci, Togliatti, etc.): "L'ordine Nuovo", i.e. "The New Order".

5. See our *Storia della Sinistra Comunista* [History of the Communist Left] (henceforth *S-dSC*), Vol.I (Milano: Edizioni Il programma comunista, 1964), p. 64. The texts of the debate can be read at pp.183-188.

6. *Ibid.*, pp.184-185.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

there would be (for Gramsci) a loss of contact on the part of the revolutionary intellectual with the class, of the opportunity to educate it in a revolutionary sense.

It is simply not possible to trace the idealistic passage of the young Gramsci through his writings. It is relevant to note that these early writings, and even later ones, are impregnated with idealism, both in the approach to history and to politics, wherein the will of the intellectual substitutes for the action of the class. Nearly all the pages of *Grido del popolo* [The Cry of the People], the weekly of which he was made the editor in 1914, reflect an ideology that, in later reconsiderations and for good reason, will be seen to be Marxism in the vestments of subjective idealism.⁸

For example, he took the view that the “Italian *Risorgimento*”⁹ [was] an artificial political movement without foundation, without roots in the spirit of the people because it had not been preceded by a religious reformation” – an erroneous analysis not only in its historical sense, but also incomprehensible in the sense that behind that vast array of anti-feudal social classes he failed to note the reality of a new mode of social production arising toward its own maturity. One can deal with such serious historical problems in this manner only from not understanding the principles of historical materialism. As a point in fact, in his own writings Gramsci constantly reduces historical materialism to a kind of idealism, denying that historical materialism is capable of providing a correct analysis of existing reality and of anticipating future events through an understanding of the laws of social development. From being the doctrine of a revolutionary rupture, Marxism is reduced to a “continuation” of past doctrines, an instrumental means of suggesting ethical and intellectual reforms: “The philosophy of praxis [i.e., Gramsci’s version of historical materialism] is the coronation of this entire movement of intellectual and moral re-

form, developed by the contrast between popular and high culture. It corresponds to the nexus of the Protestant Reformation, plus the French Revolution: it is a philosophy that is also political, and something political that is also philosophy.”¹⁰ On this basis, it would not be difficult to demonstrate how Gramsci’s philosophical make-up led him to adopt a series of stances that seriously damaged the formative development of the PCd’I, which really arrived late on the scene (and expressing political positions that the *Sinistra*, the midwife of the new party, described as spurious) and finally embraced the most complete theoretical eclecticism.

Such were the ideological predispositions that led Gramsci – always late in the day – to enter into a whole series of problems that reality thrust before revolutionary organizations for consideration, during those burning years. The result was to jeopardize the struggles that shook the very basis of Italian capitalism during the “red biennial” of 1919-1920.

ACTIVE AND OPERATING NEUTRALITY

The first “lateness” emerged as regards the tactic of revolutionary defeatism. In a series of articles before and after Mussolini’s defection to interventionism in October 1914, the *Sinistra* urged Socialists not to “adapt themselves to a national socialism [since] on the morrow the proletariat will have to be more openly anti-militarist and [will have to] clarify its stand vis-à-vis patriotism [...]”. We Italian Socialists shall have to deny the state any support to national defense.”¹¹ In the same article this position was reaffirmed further on: “We are supporters of violence. We admire the conscious violence of those who rise against the oppression of the strong, or of the anonymous violence of the masses revolting for liberty.”¹²

In contrast, Gramsci, in an a somewhat confused article,¹³ whose inter-

8. Note remarks in Christian Riechers, *Gramsci e le ideologie del suo tempo* [Gramsci and the Ideologies of His Time] (Genova: Graphos, 1993).

9. The movement that in the first half of the 19th century led to a formal national unity (1861), as an agent of and, at the same time, a reflection of the formation of a national market and creation of a common productive network.

10. A. Gramsci, *Il materialismo storico e la filosofia di Benedetto Croce* [Historical Materialism and the Philosophy of Benedetto Croce] (Torino: Einaudi, 1949), pp.86-87.

11. “Il socialismo di ieri dinanzi alla guerra di oggi [Yesterday’s socialism in confrontation with today’s war]”, in *L’Avanguardia*, October-November, 1914, reproduced in *SdSC*, I, p.250.

12. *Ibid.*, p.258.

13. “Neutralità attiva e operante [Active and Operating Neutrality]”, in *Il Grido del Popolo*, October 31, 1914.

14. "Socialismo e cultura [Socialism and Culture]," in *Il Grido del Popolo*, January 29, 1916.
15. "La rivoluzione contro il Capitale", in *Avanti!*, November 24, 1917.
16. See G. Tamburrano, *Antonio Gramsci* (Milano: SugarCo., 1977): "[Gramsci] emphasizes that the October Revolution is an event that cannot be taken as a model" (p.80). Less expeditious is F. De Felice, who maintained that Gramsci had seen in the Russian Revolution a *universal characteristic*, the rapport between the proletariat and the other classes of society: "to be at the head of a vast arrangement of non-proletarian intermediate social forces [...] Such an arrangement is not only socio-political – the formation of a system of collated forces (or that tend to be that) on an international scale against the capitalist system – but economic as well, and implicit in it the hypothesis of a reorganization of the world's economy, no longer authoritative and exploitive." Hence a Gramsci who was a forerunner of the protestors against unbridled globalization in Seattle, 2000! See F. DeFelice, *Serrati, Bordiga, Gramsci e il problema della rivoluzione in Italia, 1919-1920* [Serrati, Briga, Gramsci and the Problem of Revolution in Italy 1919-1920] (Bari: DeDonato, 1971), pp.256-257.

nal disarray can be appreciated only if read in the original (or in a very good translation!), expressed a pro-interventionist position in support of Mussolini, in which all proletarian action is conceived in terms of "Italian way". With an imperialist war raging, Gramsci disdained absolute neutrality and opted for "an active and operating neutrality" – a phrase lifted directly from Mussolini's interventionist title appearing in the Socialist "*Avanti!*". By which formula, he meant that the working class was to force the bourgeoisie to acknowledge that it had "failed completely in its goal, since it had led the nation [...] up a blind alley." And that the proletariat would not obstruct the bourgeoisie, i.e. – given the context – would passively consent to going to war behind the bourgeoisie. Further, he continued that it would be the duty of the Socialist Party to undertake the responsibility, and, in its turn, "this *immediate*, always *actual*, goal [...] devolves [on the party] special, national characteristics that force it to assume in Italian life a definite function." And this sounded very much like the beginning of an Italian national socialism in contrast with the socialism of other working classes. In the piece, Gramsci gave voice to an ontology which indicated no relation to Marxist materialism: "revolutionaries [...] conceive history as the creation of their own spirit, made up of an uninterrupted series of blows directed at the other active or passive forces of society." Significantly, there is no mention, in the piece, of imperialism, internationalist capitalist rivalry, fundamental causes of the war, or international working-class solidarity, the great loser.

Hence, for Gramsci the strategy and tactics of the party were to be decided case by case even then, on the basis of idealistic motivation and subjective voluntarism quite apart from the reality of circumstances. His interventionist statement did not derive from a misunderstanding of Marxism. Marxism was totally absent from Gramsci's evaluations or references.

In place of what was for the *Sinistra* a monolithic and invariant baggage of communist doctrine, Gramsci substituted, as indicated in another writing, an "individual's search for self" by means of "culture", a search that "is organization, discipline of one's own interior I, is possession of one's own personality, is the conquest of a superior conscience [...]. But all that does not occur from spontaneous evolution, through actions and reactions independent of one's own will [...]. Man is above all spirit, that is, an historic creation, and not nature."¹⁴

From the presence of these faux ideological views, there would arise in postwar proletarian Turin an "immediatist" and "local" deviation and detraction, that would find its reason for being in the movement of the factory councils. Meanwhile, and always with the same ideological premises, we can encounter the second Gramscian "lateness," i.e. his incomprehension of what the October Revolution meant for the international labor movement.

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

From his distorted conceptualization of the class struggle and of Marxism – that is, of what he took them to be – Gramsci formulated an evaluation of the Russian Revolution.

Even those run-of-the-mill historians, yesterday's Stalinists today turned convinced "democrats," who exalted in *Ordinovismo* the origins of what we consider the worst opportunism of the second postwar, are compelled to admit that the article "The Revolution against *Kapital*"¹⁵ is totally the product of Hegelianism and Croce (Giuseppe Fiori's assessment), and partially of idealism (Franco Livorsi). Others, like Franco De Felice, G. Tamburrano and Paolo Spriano, prefer to see in it "a faith in facts," rather than ideology, as well as the confirmation that the Russian Revolution was an event that could not be taken as a model.¹⁶ After their pedantic comments on Grams-

cian thought, it is well understood that there is the need by nearly all these “critics” to remain silent about the shocking reality of Gramsci’s actual words: “The Bolshevik revolution is the products of ideology rather than facts [...] It is the revolution against Marx’s *Kapital*. In Russia Marx’s *Kapital* was the book of the bourgeoisie rather than of the proletariat.” According to Gramsci, the Bolsheviks were not Marxists; they “lived Marxist thought, the thought that never dies, that is the continuation of Italian and German idealism, and that in Marx had become contaminated with the encrustations of positivism and naturalism.”

Gramsci’s view according to which in Russia “facts had surpassed ideologies”¹⁷ was presented to the Italian Socialists as novel criticism: that the backward economic conditions in Russia were supposed to impede socialist revolution, for which Socialists would find no solution in Marxist schemes, or what they presumed those schemes to be. In reality, this was the very question that Russian Social-Democrats [later, Communists] had elaborated on many years earlier in the course of sharp theoretical debates on the destiny of the revolution in socially backward Russia. In polemics first with the Populists, then with the “economists,” and finally with the Mensheviks, for whom the revolution should have ceased with the bourgeois February phase in 1917, Lenin, having magisterially worked the principal fundamentals of Marxism, demonstrated the necessity to supersede the democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants in favor of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

But this could not be Gramsci’s understanding! In fact, his comment on the February Revolution had been enthusiastic¹⁸ and had revealed his lack of historical understanding and his incomprehension of the role of the party. His views are that the February Revolution had to necessarily end in a socialist regime, because 1) it had been anti-Jacobin,¹⁹ and the revolu-

tionary socialists (the article never mentions the Bolsheviks) did not subscribe to the Jacobin idea of a dictatorship of a resolute and audacious minority who at all costs intends to implement their program; 2) they have substituted liberty in the place of the tsar’s authority, and “*universal conscience*” in the place of the constitution; 3) the “revolutionary Russian socialists” have “the task of controlling bourgeois organs [...] so that they don’t play the role of Jacobins and undermine the response of universal suffrage.” And so on. How far we are from the meaning of the “April Theses,” of *State and Revolution*, of *Terrorism and Communism*! How far from any dictatorial dissolution of the illusory and counterrevolutionary Constituent Assembly!

THE QUESTION OF THE PARTY AND THE FACTORY COUNCILS

The intellectual evolution of the young Gramsci would hardly matter, if, with his indecisions and incomprehension of the reality of the class struggle and of the indispensable means of directing it, he had not influenced the political reorganization at what was the decisive movement of the Italian (and European) revolutionary movement.

The reader who is poorly informed about the birth of the Communist Party of Italy, the PCd’I, will probably remained stupefied by the nature of the ideological fantasies in which Gramsci’s thoughts were cloaked and presented publicly through most of the decades after 1945, of which we have given only a pallid examples. These misrepresentations or deceptions appear again in the following: “more than any contemporary he [Gramsci] was closest to understanding the phenomena of the present,” or “his articulate appropriation of Leninism and consequent redefinition of internationalism”²⁰ – empty words if looked at carefully and set against a background of his actions. In the real history from its birth in 1919,

17. “Facts exploded the critical schemas within which, according to historical materialism, Russian history should have developed. Bolsheviks repudiate Karl Marx” (in “La rivoluzione contro il *Capitale*, cit.).

18. See “Note sulla rivoluzione russa [Notes on the Russian Revolution]”, in *Il Grido del Popolo*, April 29, 1917.

19. The term “Jacobin” is not used in the Leninist sense of a strongly organized and directed party, but in the more limited sense of uncontrolled individualism, of a clique, a sect. For Gramsci, the Jacobin was “the political man, resolute and dedicated, fanatically persuaded of the virtuous creativity of his ideas, whatever they are.” *Quaderni*, III. Now in A. Gramsci, *Il Risorgimento* (Torino: Einaudi, 1949), p.75.

20. Franco De Felice in his introduction to G.C. Pajetta, *I comunisti a Torino, 1919-1972* [The Communists of Turin 1919-1972] (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1974), p. 20.

21. At the Bologna Congress of October, 1919, *Ordine Nuovo* representatives voted for the “electionist communists,” that is, the followers of Serrati.

22. “These organizations are born during the bourgeois regime as expression of bourgeois liberty. They are organizations recognized by the masses as their reflections and their embryonic apparatus of government; but they are organizations that do not embody the revolutionary process, do not go beyond the State, do not contain the pullulating of revolutionary forces generated by capitalism. The revolutionary process occurs in production where there is no liberty and democracy.” From “Il Consiglio di fabbrica [The Factory Council],” in *Ordine Nuovo*, June 5, 1920. One reads here Gramsci’s workerism, which turns out to be anti-party and anti-Leninist. And it becomes perfectly clear why, at all crucial points – the illegal meeting at Florence in November, 1917, the Congress of Bologna, October, 1919, and even at the Congress of Livorno of 1921 – , Gramsci did not say a word, or limited himself to a criticism of abstentionism so as not to compromise his position.

23. *La Sinistra comunista in Italia sulla linea marxista di Lenin* [The Italian Communist Left in Italy in Line with Lenin’s Marxism], (Milano: Edizioni Il programma comunista, 1964), p.109.

24. In *Avanti!*, December 14, 1919, reproduced in *SdSC*, III (Milano: Edizioni Il programma comunista, 1986), p.244.

Ordine Nuovo was ideologically focused on centrist tactics, that is, “electionist” and anti-secessionist. For example, at the October 1919 Socialist Bologna Congress, when the socialist Left posed most clearly the question of secession, the representatives of Turin (Tasca and Rabazzana) collaborated in drawing up a unitary motion with the Maximalist centrists around Serrati.

Gramsci’s lateness in coming to recognize the need for the party derives from contingent circumstances that trace back to a voluntaristic and idealistic matrix. It is characteristic of the “spontaneist” and “immediatist” vision he had of the revolutionary process, also rooted in the hesitations – that in time would become real betrayals – of the Maximalist center of the PSI, and, above all, of the CGL, the reformist-led General Confederation of Labor. This became very evident after the Turinese proletariat struck with the goal of gaining control of the factories. In fact, until that point aligned with the Maximalist center,²¹ it was only with the great labor struggles of 1920 that Gramsci saw clearly the need to separate from the CGL and conceded also, but only under enormous pressure from the “Abstentionist” Left, the need to break from the Socialist Party.

Nonetheless, he never really gave up the idea of the revolution “from below,” “from the factory,” “of all the working people,” and limited the party to a function of being a *technical organizer*. In his view, only the factory council could guarantee victory, for he viewed both party and trade union as voluntaristic contractual organizations, untied to production, i.e., unrelated to the real relations of production.²² As one can see, during those decisive years, the *Sinistra* was alone in affirming with finality that only on a political basis is it possible to go beyond the differing and contrasting interests of various factory groups, branches of industry, local, regional, and national interests. And that such a political base could only be provided

by the class party.

As we have written synthesizing Gramsci’s vision, his “way of handling the defects of the General Confederation of Labor and the Socialist Party was not to purge the latter and fight to win over the former. For him, the two were to be emptied and abandoned, and a new system substituted for them – a network of factory councils. The hierarchy of this elegant utopia was traced out in toto, from the worker to the department, to the commissioner of department, to the committee of factory commissioners, to the council of local factories, and from there to the summit. This new structure would move from factory to factory, first gaining the right to control and then to direct it, a species of expropriation of capital, one cell at a time: an old pre-Marxist idea that is neither historical nor revolutionary.”²³ In this view, the class party matters little since its task is purely educational. The theory of the state also is scanted, because the transformation of society is seen as occurring one piece at a time, the pieces being the productive enterprises. Totally missing is the vision of the features of a communist society and their striking contrast to those of capitalism. One is left almost with a pallid “entrepreneurialism.”

Until after the April strikes of 1920, Gramsci continued to hammer out his *Ordinovista* factory-council concepts. The worker must consider himself as a producer in that he is encased in the process of production, in the complex that is the productive process, which are, one reads in a statement from December 1919, “in a certain sense foreign to and independent of the mode of appropriation of the wealth produced,”²⁴ as if there existed a meta-history of production for enterprises that can be separated from the mode of production and circulation of a product! Elsewhere, he wrote that “the mass of workers must prepare themselves to effectively acquire the most complete self-control, and the first step in this direction is

the most rigorous self-discipline, in the workplace, in a manner that is autonomous, spontaneous, and free. One cannot deny that the discipline installed by the new system will lead to an improvement in production.”²⁵ Only after the Second Congress of the Third International in the summer of 1920, where Lenin praised “For A Renewal of the Socialist Party,” a program of action prepared by the Turin socialist section led by the abstentionist Giovanni Boero (in which the primacy and clear responsibilities of the party were laid out), published and edited in a May issue of *Ordine Nuovo*, did Gramsci begin the reluctant turn away from the thaumaturgical views of the factory council, and towards an acceptance of the role of the party. At the same congress, Lenin condemned councilism.

From the very beginning, it was clear to the *Sinistra* that the proposals found in *Ordine Nuovo* tended toward a form of Proudhonism. In numerous articles in *Il Soviet*, the organ of the abstentionist wing of the Socialist Party, the group that would establish the basis for the first structure of the future PCd’I, did not hesitate to point out the following: the task of the party was that of going beyond the limited vision resulting from the struggles for better conditions, centralizing the historical goals of the class – goals that cannot be gained simply and directly with the conquest of political power, but which will be posed then, *and only then*, also on the basis of social and economic changes. The additional confusion that *Ordine Nuovo* introduced to the polemic with its belief that the factory council was the equivalent of the soviet (the workers’ council, the political body of proletarian sovereignty) brought to the fore all the theoretical immaturity of the Turinese movement. This immaturity would lead Gramsci to affirm the necessity to establish the councils even before having resolved the problem of the revolutionary leadership embodied by the party, to posit them almost as an *a priori* of the revolutionary action:

“The [factory] council tends to unleash the class war at any moment; by its bureaucratic nature, the trade union tends to see that the class war never occurs [...]. The power of the council rests on the fact that it adheres to the consciousness of the working masses, [and] is this same conscience of the working mass that seeks emancipation, that wants to affirm its freedom of action in the creation of history.”²⁶

It is the same immaturity, accompanied by an incomprehension of the role of the party and of the absolute necessity to come to some sort of clarification with the center and the right of the Socialist Party before the exhaustion of the great and magnificent wave of struggles that shook the nation in the immediate postwar – it is the same immaturity that led him to make this stupefying statement: “We have always asserted that the duty of the groups in the party was that of not losing oneself to particular self-deceptions (problems of abstentionism, problems of creating a true communist party) but of working to create that mass condition in which it be possible to resolve all the separate difficulties as a problem of the organic development of the communist revolution.”²⁷ Given this evidence, this avoidance of specificity and clarity, it is profoundly impossible to understand how could “historians” of various tendencies maintain: “[I]n Gramsci’s political activities and in all his writings there is present the constant and profound need to assimilate and bring the masses to understand the experience and teachings of Lenin and the Bolsheviks.”²⁸

As concerns the secession of Livorno, Gramsci and his comrades from *Ordine Nuovo*, whom the communist *Sinistra* had criticized for not “having joined sooner with those who wanted to break unity and remove themselves from electoral degeneracy and bureaucratic interests,”²⁹ had come to regret as early as 1923 their earlier step and in the process given evidence of the precipitous slide that

25. “Ai Commissari di reparto delle Officine Fiat Centro e Brevetti [To the Commissars of the Divisions in the Fiat Workplaces of Centro and Brevetti]”, in *Ordine Nuovo*, September 13, 1919. On Gramsci’s “Tayloristic” enthusiasm for the social organization of production found in the factory, it is worth quoting Marx: “The manufacturing division of labor has the effect that the *intellectual aspect* of the process of production appears to the worker as a *foreign property* and as a *power that dominates him*. This *process of separation* begins with simple cooperation in which the capitalist presents himself to the individual worker as the unity and will of the social work effort; it is developed in manufacturing, which mutilates and deforms the worker, turning him into a partial worker; and it comes to a fruition in large industry which separates science from work as an independent productive power, employed in the service of capital.” (*Capital*, Book I, XII).

26. “Sindacati e Consigli [Trade Unions and Councils]”, in *Ordine Nuovo*, June 12, 1920.

27. “Due rivoluzioni [Two Revolutions]”, in *Ordine Nuovo*, July 3, 1920. Two weeks later the II Congress of the Communist International met. Talk of lateness...!

28. See L.Lombardo Radice & G.Carbone, *Vita di Antonio Gramsci* (Roma: Cultura Sociale, 1952), pp. 119-120.

29. “Lo sciopero di Torino [The Strike at Turin]”, in *Il Soviet*, May 2, 1920, now in *SdSC*, III, pp. 391-392.

would later turn them into obedient followers of a Stalinized Comintern: "Reaction has decided to kick the proletariat back to the conditions in which it found itself in the initial period of capitalism: dispersed, isolated, individuals, not a class that senses its unity and aspires to power. The secession of Livorno is without doubt reaction's greatest triumph."³⁰ In these words we see that with Gramsci what counted was not a clear doctrinal foundation, not a well-established direction, not the theoretical and organizational principles whose bases are established from the very moment the proletariat emerged as *a class for itself*. What was important for him (and this will be even truer for those communist parties that prostrated themselves before the "inter-classism" of anti-fascism) was unity at all costs – the unity with the "centrists" that he reluctantly abandoned in 1920, and then only under the impulse coming from the most violent class struggles.

How is it possible not to recall here the Lenin of 1920, wrongfully cited against the *Sinistra*: "In every case secession is preferable to the confusion that obstructs the ideal, theoretical, and revolutionary development of the party, that prevents the maturation of the party and its practical work, truly organized, really able to prepare the dictatorship of the proletariat?"³¹

GRAMSCI AT THE HEAD OF THE PCD'I

The political struggle that the *Sinistra* led within the International from 1921 is known.³² The points of contention, the discussions of which were carried out within the parameters of recognized Marxist tenets, touched upon matters of ample theoretical implications: revolutionary parliamentarianism, and, more to the point, the democratic principle; the vital need to set clear limits on the tactical activities of member parties; the hybrid tactical moves de-

signed "to win a majority," not by direct contact with the working class through activities and struggles, but by means of political blocs with parties and classes whose stances invariably had proven to be anti-revolutionary.

Contrary to what has been written by the falsifiers of history, the young PCD'I was the sole European communist party to translate into practice the tactical directives of the Communist International – and this, either in the area of trade union actions or in establishing ties with the working class, which, by 1921, had begun to show signs of retreat after years of bitter class struggles undertaken with generous combativeness. An illegal and military network had been established to permit the party to operate from a position of strength even in times of retreat.³³ A serious and determined effort had been made to bring all labor organizations into a united front against fascism, and if that failed it was due to the attitude of the other political parties active in the working class. The "Rome Theses" (1922), and in general all the political stances of the party during the first two years, had made clear to all that an attempt to take power was no longer possible, while it was absolutely necessary to safeguard the integrity of the doctrinal base without surrendering to a tactical eclecticism. The latter had not brought about the much-desired "conquest" of the masses: on the contrary, it had led to the inevitable abandonment of the goals and program of revolutionary action.

As it happened, the absolute need to break the encirclement of the USSR and the effort to generalize the class struggles in Europe (where a still feisty proletariat was beginning to feel the effects of the hesitations and uncertainties of its leadership) had led the International to press ever harder in order to promote initiatives leading to temporary "accords" and "alliances" with parties wrongly considered to be representative of the working class. It was the beginning of

30. Quoted in P. Togliatti, *La formazione del gruppo dirigente del Partito comunista italiano nel 1923-1924* [The Formation of the Leading Group of the Italian Communist Party in 1923-1924] (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1984), p.102.

31. Lenin, *Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder of Communism* (Appendix: The Secession of the German Communists).

32. See the four volumes of *SdSC*, III & IV in particular.

33. See *SdSC*, IV (1997).

the withdrawal to the (supposedly) tactical level, that anticipated the catastrophic abandonment of the fundamental principles of communism.³⁴ Overlooking the lessons of October 1917, and those administered by the betrayals of social-democracy (Noske and Scheidemann!), the International entertained a plan of operation that would sacrifice a generation of militant activists to advancing Stalinism.

At the Fourth Congress of the International (1922), the “Italian Question” was handled harshly. Citing theoretical reasons, the PCd’I refused to fuse with the Socialist Party led by Serrati. As the conflict with the International worsened, and sensing that its authority was superseded, the leadership of the PCd’I decided to disassociate itself from the policies of the International.

Hence upon receiving a letter from the Central Committee of the Russian party insisting on an immediate fusion, Bordiga himself rejected compromise, declaring he would accept the decision on the basis of discipline but would not participate in working out the conditions of unity. From that moment, the entire majority-wing of the Italian party moved into opposition to a “center,” that paradoxically did not yet exist, but was backed by the Executive of the International.

To complicate matters more, many communist leaders, including Bordiga, were arrested in February, 1923. The activities of the party remained paralyzed for many months, as the International sought to cobble together a new leadership that would be more accommodating to its views. They found a sympathetic ear in Gramsci, who had been sent to Moscow in May of 1922 as representative of the PCd’I to the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI). When, in the name of the ECCI, Matias Rakosi proposed that he assume the direction of the party, Gramsci answered he would “do all possible to help the Executive

of the International resolve the Italian question.”³⁵

Given all this background history, it is obvious that with the formation of the new Gramsci-led Center, the party was not out of the grave crisis that had befallen it. This was made crystal clear, in the early months of 1923, in an “Appeal” written by Bordiga from prison, in the name of the entire former EC, calling each party member to an immediate co-involvement and consideration, not so much of “the crisis in [the party’s] efficiency and organization which is the inevitable consequence of the victory of the antiproletarian forces in Italy [Mussolini’s government, established after the “March on Rome,” October 1922]. This crisis also deserves full attention, but it could be faced – if there were no others – by opportune measures taken by the directive organs and faithfully carried out. Here it is a question of another crisis which unfortunately aggravates the consequences of the first: an internal crisis of general policies, which from individual tactical questions has now broadened to include the whole framework of principles and the tradition of the political line of the party. This crisis did not originate from internal disagreements, but from divergencies between the Italian party and the Communist International [...]. Three facts must be considered: 1) the Italian party has had different opinions than those of the International regarding the communist ‘international’ tactics; 2) the divergence regarding Italian things is even more serious, since it departs from the limits of ‘tactics’ to touch upon the very bases of the constitution of the party; 3) up to now, the International has modified and is still in the process of modifying its policies with regard to tactics, but now also with regard to its program and its fundamental organizational norms.”³⁶

At this point in time (1924), the long shadow of Bolshevization, that is, the restructuring of the member parties on the basis of the factory cell, had

34. It was at this point that the formula “workers’ government” was put forward: proposed as the equivalent of the dictatorship of the proletariat, in reality it was an alliance between communists and the parties of the *petite bourgeoisie*.

35. Letter from Gramsci to Scoccimarro, March 1, 1924, in *La formazione... [The Formation...]*, cit., p.228.

36. Amadeo Bordiga, “Manifesto”, in Helmut Gruber, ed., *International Communism in the Era of Lenin* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1972), pp.327, 329-330 (not surprisingly, the introduction to the “Manifesto” speaks of Bordiga’s “strong syndicalist leanings” as “already [finding] expression in the Rome Theses of 1922” [p.316]: speak of... historiography!). The Italian original of the “Manifesto” can be read in *Rivista Storica del Socialismo*, September-December, 1964, p.515.

begun to fall upon the whole international movement, and with it the use of expedient and short-lived tactics, of united fronts stitched by agreements amongst the apexes of parties, of “workers’ governments,” of the removal *en masse* of the leaderships of parties (the Italian, a case in point) “guilty” of not having followed the ever more uncertain “formulas” provided by the International, or of not having been able to carry out a revolutionary struggle victoriously (which happened with the German party, the KPD, in 1923, leading to its subsequent decapitation).

THE NEW TACTIC OF THE PCd’I AFTER 1923

The fact remains – and is well documented even in the party press of those years – that the base of the PCd’I remained faithful to the *Sinistra* even after its removal and notwithstanding all the efforts of the new Center (now composed of Gramsci, Togliatti, Terracini, and Scoccimarro, whilst Tasca, from the original *Ordine Nuovo*, took up a position on the right) to force the members to accept the new changes. In 1924, the fusionist effort, pursued so long and tenaciously by the International and the new Center, led to the absorption into the party of the so-called “*Terzini*,” leftwing socialists from the PSI, some two thousand-strong who amalgamated into the PCd’I. Meanwhile, one of the reactions to the assassination of the reformist socialist Giacomo Matteotti was a rush of new recruits into the party, at the same time when popular support for fascism dropped precipitously.

In this situation of profound political and organizational crisis besetting the party, which also found itself in an almost total isolation from its most faithful allies even, the new Gramscian leadership of PCd’I decided to join with all the “opposition” in a united front of anti-fascist parties, leading to the proclamation of an “anti-Parliament,” the so-called “Aventi-

no”. In the initial period, the party leadership joined in with a phantasmagorical “Committee of the Opposition” to the end of promoting a general strike. With that proposal a failure on the very first day, the Executive Committee opted for going it alone and issued a strike call, which proved to be a dismal affair with limited adherence in a few cities.

Since there now reigned total confusion on “what to do,” the International came to the rescue through its representative, Jules Humbert-Droz.³⁷ A proposal was made to the opposition to continue boycotting the parliament, thereby transforming it into a parliamentary assembly of the opposition outside and against the fascist-controlled parliament. The people were called on to organize popular militias, and invited to pay no taxes “until freedom is returned once again to the working class [...]. In this situation we must not be concerned with scruples, but we must employ every opportunity to turn directly and publicly against the opposition [the other anti-fascist secessionists] in order to expose them.”³⁸ At least tendentially, this would be the anti-fascist tactics of the PCd’I: a multi-class tactic, that posed at the heart of the anti-fascist demands the struggle for a return to democratic liberties, and which anticipated by twenty years the tactics of the national liberation fronts. Gramsci announced the policy with candid clarity: “And then we will proclaim a constituent assembly, representative of and subject to all the anti-fascist currents, and appeal directly to the Italian people – our anti-parliament. But perhaps it will be too late. In every political situation there is a proper means of struggle. Today, the masses accept the anti-parliament as the order of the day; tomorrow, with the situation worsened [...] the Italian proletariat – reduced to desperation and hunger – may want something else.”³⁹ The following day, in a confused and “*ordinovista*-fashion” way, Gramsci returned to clarify how “the heavy tyranny of fascism” would be cast off by the workers, “who will

37. Humbert-Droz has left numerous comments on his not always above-board activities in Italy as a representative of the Communist International. Regarding the *Sinistra*, he wrote, “My aim was to introduce a differentiation [!!!] in the extremist majority of the Communist Party of Italy and split Gramsci’s group from Bordiga, in order to hand it the leadership of the party. Already at the Rome Congress [1922], Gramsci’s group had indicated a certain independence and expressed certain indications that had to be exploited to isolate the ultra-left position of Bordiga.” In J. Humbert-Droz, *L’internazionale comunista tra Lenin e Stalin* [The Communist International between Lenin and Stalin], (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1974), p.197.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 186.

39. “L’Antiparlamento [The Anti-Parliament]”, *L’Unità*, November 11, 1924.

be forced at last, in the end, to organize their anti-fascist and anti-bourgeois revolt by means of *committees of workers and peasants* that today [?] see themselves concretely as the only means of struggle by which to overthrow the fascist dictatorship.”⁴⁰

In view of the confusion evident amongst the party leaders, the *Sinistra*'s program was on the one hand to call for a direct application of the tactics on parliamentarianism developed by the International, and on the other to warn against transforming the struggle into a “moral question” – i.e., reducing the crisis to a non-fundamental matter and employing inadequate tactics that would waste the opportunity presented. The *Sinistra*'s suggestion that the party re-enter the parliament regardless of the decision made by the other opposition parties was accepted, but only because the others refused to undertake any action suggested by the PCd'I. Nonetheless, the episode illustrated that even on the question of “revolutionary parliamentarism,” a tactic so dear to the Centrists, only the *Sinistra* knew how to propose a political step that would faithfully follow the directives laid down by the International, in contrast to the conditional “abstentionism” of the anti-fascist democrats who were forever ready to establish a bridge between parliament and “anti-parliament,” a move that assured the permanence of bourgeois order.⁴¹ From what has been said it should be clear that we are here dealing with two diverse views of the revolutionary process, of the role of the party, and of the development and evolution of capitalism.

Appearing in the national press through a long series of articles, the *Sinistra*'s definition and analysis of fascism was also delivered to the IV and V Congresses of the International. In this view, fascism was characterized as a more up-to-date anti-proletarian movement, at the moment more useful to the defense of capitalist order than the earlier liberal democracy; fascism united the inter-

ests of large landowners, large industrialists and high finance, and had learned to mobilize the middle classes in its own favor through the use of the state apparatus. From an ideological point of view, fascism was nothing new, but it did create a forbidding apparatus for political and military conflict. Upon this analysis, the *Sinistra* insisted on the party's need for independent action, and declared for an open and direct struggle and the refusal of any political agreement with the other anti-fascist groups. “Naturally, the struggle is only possible with the participation of the masses. The great majority of the working class knows well that the matter cannot be handled by the offensive of a heroic vanguard. Every Marxist party must reject this naïve view. But [...] we must reject the illusion that a transitional government will be such a simpleton as to permit by legal means or parliamentary maneuvers – or other more or less expedient means – the circumscribing of bourgeois power, that is, the taking legal control of its entire technical and military machine, and the peaceful distribution of arms to the proletariat; and, having done so, light-mindedly give the signal for battle. This would be really infantile and ingenuous. Revolutions are not so easily made.”⁴²

The Centrist view of fascism is found in Gramsci's statement to the Central Committee, August 1924. In his remarks, fascism “came to power manipulating and organizing the lack of conscience and the sheep-like attitude of the petite bourgeoisie [...]. Why have the crises of the middle classes had worse consequences in Italy than in other nations [...]? For the reason that, given the lack of industry and the regional nature of that industry, not only is the petite bourgeoisie more numerous but it is the only class that is ‘territorially national.’”⁴³ To Gramsci, the coming to power of fascism represented the social and political disintegration of the unitary state, resulting from the postwar crisis; this would not have

40. “Il nullismo dell'Aventino [The Nullity of the Aventine Opposition],” *L'Unità*, November 12, 1924.

41. We refer readers to our *O preparazione rivoluzionaria o preparazione elettorale* [Either a Revolutionary Preparation or an Electoral Preparation] (Milano: Ed. Il programma comunista, 1968).

42. Bordiga's report on fascism to the V Congress of the International. In *Communisme et fascisme* (Paris: Editions Le Programme Communiste, 1970), pp.141-142.

43. A. Gramsci, “La crisi italiana [The Italian Crisis],” in *Ordine Nuovo*, September 1, 1924, series III, I, n. 5, and also found in A. Gramsci, *La costruzione del partito comunista, 1923-1926* [The Construction of the Italian Communist Party, 1923-1926] (Torino: Einaudi, 1971), p.29.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

45. His essay *The Southern Question* has been the workhorse of herds of revisionists and opportunists of all kinds. On the basis of a real economic unbalance in the South following unification and the result of the rapine of resources by northern industry, the Stalinists created the *invention* of a proclaimed feudalism in the South, thus finding more reason to justify alliances with democratic and bourgeois parties in joint actions against a "common enemy" and further distorting the politics of class struggle, its means and goals.

46. The noted Renaissance political writer Machiavelli wrote in 1513 that a prince must befriend the people. Gramsci latched on to this concept and substituted the Renaissance Prince with a modern "political party. In the actuality of some states, 'the head of the state,' that is, the balancing element amongst contesting interests in a struggle against the prevailing interest [...] is literally the political party."

A. Gramsci, *Note sul Machiavelli, sulla politica e sullo stato moderno* [Notes on Machiavelli and on Politics and the Modern State] (Torino: Einaudi, 1949), p.94. What nostalgia one feels for Lenin's *State and Revolution!*

47. See G. Fiori, *Vita di Antonio Gramsci* [The Life of Antonio Gramsci] (Bari: Laterza, 1966), p.275.

occurred if the working class had not "failed in 1920 in its task of creating with its own means a state able also to satisfy the national and unitary demands of Italian society [...]. Our main duty is to win a majority of the working class, [and] the phase we are now going through does not herald the direct struggle for power, but a preparatory phase, a transition to the struggle for power [...]. These struggles must be seen in the limits of a phase of transition, as elements of propaganda and agitation [needed] for the conquest of the majority."⁴⁴

The use of such "elastic" tactics (or, better, of tactics which run counter to the principles) inesorably brings on its own consequences. If one embraces "the cause of the nation," or assumes responsibilities for the dissatisfaction of the petite bourgeoisie and the peasantry, and if one courts the nationalists, one result is the inevitable acceptance of social democracy as an element of the workers' movement that can be recuperated to the revolution and no longer viewed as the leftwing of the bourgeoisie. Gramsci's disastrous stand on the entire range – on fascism, fusion, the united front – represented a slippage toward a bourgeois anti-fascism that would set its aim not on socialism but on a return to full bourgeois democracy. Not only: it was also the prelude to the politics of the popular front and participation in bourgeois governments. The abandonment of the revolutionary policies of the Livorno Congress (and of the earlier October Revolution) could not be clearer.

THE PRISON YEARS.
THE NOTEBOOKS AND
THE PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWS.
THE LEGACY

Gramsci's historic role of aligning the PCd'I to the politics of an International that became the first defense of the Soviet Union ended with the III Congress of Lyons, January 1926, held abroad for reasons perhaps more than just the outlawing of the

party in Italy. With the crushing of the *Sinistra*, there remained the matter of reorganizing the party internally and outside Italy. This task would be left heir to others. Toward the end of 1926 Gramsci was arrested and remained in prison literally to his death in 1937.

During his years of imprisonment, Gramsci undertook a study of a number of issues relating to social and economic conditions, literature and philosophy, and history. Amongst others, he discussed the Southern Question,⁴⁵ the problem of the rapport between the Italian nation and the intellectuals, the proletariat as a hegemonic force, the party as a "collective intellectual" or the "modern Prince".⁴⁶ In a word, those theoretical elaborations that so appealed to whole flocks of "leftwing intellectuals," who actually view Gramscian thought, and not without reason, as "a summing-up of the concept of 'dialectic' in the Hegelian-Marxist sense," or as a research in "Italian concrete reality and theoretical elaboration," or an analysis of problems that, if they cannot all be resolved, were at least "presented with originality."⁴⁷

The principal "merits" ascribed to Gramsci by his Stalinist epigones were his reflections on the Italian *Risorgimento*, his more or less explicit "frontism" that would be applied in full during the partisan war, and his capacity to adapt Marxism to the "realities of an Italian road to socialism (an expression which was common world-wide to all renegades).

For the Communist Left, for the *Sinistra*, the *Risorgimento* was certainly a historical phase that led Italy to accomplished capitalist conditions, through a revolutionary process in which various proletariats participated in a confused struggle alongside other social strata. It was a revolution which resorted to arms in order to assault the old power structures. Of these violent changes, "we can say that the revolution [...] in Italy was more subversive of the old regime

than any other, since it destroyed a series of statelets and their institutions, the Papal one amongst them.”⁴⁸ The intellectuals of the period, for the most part voices from the radical bourgeoisie with Mazzini and Garibaldi being good examples, sought to channel the proletariat, whose menacing power they already understood, within the parameters of their bourgeois revolution. “This position was the opposite of Marxism – it was a position that in an historic situation similar and parallel to the Italian *Risorgimento*, we mean Tsarist Russia, Lenin reversed with the remark: the revolution for the proletariat, not the proletariat for the revolution! That very Lenin who was fully aware that in the armed struggle it would fall to the proletariat to conduct the anti-feudal revolution.”⁴⁹

Not so with Gramsci. To him, the Italian *Risorgimento* was a “passive” revolution, conducted from on high. To him, absent was that popular participation that had completed the national development in the other European states capped by bourgeois revolutions. Hence, the result of a “missed” agrarian revolution, and of an incomplete undertaking by intellectuals who not only had not known how to lead the revolution but had failed to create a modern state.

From this analysis, the later Stalinized PCI drew the conclusions that the interaction of an unresolved national question with the festering Southern Question and a persistent “moral” deficiency (i.e., the traditional Italian “bad government”, involving mafia, camorra, ‘ndrangheta and corruption) could be dealt with only through a coalition of parties and classes so as to finally complete the much aspired bourgeois revolution, by re-enacting a sort of second run of bourgeois radicalism (anti-fascism), in which socialism and working-class revolution served as iconic ornaments to be displayed but not taken seriously. Such an analysis was trotted out by a PCI leadership that had lost all interest in revolution, in order

to justify – not their only theoretical excuse by any means – and rationalize their right to carry out a “second *Risorgimento*” that would finally do away Italian backwardness, of which fascism was considered an expression.

From the mouth of Togliatti himself: “the proletariat’s task is to give our nation that unitary internal structure that capitalism failed to bring about because it saw in the South (the *Mezzogiorno*) a land to conquer and exploit. This is the time [1923-1926] when he [Gramsci] intuited the concept of the strategic alliance between the workers of the advanced zones and the mass of poor and disowned population of the *Mezzogiorno* [...]. Gramsci drew the most interesting, consequential tactics and politics, to the point of establishing solidarity with the autonomous movements that arose at the time in the southern regions, and he foresaw a particular structure of power under the Workers and Peasant State that would grant these movements the needed satisfaction in founding on new democratic foundations the unity of the state.”⁵⁰

We are not far from the flowering of the practices and theory of the second postwar, when the PCI entered into various bourgeois coalitions of “progressive democracy” that would, it was hypocritically stated, serve in the long run as a transition to a popular socialism. The heirs of the worst in Gramsci pronounced that “an Italian road to socialism” was dictated by the “backwardness” of Italian capitalism. From this allegedly “Marxist-based” phantasmagoric interpretation of Italian “reality,” they pronounced the imperative (in 1945!) of a double revolution in Italy – which, of course, they would have stopped at the Kerevskyian phase, had it been true – and proceeded to act all the stages of classical opportunism: till they proclaimed socialism and Marxism dead!

Here is not the place to enter into a lengthy analytic dissection of Gram-

48. “Meridionalismo e moralismo [‘Southernism’ and Moralism], in *Il programma comunista*, n.20, 1954.

49. *Ibid.*

50. P. Togliatti, *La formazione... [The Formation...]*, cit., p.39.

51. A. Gramsci, "Il nostro Marx [Our Marx]", in *Il Grido del Popolo*, May 4, 1918.

52. Amongst the many, let us mention G. Tamburrano, *Antonio Gramsci Una biografia critica*, (Bari: Lacaita 1963), p.240. Tamburano was a socialist, not a Stalinist.

53. Tamburranno's words. According to him (and his fellow critics), "Lenin's theses are not found in the ambit of pure objectivism: the recognition of the dialectic process in consciousness and the affirmation of the power of man's and thought's power of reaction on the structures and the object introduce elements of subjectivism in philosophical theory." *Antonio Gramsci*, p. 244. Not surprising, to these "scholars of reality" impregnated with the concept of individualism, the rapport between party and class can be seen only as a transmission of "ideas" to "matter."

54. "Teoria ed azione nella dottrina marxista [Theory and Action in the Marxist Doctrine]," (1951), now in *Partito e classe* [Party and Class] (Milano: Edizioni Il programma comunista, 1991), p.137.

55. A. Gramsci, *Il materialismo storico e la filosofia di Benedetto Croce* [Historical Materialism and the Philosophy of Benedetto Croce] (Torino: Einaudi, 1949), p. 9 and *infra*.

sci's philosophy. It will be enough to identify at least two of the components that suggest why his theories have aroused such enthusiasm amongst intellectuals of the bourgeois left around the world.

1) His attempt to synthesize Marxism and idealism, thereby deforming historical materialism to a vision of individualist voluntarism. Note this citation: "With Marx history continues to be the domain of ideas, of the spirit, of the conscious activity of the individual and associates."⁵¹ A biographer took the statement to mean that Gramsci stood for "a vigorous refutation of idealism" and a negation "of the separation of man from matter."⁵² Having entered, along with Gramsci, into the world of idealistic monism, these "critical" biographers were able to criticize Lenin for the contradiction between the "subjective voluntarism" of his "political texts" and the "gnostic objectivism" of his "philosophical works"!⁵³ On this basis, a "philosophy of the praxis" was constructed that was the direct opposite of historical materialism and that, necessarily, was reflected directly and dramatically in the actual problem of the revolutionary organization, in its method of working in the class and for its ultimate goals.

The authentic Marxist view of the overturning of the praxis lies in the fact that "only the party is able to overturn the sense of praxis. It is armed with a theory and has an understanding of the unfolding of events: within limits, and depending on the situation and the rapports of power [that cannot ever be changed by voluntarism to the advantage of this or that class] the party is able to exercise decisions and initiatives to influence the on-going struggle [...]. The dialectical rapport consists in the fact that to the degree that the revolutionary party is a conscious and willing factor in the events, to that degree it is also a result of them and of the conflict between the old forms of production and the new productive forces. The theoretical and active role

of the party would cease to be effective if its material ties with the social setting made up of the *primordial, material and physical class struggle* [emphasis added] were broken."⁵⁴

Gramsci's approach was quite different, which we reconstruct with borrowings from one of his prison writings.⁵⁵ His "philosophy of praxis," by which he meant Marxism, is presented in the form of criticism and polemics, that is, of *ideology*, that is intended to replace the mode of thought operating in the existing culture. This ideology seeks to lead the proletariat to a superior awareness of life. This is the role that the intellectual [we would say, the party] undertakes with the oppressed class, "not to limit the scientific activity and keep unity at the low level of the masses, but to create a moral-intellectual bloc that permits an intellectual progress of the masses." From this there derives the classical and anti-Marxist vision of Gramsci, according to which the philosophy of the praxis is the instrument by which the proletariat acquires an understanding of its position in society and undertakes the effort for emancipation. The revolution becomes a fact only as a result of voluntarism and culture. Only by means of study will the worker create a new vision of the world, that he will impart to the rests of society by a process no better described than as "hegemony." (The proletariat as a hegemonic class is a phrase from Gramsci's cultural maturity.)

Hence, very much the way fifteen years earlier during the *Ordine Nuovo* period he believed it possible to construct socialist relations under conditions of full capitalist control, so now, having thrown aside the failed factory-council scheme, Gramsci saw a new means of escape in the "renewal of conscience," through the edification of a socialist culture destined to extract the popular classes from the dominant influences. Gramsci was well aware that this "moral revolution" could not emerge from the "sa-

tanic mills” of capitalistic production, or from the state schools or the academies ministered by priests, or from the common fate of being tied to a brutish exploitation, worsened by continuous demands for increased surplus labor. *Ergo*, the modern hero, the intellectual who rises above the masses and enlightens them and attracts them through the persuasive power of his arguments. But this means exactly overturning Marxism. Which has shown that “The power of criticism cannot replace the power of arms, material force must be overthrown by material force.”⁵⁶

2) The second component (that so attracts intellectuals and renegades alike) is his explicit refusal of determinism, seen as an unacceptable limitation of the individual’s freedom: “One can observe,” he wrote in one of his most quoted and most wrongly applied passages, “how the deterministic element, fatalistic [?], mechanistic [?], was an ideological ‘trait’ associated with the philosophy of praxis [the reference is to historical materialism], a form of religion and stimulant (like a drug) [...]. When the initiative in struggle is lost and that struggle ends in association with a series of defeats, mechanical determinism becomes a force of formidable moral resistance, of cohesion, of patient and stubborn perseverance [...] Real will transforms itself into an act of faith, into an embodiment of a certain rationality of history, into an empirical and primitive and impassioned finality that appears as a substitute for the predestination of providence, etc., of the confessional religions [...] one should stress that fatalism is no more than a covering of the weak [...]. [W]hen it becomes associated by intellectuals with a reflective and coherent philosophy, it becomes a cause of passivity, of stupid s-mugness.”⁵⁷

How can we forget here the Gramsci of the party’s conference of Como in 1924, when, in a sharp contradictory opposition to Bordiga, he proclaimed “being in a hurry”? How can we forget

here his haste to recuperate the support of the masses through action? Or his voluntaristic resistance to the counterrevolutionary wave leading to the Matteotti assassination? To such a wave, in his view, the party should oppose, *not* the most careful delimitation of the party’s area of action, *not* a strict adherence to the principles in order to be able to renew revolutionary action *on the morrow*, *but* (as he was to do in the Matteotti crisis) the adoption of cheeky and showy tactics, based on principles that were not ours yesterday and will not be ours tomorrow.⁵⁸

To the distortions by Gramsci and his heirs we answer that the economic “base” is not only commerce and salary, but the very reproductive basis of the species, be it biological or technical, which includes culture and its transmission.⁵⁹ We answer that determinism is not, and has never been, passivity, but it signifies that action precedes consciousness, whilst foreseeing the arrival of a revolutionary movement. As stated many years ago in another of our texts: “We maintain that the reprise of the revolutionary workers’ movement does not coincide simply with the impulses coming from the material social and economic contradictions of bourgeois society, which can pass through periods of very great crises, of violent conflicts, and political collapses without any of these radicalizing and impelling the workers’ movement towards revolutionary stances. *That is, there is no automatic connection in the field of relationships between the capitalist economy and the revolutionary party of the working class.*”⁶⁰

Not having ever understood these simple ABC’s of Marxism turned Gramsci into one of the promoters of opportunism. It is precisely here that one can understand his “strange destiny” and, at the same time, his involuntary and varied intellectual heredity.

He passed unmarred through the folds of a Stalinist historiography,

56. Karl Marx, “Critique of the Hegelian Philosophy of Public Law” (Introduction).

57. A. Gramsci, *Il materialismo storico...* [Historical Materialism], cit., pp.13-14.

58. Nor must it be overlooked that not even Gramsci was “in a hurry” in 1919, at the October Congress of the PSI at Bologna, where he voted with the Maximalists, thereby delaying clarification of views amongst the ranks of the genuine revolutionaries, who could act only two years later.

59. We refer readers to “I fattori di razza e nazione nella teoria marxista [The Factors of Race and Nation in Marxist Theory]”, in *Il programma comunista*, numbers 16-20, 1953.

60. “Attivismo [Activism]”, in *Battaglia comunista*, n. 7, 1952.

wherein he was venerated for his destruction of the *Sinistra*; similarly through the democratic post-Stalinist writings, now hailed as a precursor of the “national roads” to socialism; celebrated in the Trotskyist school for his anti-Stalinism; praised in writings from the resistance period as “the man of culture” who was unjustly prosecuted and was the defender and standard bearer of the united fronts and the multi-class alliances; some autonomous workers’ movements see him as their own man because he was an *ante litteram* “immediatist” and non-doctrinaire; finally, with “Third World” sympathizers, he is a forerunner of peasant and popular-class revolutions. Aman of all seasons: surely not a militant in the Marxist camp!

61. Lenin, *Two Tactics of Socialdemocracy in the Democratic Revolution*.

Despite all the above adaptations, Gramsci’s bequest consisted of a deep anti-Marxism, in its tactical superficiality and its pretense to being Leninist. In summation, precisely in his “belittling the importance of tactical words of order strictly in conformation with principles [...]”. The elaboration of correct tactical decisions has a great importance for a party that seeks to lead the proletariat in the rigorous spirit conforming to the principles of Marxism, and not simply allow itself to be drawn in the tow of events.” (Lenin)⁶¹

For those who want to understand, the lessons of history could not be clearer – as are its most bitter defeats.

The democratic criterion has been for us so far a material and incidental factor in the construction of our internal organization and the formulation of our party statutes; it is not an indispensable platform for them. Therefore we will not raise the organizational formula known as “democratic centralism” to the level of a principle. Democracy cannot be a principle for us. Centralism is indisputably one, since the essential characteristics of party organization must be unity of structure and action. The term *centralism* is sufficient to express the continuity of party structure in space; in order to introduce the essential idea of continuity in time, the historical continuity of the struggle which, surmounting successive obstacles, always advances towards the same goal, and in order to combine these two essential ideas of unity in the same formula, we would propose that the communist party base its organization on “*organic centralism*”. While preserving as much of the incidental democratic mechanism that can be used, we will eliminate the use of the term “democracy”, which is dear to the worst demagogues but tainted with irony for the exploited, oppressed and cheated, abandoning it to the exclusive usage of the bourgeoisie and the champions of liberalism in their diverse guises and sometimes extremist poses.

From our text “The Democratic Principle” (1922)

BACK TO BASICS: THE 1921 LIVORNO PROGRAMME

In January 1921, the Communist Party of Italy (Section of the Communist International) was born in Livorno (Leghorn), splitting from the old, reformist Socialist Party. The new Party – which stressed in its very name the fact of belonging to an international body (it was only after the Stalinist take-over that the name was changed to Italian Communist Party, in acknowledgment of a purely national perspective) – was led by the Sinistra, the Communist Left. For almost a decade, the Sinistra had waged a consistent and intransigent struggle within the Socialist Party, in complete, substantial alignment with the Bolshevik positions on all key issues (see above the article “Where We Come From A Brief Chronology”). What we reproduce below is the 1921 Program, a text which is not to us an “archaeological find”, but a living part of a history which continues. Other documents on the birth of the Communist Party of Italy (Section of the Communist International) will follow in the next issues of this journal.

- 1 The Italian Communist Party (Section of Communist International) takes the following as its founding principles:
- 2 Within the current capitalist social regime, there develops an increasingly sharp contrast between the forces of production and the relations of production, and this gives rise to the antithesis of interests and the class struggle between the proletariat and the dominant bourgeoisie.
- 3 The present relations of production are protected by the power of the bourgeois State which, founded as it is upon the representative system of democracy, is the main body acting on behalf of the interests of the capitalist class.
- 4 Without the violent destruction of bourgeois power, the proletariat can neither breach nor modify the capitalist relations of production which are responsible for its exploitation.
- 5 The political class party is the indispensable organ for the proletarian revolutionary struggle. The Communist Party, incorporating within itself the most advanced and aware part of the proletariat, unites the efforts of the working masses and leads them from the fight waged on behalf of group interests and for limited and contingent results to the struggle for the revolutionary emancipation of the proletariat. Its task is to promote a revolutionary consciousness among the masses, organize the material means of action and guide the proletariat during the course of its struggle.
- 6 World War I, a direct result of the deep seated and incorrigible contradictions of the capitalist system which gave rise to modern imperialism, has harbingered the disruptive crisis of capitalism, and the class struggle which lies at the heart of this crisis must necessarily lead to armed conflict between the working masses and the power of the bourgeois States.
- 7 Once bourgeois power has been overthrown, the proletariat will only be able to organize itself as the dominant class if the bourgeois state apparatus is destroyed and a proletarian dictatorship is established: i.e., the State elective representation will be

based solely upon the laboring class, while all political rights of the bourgeois class will be excluded.

- 8 The form of political representation in the proletarian State is the system of workers' councils (workers and agricultural labourers), already enacted during the Russian revolution. This revolution marks the beginning of the worldwide proletarian revolution and is the first solid enactment of a proletarian dictatorship.
- 9 The necessary defence of the proletarian State against all counter-revolutionary endeavours can only be guaranteed if all instruments of political agitation and propaganda are taken away from the bourgeoisie and those parties opposed to the proletarian dictatorship. The proletariat also needs to be armed in an organized fashion if attacks from within and without are to be repulsed.
- 10 Only the proletarian State can systematically carry out all the successive measures of intervention in the social and economic field which are necessary for the successful replacement of the capitalist system with the collective running of production and distribution.
- 11 As a result of this economic transformation and the subsequent transformations of all activities in the social sphere, the division of society along class lines will be eliminated and, consequently, so too will the need for a political State whose operations will become increasingly limited to those dealing with the rational administration of human activities.

The fact that economic interests play a decisive role does not in the least imply that the economic (i.e., trade union) struggle is of prime importance; for the most essential, the “decisive” interests of classes can be satisfied only by radical political changes in general. In particular the fundamental economic interests of the proletariat can be satisfied only by a political revolution that will replace the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie by the dictatorship of the proletariat.

V. I. Lenin “What Is To Be Done?”

Suplemento en español

- **LA ASAMBLEA CONSTITUYENTE EN VENEZUELA: OXÍGENO PARA LA EXPLOTACIÓN CAPITALISTA**

- **DOS TEXTOS DE NUESTRA CORRIENTE**

Movimiento obrero e internacionales sindicales
(de “Battaglia Comunista”, 29-6-1949)

El cadáver todavía camina
(De nuestro opuscolo *Sul filo del tempo*, mayo de 1953)

- **PROGRAMA DEL PARTIDO COMUNISTA INTERNACIONAL**
- **DE DÓNDE VENIMOS**

LA ASAMBLEA CONSTITUYENTE EN VENEZUELA; OXÍGENO PARA LA EXPLOTACIÓN CAPITALISTA

«Cuando tuvieron razón de ser y un contenido, las constituciones seguían a una lucha revolucionaria, eran el reflejo de ésta, su redacción era rápida y directa en las llamas de la acción. Ellas sancionaron, como cartas y declaraciones de nuevas clases victoriosas, principios en clamorosa oposición con el pasado, y un grupo homogéneo las afirmó y proclamó con ideologías de nítidos contornos» (del artículo: «Abajo la república burguesa, abajo su Constitución», «Prometeo», n° 7; publicación de nuestro partido, marzo-abril de 1947). Las Constituciones que la burguesía putrefacta de hoy nos regala periódicamente no tienen ninguno de estos caracteres, y es fácil comprender el por qué. Ellas son hijas de matrimonios híbridos, sus contornos son pálidos e imprecisos, sus «principios» (cuando existen) se presentan, con una elasticidad rufianesca, a cualquier adaptación; en la sucesión de sus artículos se reflejan indistintamente pasado y presente, pero *sobre todo*, el pasado, no hay en ellas ningún eco de memorables batallas ni el fulgor de las «llamas de la acción»; pretenden, aquí y allá, innovar, pero, en realidad, son retrógradas.

Como siempre, queda en manos de los comunistas la tarea de asumir una posición revolucionaria, en este caso ante el planteamiento de la convocatoria a una Asamblea Nacional Constituyente (ANC). En torno a este planteamiento se han nucleado no sólo AD, COPEI y Proyecto Venezuela, atropellados por el liderazgo carismático del Presidente Hugo Chávez. También hemos podido ver a diferentes partidos y grupos oportunistas y activistas, formar filas con el Movimiento V República para llamar a las masas a participar en la ANC, y a cifrar en ella sus esperanzas de solución a sus problemas.

AYER

La Asamblea Nacional Constituyente es un mecanismo que ha utilizado la democracia burguesa, en su rancia historia, para concretar o actualizar el famoso «**Contrato Social**» pregonado por Juan Jacobo Rousseau. Con la revolución francesa (1789), la fundación de la república francesa burguesa y el lanzamiento de la «**Declaración de los Derechos del Hombre y del Ciudadano**», Europa rompía con el caduco régimen del Feudalismo e iniciaba el desarrollo del capitalismo, que se extendería por todo el planeta, con su escudo de igualdad, fraternidad y solidaridad, que ha condenado a millones de proletarios a la esclavitud asalariada, al hambre, la miseria, las guerras y a accidentes y enfermedades de trabajo.

Fue duro para los proletarios descubrir que ahora eran libres para morirse de hambre o ser esclavos de un empresario a cambio de unas cuantas monedas; la misma libertad de la que «disfruta» cualquier trabajador de nuestros días.

De estos tiempos data también la falsa idea de que «el poder reside en el pueblo» («el soberano», como dice Hugo Chávez), y que éste lo ejerce a través del voto. Mientras los faraones y los reyes se presentaron como elegidos de dios, los republicanos se presentaron como elegidos por «el soberano», por «el pueblo». Tardíamente los proletarios descubrirían que el «pueblo» es una categoría muy abstracta y amplia, donde tienen cabida sus explotadores, supuestamente iguales a ellos no ante dios sino ante la ley. Tardíamente los proletarios descubrirían que el poder no «reside» sino que es detentado por una clase social, que domina a las demás, y que ejerce su poder a través del Estado y sobre la base de la violencia virtual y cinética. El poder del pueblo o «poder constituyente» terminó siendo el poder de la burguesía. Y el voto terminó siendo la cabeza de cada proletario colocada en la guillotina de la explotación asalariada.

Con la Comuna de París (1871), el proletariado respondió a las patrañas burguesas sobre «el ciudadano» y rompió con el «**Contrato Social**» imperante. Se confirmaron las tesis marxistas de la lucha de clases y sobre la necesidad de la destrucción del Estado Burgués. La única vía para que las masas proletarias accedan al poder es a través de la lucha de clases, constituyéndose en partido político enfrentando a la burguesía y utilizando contra ella todos los medios de violencia virtual y cinética a su alcance. Aún con su derrota, la Comuna de París abrió el capítulo histórico de la lucha por la revolución proletaria y el comunismo. A partir de ese momento quedó descartado para el proletariado la firma de cualquier «contrato social» con la burguesía.

HOY

Hugo Chávez no oculta su identificación con los más rancios ideólogos burgueses. En un foro sobre la constituyente, presentado por televisión (23-9-98), Chávez planteó: «La segunda fase a la que digo estamos a punto de llegar, es la fase contractual y el término lo he tomado de la teoría y la doctrina de Juan Jacobo Rousseau cuando hablaba del contrato social. Estamos a punto de firmar un contrato, los venezolanos, o en todo caso la mayor parte de los venezolanos y nosotros que estamos proponiendo el

camino constituyente...». La «fase contractual» mencionada por Chávez, va a ser el producto de la ANC: un nuevo piso jurídico y político que permita el funcionamiento eficiente sin trabas del mercado. Desde el punto de vista de EE.UU la cosa está clara: «**Si no perturba la paz mundial, hemisférica**»... «**y frente a la posibilidad de un desorden mayor se le daría un ropaje jurídico, constitucional, que apunta a un orden, a un registro político que permita las reformas económicas, que hagan más fácil los negocios**» (El Nacional, 21-2-99). En ese sentido, la ANC producirá atractivos y seguridad a las inversiones extranjeras. En este campo destacan todas las reformas laborales que posibilitan el incremento de la explotación de los trabajadores a bajos costos. Ya que Venezuela no representa un mercado de consumidores tan importante, si puede ser en cambio asiento de algunas empresas que necesitarán del atractivo de los bajos salarios, una legislación laboral más antiobrera que la actual y organismos sindicales más centralizados, con los que se faciliten las negociaciones. La mejor confirmación de esta orientación de la Asamblea Nacional Constituyente está en la propuesta de la Ley Habilitante por Chávez y su Gabinete al Congreso Nacional que, entre otras cosas planteaba «**reducir el tamaño de la burocracia**» (léase: despidos en la administración pública) y una «**ley para garantizar seguridad jurídica a los inversionistas**».

Con un mensaje patriótico, bolivariano y cristiano y con la tesis de que la única institución que no está corrompida es el ejército, Chávez, el Movimiento V República y los oportunistas que le acompañan, se han granjeado el apoyo de las masas proletarias y de la pequeña burguesía en proceso de proletarización. La mesa está servida para que empiecen a concretar los sacrificios masivos en defensa de la «patria», «del país», de «**La soberanía popular**». Pero, al igual que ayer, los comunistas planteamos que la defensa de la patria es la defensa del mercado y, por lo tanto, de la explotación del trabajo asalariado.

Pero, mientras se habla de despidos masivos de trabajadores y el salario mínimo se ubica en un monto que no equivale ni a la mitad del costo de la canasta alimentaria, nos encontramos con planteamientos como los de Carlos Hermoso, dirigente nacional del otrora subversivo Partido Bandera Roja que, en su artículo «**La Constituyente y el Cambio Necesario**» (ELINSURGENTE. Enero de 1999. N° 24), aboga por lo que denomina «**Una Economía para servir al pueblo trabajador**». Allí plantea que es necesario «**reactivar el aparato productivo industrial y agrícola, y la construcción, y aumentar sus niveles de producción... abaratamiento del crédito bancario... una política de importaciones basada en la preferencia en la adquisición de bienes y equipos en el exterior que sirvan para aumentar la capacidad productiva nacional, junto a una política de cambios diferenciales**». Pero todas estas reivindicaciones no son otra

cosa que aspectos del programa económico de la burguesía de aquellos sectores de la pequeña burguesía que se ven amenazados por el poder de las transnacionales y los inversionistas extranjeros. Con estas tesis Hermoso y su partido están pregonando una santa alianza entre patronos y trabajadores para salvar a la economía nacional. Para Bandera Roja y todos los nuevos republicanos, los trabajadores deben conformarse con que se generen nuevas fuentes de empleo (cosa que veremos si se cumple), sin importar las reivindicaciones salariales, etc.

Por supuesto que hay muchos otros planteamientos en el contaminado ambiente político venezolano y no faltan quienes llaman a las masas a conquistar o rescatar reivindicaciones en la ANC. Pero, todos hacen coro para llamar a las masas a unirse en torno a la Constituyente, es decir, todos llaman a firmar el «**Contrato Social**», a sentar las bases para la paz laboral.

Este es el caso de gramscianos como Carlos Lanz, que ha publicado ya un folleto con el ABC de la Asamblea Constituyente y que es el texto guía de muchos talleres que, sobre el tema, se vienen realizando en todo el país. De manera pues que, tenemos a todo un movimiento de constituyentistas, incapaces de levantar un programa revolucionario, pero orgullosos porque están convencidos que es un avance que el pueblo se esté organizando y que es posible construir poderes locales. Pero lo que no entienden es que la organización y el «**poder**» que están construyendo es el que necesita la burguesía para que avance su plan económico y se oxigene la democracia.

¿QUÉ HACER?

Pero cada vez que discutimos con un activista de masas (en su mayoría honestos, pero sin una posición de clase proletaria), éste nos dice que si no hay que participar en la constituyente y que si no hay que apoyar al movimiento liderado por Chávez entonces qué alternativa les presentamos. Pareciera que no es posible hacer política en Venezuela sin participar en la Constituyente, y que oponerse a ésta es condenarse al aislamiento y al desprecio de las masas. A estos luchadores les recomendamos leer un importante texto de V.I. Lenin que aborda estos «**problemas candentes de nuestro movimiento**». Se trata del texto «**¿Qué Hacer?**».

Todos quienes nadan hoy a favor de la corriente que lideriza Chávez y el MVR no hacen más que subordinarse a la marcha espontánea del movimiento obrero y, por lo tanto, tras los dictados ideológicos de la burguesía. Y no escapan de esto ni siquiera los incautos que penetrando las filas del MVR podrán aprovechar esto para generar un movimiento de «**cambio**» y mantenerse ligados a las masas. Los comunistas no se pliegan a las posiciones atrasadas de las masas aunque esto implique su aislamiento circunstancial de éstas. Los revolucionarios no abrazamos el credo de Rousseau ni de Bolívar, ni nos convertimos de repente en constituyentistas, ni levanta-

mos posiciones anti-partido sólo por ganarnos la simpatía de las masas. Las masas proletarias por sí mismas solamente fortalecerán la ideología burguesa; el partido revolucionario debe nadar contra esa corriente manteniendo siempre en alto el Programa Comunista. Veamos que nos dice el viejo Lenin:

«Ya que no puede hablarse de una ideología independiente, elaborada por las masas obreras en el curso de su movimiento, el problema se plantea solamente así: ideología burguesa o ideología socialista. No hay término medio (pues la humanidad no ha elaborado ninguna “tercera” ideología; además, en general, en la sociedad desgarrada por las contradicciones de clase nunca puede existir una ideología al margen de las clases ni por encima de las clases). Por eso, todo lo que sea rebajar la ideología socialista, todo lo que sea alejarse de ella equivale a fortalecer la ideología burguesa [que es lo que hacen nuestros constituyentistas, ndr.]. Se habla de espontaneidad. Pero el desarrollo espontáneo del movimiento obrero marcha precisamente hacia su subordinación a la ideología burguesa, marcha precisamente por el camino del programa del “Credo” [en el caso de Venezuela por el camino del programa del MVR y la Constituyente, que es el mismo del FMI y los empresarios, ndr.], pues el movimiento obrero espontáneo es tradeunionismo, es Nur-Gewerkschaftlerei, y el tradeunionismo implica precisamente la esclavización ideológica de los obreros por la burguesía. Por esto es por lo que nuestra tarea, la tarea de la socialdemocracia consiste en cambiar la espontaneidad, consiste en apartar el movimiento obrero de esta tendencia espontánea del tradeunionismo de cobijarse bajo el ala de la burguesía y atraerlo hacia el ala de la socialdemocracia revolucionaria [y debemos

hacer esto aunque no siempre nos encontremos con fuerzas suficientes, ndr.]».

Con esta cita sólo queremos transmitirles a nuestros enlodados constituyentistas, que no encontrarán respuestas a la pregunta ¿Qué hacer?. Marchando a la cola del MVR, ni siquiera con el argumento de que con éste están las masas. Queremos reafirmarles que todo esfuerzo que hagan en función de la movilización de las masas hacia la Asamblea Nacional Constituyente, es un esfuerzo a favor de la Democracia y el capitalismo.

No estamos planteando el abandono de las luchas económicas. Todo lo contrario. La lucha reivindicativa debe plantearse, pero desde los organismos naturales de las masas y manteniéndolas independientes de la ANC, rechazándola como farsa burguesa. Los proletarios deben rechazar la firma de este nuevo **«Contrato Social»**.

En el plano político, nuestro llamado es en primera instancia a incorporarse y fortalecer el Partido Comunista Internacional, a apoyar la propaganda revolucionaria y a desenmascarar donde se pueda a los viejos y los nuevos representantes de la burguesía.

El proletariado venezolano y mundial debe abandonar toda ilusión democrática y reformista y levantar las banderas de la revolución proletaria, del derrocamiento del poder burgués para la implantación de la Dictadura del Proletariado, la abolición del mercado, de la moneda y del trabajo asalariado, como única vía hacia la disolución del estado, tendiendo hacia el Comunismo.

**iiiiLA CONSTITUYENTE ES UNA FARSA!!!!
 iiiLEVANTEMOS EL PROGRAMA COMUNISTA!!!!
 iiiHACIA LA TOMA DEL PODER Y LA DICTADURA
 DEL PROLETARIADO!!!!**

Lean Uds

“Estructura económica y social de la Rusia de hoy”

Un texto fundamental para entender
lo que fue la contrarrevolución de Stalin.

Pídenlo Uds a Edizioni “il programma comunista”
Apartado postal 962 - 20101 Milano (Italia)

Dos Textos de Nuestra Corriente**MOVIMIENTO OBRERO
E INTERNACIONALES SINDICALES**

(de "Battaglia Comunista", 29-6-1949)

En los primeros movimientos proletarios no estaba muy clara la distinción entre organizaciones de defensa de los intereses económicos de categoría de los asalariados y los primeros grupos, círculos y partidos políticos. Sin embargo, ya en el *LLAMAMIENTO* inaugural de la Primera Internacional de los Trabajadores está muy claro el concepto de que se trata de una Asociación mundial de partidos políticos.

El *LLAMAMIENTO* efectivamente tras haber recordado el camino recorrido desde entonces por las clases obreras en la defensa de sus intereses contra la explotación burguesa, el *bill* de las diez horas arrancado al parlamento inglés, y los resultados de las primeras cooperativas de producción, utiliza tal material de propaganda en el campo crítico, y subraya el desmentido a los teóricos de la economía burguesa, según los cuales, la producción se habría hundido pavorosamente donde hubiese sido reducida la extorsión de trabajo a los asalariados reduciendo la jornada de trabajo y elevando la edad mínima del obrero, como lo desmiente en la tesis de que puede haber producción sin **«la existencia de una clase de patronos que emplea a una clase de trabajadores»** en grandes proporciones y según los preceptos de la ciencia moderna. Pero rápidamente el *llamamiento* afirma, que movimiento sindical y trabajo cooperativo nunca estarán en condiciones **«de detener el aumento del monopolio que tiene lugar en progresión geométrica, de liberar a las masas y ni siquiera de aliviar en modo sensible el peso de su miseria»**. El trabajo cooperativo debería ser hecho a escala nacional y en consecuencia con medios del Estado. **«En cambio los señores de la tierra y del capital utilizarán siempre sus privilegios para defender y perpetuar su monopolio económico»**. Por consiguiente, el gran deber de las clases obreras es el de conquistar el poder político.

La cuestión del poder político y del estado determinó largas batallas, primero entre los socialistas marxistas y los libertarios, con la escisión de la Primera Internacional, luego entre marxistas revolucionarios y socialdemócratas. Lenin ha dado la demostración históricamente irrevocable que **«la tendencia a eludir la cuestión de la actitud de la revolución en las confrontaciones con el Estado»** fue **«la cosa más característica del proceso de crecimiento del oportunismo de la II Internacional (1889-1914), que ha conducido a su hundimiento»**.

Los fundamentos de la posición marxista que Lenin restablecía en **«El Estado y la Revolución»** como base de la doctrina de la Tercera Internacional Comunista de Moscú eran: destrucción con la violencia del aparato de Estado burgués –dictadura revolucionaria del proletariado armado para el progresivo desmantelamiento del sistema social capitalista y la represión de los burgueses contrarrevolucionarios– sistema estatal obrero sin burócratas de carrera, sino con los trabajadores **«periódicamente llamados a las funciones de control y vigilancia»**, revocables en todo momento y con el mismo trato económico y finalmente disolución del nuevo aparato estatal en la medida en que la producción se realiza sobre base comunista.

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El reunir a los sindicatos obreros en un organismo internacional único acaeció tarde, puesto que también nacionalmente se reagruparon mucho más tarde que los grupos de propaganda que se transforman en verdaderos partidos. Desde mucho antes se formaron las federaciones profesionales o de categoría, y después se unen éstas en confederaciones nacionales. Esta red de la organización económica es siempre muy distinta de aquella política de par-

tido, pero hay excepciones, provocando confusión en las relaciones internacionales el sistema inglés del *Labour Party*, que acepta las adhesiones tanto de grupos y partidos políticos obreros como de las *Trade Unions* económicas. El *Labour Party* no es y ni siquiera se declara socialista y marxista, sin embargo, se adhiere a la Internacional política, a cuyos congresos mundiales posteriores de manera más o menos directa participan delegaciones de las confederaciones sindicales de varios países.

Si el proceso del oportunismo denunciado y afrontado por Lenin tuvo su aspecto político en el seno de la Segunda Internacional con el abandono de cualquier preparación seria del proletariado para la revolución, la inserción en el sistema parlamentario del país respectivo, e incluso la traición final con el apoyo de guerra a las burguesías nacionales en abierto desprecio hacia las decisiones de los congresos mundiales socialistas de Stuttgart y Basilea, el oportunismo tuvo aspectos no menos graves en el campo sindical. Los dirigentes de las grandes organizaciones obreras de oficio y de las confederaciones sindicales se burocratizaron en una práctica de convenios y de acuerdos con los organismos patronales, que les condujo a rechazar cada vez más la batalla directa de las masas asalariadas contra el patronato. A medida que frente a las organizaciones obreras se levantaban sindicatos de empresarios industriales y educaban a los burgueses en la necesidad de superar, por razones de clase, la autonomía de la empresa y la concurrencia en una doble lucha monopolista dirigida contra el consumidor por un lado y por el otro contra la organización sindical obrera, los bonzos sindicales construyeron el método de la colaboración económica, por el cual los obreros, en lugar de luchar en cada empresa y en un campo más amplio contra los empleadores, obtienen ventajas limitadas a condición de sostener a la empresa productiva evitando las huelgas y moviéndose en el plano de la búsqueda del interés común en la «**productividad**» y en el «**rendimiento**» del trabajo industrial.

Si los parlamentarios socialistas traicionan vergonzosamente a la clase obrera votando los créditos militares y entrando en los ministerios o gobiernos de guerra de 1914, los dirigentes sindicales tienen su digna viga maestra al proclamar el deber de los obreros industriales de intensificar el trabajo para producir los medios bélicos necesarios para la salvación de la patria, y les llaman al engaño del compromiso jactándose de la obediencia de exenciones del servicio militar.

La ventolera de crisis y extravío que cayó sobre el movimiento proletario suspendió durante toda la guerra la vida de los *buros* obreros internacionales, el político de Bruselas y el sindical de Amsterdam. Para colmo las mismas Confederaciones disidentes de las reformistas, y dirigidas por los libertarios o por sindicalistas de la escuela de Sorel, tampoco resistieron todas a las seducciones del socialpatriotismo; ejemplo clásico fue la francesa de Jouhaux, que se arrojó en pleno en la política chovinista y en la *unión sagrada*.

Los renegados y los socialtraidores que durante la guerra se habían combatido fieramente entre sí bajo las respectivas banderas nacionales se volvieron a reunir tras la guerra en las internacionales amarillas, y la oficina sindical internacional de Amsterdam estableció las mejores relaciones con el Buró Internacional del Trabajo fundado en Ginebra como flanco de la Sociedad de las Naciones.

Los comunistas leninistas atacaron a fondo a todas estas instituciones, expresiones del imperialismo mundial y del esfuerzo contrarrevolucionario del régimen capitalista que se agrupaba desesperadamente contra las sublevaciones del proletariado mundial victorioso en la dictadura roja de Octubre.

La línea de la táctica sindical de los comunistas, que en 1919 fundaban en Moscú el Comintern, sin embargo, viene recordada en los puntos esenciales para ser claramente comprendida. Ninguna duda, en el campo de la organización política proletaria, sobre la exigencia de romper definitivamente no sólo con los oportunistas del socialnacionalismo sino también con los centristas dubitativos frente a la consigna de la lucha contra la democracia parlamentaria y por la dictadura revolucionaria en todos los países. Por consiguiente, al igual que fue repudiada la Internacional de Bruselas y el reagrupamiento que se formó después llamado irónicamente con el nombre de internacional *dos y media*, así también fueron invitados los comunistas de cada nación a romper con los partidos socialistas locales.

En el campo sindical, mientras que estaba no menos clara la declaración de guerra contra los servidores amarillos del capital de Amsterdam y de Ginebra, emanación material directa de los estados monopolistas burgueses y sin ningún lazo con los estratos de la clase trabajado-

ra, se resolvió de modo coherente pero no formalmente idéntico el problema de las organizaciones locales y nacionales.

La cuestión dio lugar a no pocos debates entre los jóvenes partidos comunistas. En no pocos de estos se sostuvo la táctica del abandono de los sindicatos dirigidos por los amarillos para pasar a la formación de nuevos sindicatos económicos escisionistas que reagrupaban a los trabajadores disgustados con el oportunismo de los funcionarios socialdemócratas. Se consideró desde estos grupos, alemanes, holandeses y de otros países, que a la lucha revolucionaria le fuese necesario no sólo un partido comunista autónomo, sino también una red sindical autónoma y ligada al partido.

La crítica de Lenin probó que una visión similar implícitamente y a veces explícitamente contenía una desvalorización de la función del partido y, por tanto, de la necesidad de la lucha política revolucionaria, y se emparentaba con viejas preocupaciones obreristas participes de los errores de derecha. Se relacionaban con ella las tendencias a devaluar, también representadas en Italia, al mismo sindicato de categoría o de rama con base nacional respecto a los organismos de fábrica constituidos entre los obreros, o Consejos de Empresa, que venían siendo considerados no como órganos de lucha insertados en una red general, sino como células locales de un nuevo orden productivo que habría reemplazado en la gestión al orden burgués, dejando subsistir la autonomía de la empresa bajo la dirección de sus obreros.

Esta concepción conducía a una visión no marxista de la revolución, según la cual el nuevo tipo económico habría ido sustituyendo al no capitalista célula por célula con un proceso más importante de aquellos que se refieren al poder central y a la planificación general socialista. La doctrina del Comintern eliminó todas estas desviaciones y precisó la importancia, en la situación histórica de entonces, del sindicato económico al que los trabajadores afluirían, en todos los países, en masas compactas imponiendo bastas luchas nacionales de categoría y planteando las premisas de batallas políticas. Para Marx y Lenin, en el agrupamiento de las fuerzas obreras el partido es indispensable, y si falta o pierde su fuerza revolucionaria, el movimiento sindical no puede más que reducirse al ámbito de una colaboración con el sistema burgués; pero donde maduran las situaciones y la vanguardia proletaria es fuerte y decidida, también el sindicato pasa de órgano de conquistas limitadas a órgano de batalla revolucionaria, y la estrategia de la conquista del poder político halla su base en la decidida influencia del partido, eventualmente incluso minoritaria, en los órganos sindicales a través de los cuales se puede llamar a las masas a las huelgas generales y a las grandes luchas.

El II Congreso del Comintern de 1920, en sus tesis sindicales, que están entre las más expresivas, quiso pues, que los partidos comunistas trabajasen en las confederaciones sindicales tradicionales tratando de conquistarlas, pero (en caso de que no pudiesen arrancarles la dirección a los oportunistas) que no sacasen de tal situación el motivo para lanzarle a los obreros la consigna de abandonarlos y fundar otros sindicatos a nivel nacional.

Esta táctica tuvo fiel aplicación, por ejemplo, en Italia, donde los comunistas participaron en todas las luchas sindicales e hicieron un intenso trabajo en las fábricas, en las Ligas y en las Cámaras del Trabajo, muchas de las cuales estaban dirigidas por los comunistas, en las federaciones de oficio, de las que controlaban algunas aunque la *Confederazione Generale del Lavoro* estuviese en manos de los reformistas anticomunistas Rigola, d'Aragone, Buozzi e similares.

En el campo de la organización internacional, se mantuvo dicha táctica país por país, los comunistas fundaron la Internacional de Sindicatos Rojos –Profintern– con sede en Moscú, que reunía las Centrales Nacionales dirigidas por los comunistas, y en primera línea los sindicatos rusos. Fue la época de la consigna: *Moscú contra Amsterdam* en el movimiento obrero.

Después de algunos años este método claro y neto sufrió una primera rectificación regresiva. Habiéndose verificado, por razones de la situación general del mundo capitalista que no es necesario reclamar extensamente, retrocesos y derrotas del movimiento revolucionario en Europa, se sacó el pretexto, en relación a las exigencias del Estado ruso, para modificar la táctica sindical internacional y suprimir el Profintern, llegando hasta exigir que los sindicatos rusos fuesen aceptados como confederación nacional en el *Buró* de los amarillos de Amsterdam, y se invitó a los obreros comunistas a luchar por este objetivo y a protestar contra el previsible rechazo de los oportunistas a aceptar tal inscripción. Era un primer paso en la

vía liquidacionista. La política de los frentes populares y de la defensa de la democracia, paralela a las evoluciones de la política exterior del Estado soviético, ahora ya entrado en el circuito mundial del imperialismo y habiéndose alineado en las barricadas del imperialismo, completaba el proceso de liquidación de la autonomía política y organizativa del proletariado, comenzando por el partido y acabando con los organismos sindicales de masas, y la transformación de estos en instrumentos de la conservación burguesa y del imperialismo.

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El problema del engranaje entre órganos políticos y órganos sindicales de lucha proletaria, en su enfoque, debe tener en cuenta hechos históricos de la mayor importancia acaecidos después del final de la primera guerra mundial. Tales hechos son, por una parte, la nueva actitud de los Estados capitalistas respecto al hecho sindical, y por la otra, la disolución misma del segundo conflicto mundial, la monstruosa alianza entre Rusia y Estados capitalistas y los contrastes entre los vencedores.

Desde la prohibición de los sindicatos económicos, consecuencia coherente con la pura doctrina liberal burguesa, y desde su tolerancia, el capitalismo pasa a la tercera fase de la inserción sindical en su orden social y estatal. Políticamente la dependencia ya se había obtenido en los sindicatos oportunistas y amarillos, y había hecho sus pruebas en la primera guerra mundial. Pero la burguesía, para la defensa de su orden constituido, debía hacer más. Desde la primera época la riqueza social y el capital estaban en sus manos, y los iba concentrando cada vez más con el continuo arrojar entre los desposeídos a los estratos arruinados de las clases tradicionales de los productores libres. En sus manos ya desde las revoluciones liberales estaba el poder político y armado del estado, y de un modo más perfecto cuanto más perfectas sean las democracias parlamentarias, como demuestra Lenin con Marx y Engels. En las manos del proletariado, su enemigo, cuyos efectivos crecían con el crecimiento de la expropiación acumuladora, había un tercer recurso: la organización, la asociación y la superación del individualismo, divisa histórica y filosófica del régimen burgués.

La burguesía mundial también ha querido arrancar a su enemigo ésta, su única ventaja, habiendo desarrollado la propia conciencia y organización de clase interna, la burguesía ha hecho inauditos esfuerzos para reprimir las puntas de individualismo económico en su seno y dotarse de una planificación. Desde el primer momento tiene en el Estado un organismo de engaño y de represión policiaca; se esfuerza en los últimos decenios en hacer del Estado, al mismo tiempo un instrumento al propio servicio, un organismo de control y de regimentación económica.

Puesto que la prohibición del sindicato económico sería un incentivo a la lucha de clase autónoma del proletariado, en este método la consigna se ha convertido en todo lo contrario. El sindicato debe ser insertado jurídicamente en el estado y convertirse en uno de sus órganos. La vía histórica para llegar a tal resultado presenta muchos aspectos distintos e incluso retornos, pero estamos en presencia de un carácter constante y distintivo del moderno capitalismo.

En Italia y Alemania los regímenes totalitarios llegaron con la destrucción directa de los sindicatos rojos tradicionales e incluso de los amarillos.

Los estados que en guerra han derrotado a los regímenes fascistas se mueven con otros medios en la misma dirección.

Temporalmente, en sus territorios y en los conquistados han dejado actuar a sindicatos que se dicen libres y no han prohibido todavía campañas de propaganda y huelgas.

Pero en todas partes la solución de tales movimientos confluye en una negociación en la institución oficial con los exponentes del poder político estatal que hacen de árbitros entre las partes económicamente en lucha, y es obviamente el patronato quien realiza de tal modo la parte de juez y ejecutor.

Esto, seguramente preludia la eliminación jurídica de la huelga y de la autonomía de organización sindical, ya de hecho acaecida en todos los países, y crea naturalmente un nuevo planteamiento de los problemas de la acción proletaria.

Los organismos internacionales reaparecen como emanación de poderes estatales constituidos. Como la II Internacional renació con el permiso de los poderes vencedores de entonces,

en forma de *buros* domesticados, también tenemos hoy *buros* de los partidos socialistas en la órbita de los estados occidentales, y un denominado *buró* de informaciones comunistas en lugar de la gloriosa tercera Internacional que lo fue.

Los sindicatos se reagrupan en congresos y consejos sin poder probar que tengan ningún lazo con la clase obrera, y que con clara evidencia demuestran haber sido puestos en pie por uno u otro grupo de gobiernos.

La salvación de la clase obrera, su nuevo ascenso histórico después de luchas y travesías tremendas, no está en ninguno de tales organismos. La salvación está en la vía que sepa reunir el reordenamiento teórico de las visiones sobre los más recientes fenómenos del mundo capitalista y el nuevo planteamiento organizativo en todos los países a escala mundial, que sabrá dotarse de un plan más elevado que el contraste militar de los imperialismos, volviendo a colocar la guerra entre las clases en el lugar de la guerra entre estados.

EL CADÁVER TODAVÍA CAMINA

(De nuestro opuscolo *Sul filo del tempo*, mayo de 1953)

No es por sacrificar la actualidad del innoble Mayo que transcurre, y tomó un lugar digno entre varios de sus predecesores consagrados a los transcurso de la «**dura amazona**» Libertad, reducida ya a vieja trotona, por lo que nos ocuparemos una vez más del tema: proletariado y electoralismo.

En efecto, sin dar importancia alguna al pronóstico o a los sondeos estadísticos de los resultados, aquí desde hace más de treinta años rechazamos también esta última afirmada utilidad del índice cuantitativo de las fuerzas sociales, y por tanto sin intentar el frío bosquejo o admirar la pálida fotografía en números actuales, y del país italiano, enlazaremos en breves trazos las posiciones de un período histórico cuyas inmensas lecciones son inutilizadas en gran parte por el estado para observar a las masas que acuden —aunque con visibles y amplios reflujos de desconfianza y disgusto— a las urnas.

En 1892 en el Congreso de Génova se constituyó el Partido Socialista Italiano con la separación de los marxistas de los anarquistas. La polémica y la escisión reflejan de lejos la que puso fin a la Primera Internacional entre Marx y Bakunin, y como se dijo, entre autoritarios y libertarios. En un primer plano la cuestión se ve así: los marxistas están, en aquella época, por la participación en las elecciones de los organismos públicos administrativos y políticos, los libertarios están en contra. Pero el verdadero fondo de la cuestión es otro (ver los escritos de la época de Marx y de Engels sobre España, etc.). Se trata de rebatir la concepción revolucionaria individualista para la cual no se debe votar con el fin de «**no reconocer**» con ese acto al Estado de los burgueses, con la concepción histórica y dialéctica de que el Estado de clase es un hecho real y no un dogma que baste con cancelar, más o menos ociosamente, por la propia «**conciencia**», siendo históricamente destruido sólo por la revolución. Es éste por excelencia un hecho de fuerza (decía Engels ¿existe algo más autoritario que la revolución?) y no de persuasión (y aún menos de recuento de opiniones), de autoridad y no de libertad, que no será tan ingenua como para lanzar al vuelo a los individuos autónomos como a una jaula de pichones, sino que construirá la potencia y la fuerza de un nuevo Estado.

De manera que, en esta contienda entre aquellos que querían entrar en los parlamentos y aquellos que querían quedarse fuera (pero como corolario de errores mucho más graves incitando a los proletarios a negar el Estado de clase, el partido político de clase, y finalmente la organización sindical), eran los socialistas marxistas y no los anarquistas antielectoralistas y antiorganizadores los que negaban la burla burguesa de la libertad, base del engaño de la democracia electiva.

La recta posición programática era la de reivindicar no tanto la «conquista» formal «de los poderes públicos», sino la futura «conquista revolucionaria del poder político», y vanamente el ala derecha posibilista y reformista trató de encubrir la fórmula lanzada por Marx desde 1848: ¡Dictadura de la clase obrera!

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La burguesía europea ampliamente avanzada en el campo de las reformas sociales y de seductoras invitaciones de colaboración a los dirigentes sindicales y parlamentarios de los obreros, entra en el circuito explosivo del imperialismo, y en 1914 estalla la primera guerra mundial. Una ola de extravío asalta a los socialistas y a los trabajadores, que incluso habían proclamado en la vigilia, en Stuttgart y Basilea, que se habría contrapuesto a la guerra la revolución social. Los traidores comienzan a medir la catastrófica situación que arroja decenios de rosadas ilusiones, no con el metro del marxismo proletario, sino con el de la libertad burguesa, cuyos clamores más altos se elevan cada vez que la causa y la fuerza de nuestra revolución se arrodilla.

La existencia de Parlamentos y del derecho al voto es invocada como patrimonio asegurado al proletariado que debe defenderlo permitiendo que le encuadren y le armen en el ejército nacional: y así los trabajadores alemanes estarán persuadidos para hacerse matar para acabar con el peligro zarista, y los occidentales contra el espectro kaiserista.

El Partido Socialista Italiano tuvo la ventaja de un lapso de tiempo para decidir antes de acceder a la unión nacional: rechazó decididamente cuando el Estado italiano habría debido seguir a los alemanes en alianza política, refugiándose en la fórmula de la neutralidad (insuficiente, como declaró el ala revolucionaria aún antes del mayo relampageante de 1915) y supo luego resistir a la oposición cuando la burguesía bajó «al campo de la libertad» atacando a Austria.

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En 1919 la guerra había acabado, con la victoria nacional y con la liberación de las ciudades «irredentas», pero después de un inmenso sacrificio de sangre y con el arrastramiento inevitable de convulsiones económicas y sociales: inflación, crisis de producción, crisis de la industria de guerra. Dos potentes resultados históricos son adquiridos y evidentes ante las masas y su partido. En el campo interno se ha visto la antítesis existente entre los postulados de democracia y nación, identificados con la guerra y con la masacre, y los postulados de clase y socialistas: los intervencionistas de todos los colores, desde los nacionalistas (luego fascistas) a los demomasones y republicanos, hayan o no hayan hecho la guerra, ansiosos de envolverse en la orgía de la victoria, enseguida enfriada por los azotes de los aliados imperialistas, son odiados justamente y escarnecidos por los trabajadores que los echan fuera de las plazas a las que van decididos a la lucha. En el campo internacional la revolución bolchevique ha dado de hecho el polo opuesto a la teoría de la revolución demoburguesa y anarquista: entre tanto se puede llegar a la victoria, en cuanto nos liberemos radicalmente de errores, ilusiones y escrúpulos de democracia y libertad.

Y entonces se abre la incertidumbre ante el gran partido batido por los intervencionistas en mayo de 1915. Por la vía democrática es fácil obtener una poderosa revancha numérica. Mucho más dura es otra vía que se afronta fundando un partido revolucionario, eliminando a los socialdemócratas a la Turati, Modigliani y Treves, aunque salvados de la deshonra del socialpatriotismo, organizando la toma insurreccional del poder, que entre tanto se considera posible en toda Centroeuropa, en los territorios de los imperios derrotados.

En la situación de 1892 no existía antítesis entre la vía revolucionaria y la de la actividad electoral, no teniendo la primera otro lugar histórico más que el claro programa de partido, no la maniobra de acción.

Un grupo avanzado de los socialistas italianos en el Congreso de Bolonia sostuvo que en 1919 la antítesis estaba abierta. Tomar el camino de las elecciones equivalía a cerrar el camino a la revolución. La perplejidad de la burguesía era evidente, pues no quería, en su mayoría de entonces, prevenir la guerra civil con iniciativas de fuerza, y con Giolitti y Nitti invitaba a los obreros a entrar en las indefensas fábricas y a las 150 señorías del PSI a vol-

carse en Montecitorio (Parlamento italiano): ¡Aunque se cantase en ambos recintos Bandiera Rossa!

No fue posible frenar el entusiasmo por la campaña electoral, y hacer valer la previsión, históricamente confirmada, de que su efecto, sobre todo en cuanto afortunada, habría hecho perder todo lo ganado con la vigorosa campaña de desvergüenza de la «**guerra democrática**», con el entusiasmo con el que los trabajadores italianos, fuertemente alineados y solos en el frente de clase, habían acogido la toma del poder por los Soviets rusos y la dispersión de la Asamblea democrática nacida muerta.

Mussolini, que nos había traicionado en 1914, pasándose al frente opuesto con los autores de la intervención democrática e irredentista, autor —¡Ojalá lo hubiese hecho antes!— de una iniciativa de fuerza de la burguesía nacional para sofocar a los órganos proletarios —fue ridiculizado en las elecciones, y la borrachera siguió su irresistible curso.

En 1920, echándose las bases del partido comunista en Italia dividido por los socialdemócratas, la Internacional de Moscú consideró que aquella antítesis entre elecciones e insurrección no existió, en el sentido de que los partidos comunistas sólidamente estables, más allá de la línea de división entre las dos Internacionales, pudiesen considerar aún útil el empleo de la acción en el Parlamento, para hacer saltar por los aires el Parlamento mismo, y por tal vía enterrar el parlamentarismo. La cuestión planteada demasiado genéricamente era difícil, y todos los comunistas italianos se sometieron a la decisión del II Congreso de Moscú (junio de 1920) estando clara la solución: en principio, todos contra el parlamentarismo; en táctica, no es necesario establecer ni la participación siempre y en todas partes, ni el boicot siempre y en todas partes.

Los pareceres de la mayoría significan muy poco ante los testimonios de la historia. Una tal decisión, y su aceptación general en Italia, no quitan nada a la recordada antítesis de 1919: elecciones con un partido híbrido de revolucionarios como mucho en lenta vía de orientación y de socialdemócratas bien decididos —o la ruptura del partido (octubre de 1919, era el momento; en enero de 1921 fue tarde) y preparación para la conquista del poder revolucionario. Es indiscutible que Lenin hizo poco bien parangonando la posición de los socialistas antibélicos en Italia, en la posguerra de un Estado desde hacía tiempo democrático, y victorioso, con la de los bolcheviques en Rusia en las Dumas zaristas durante las guerras perdidas. Pero no menos indiscutible es que Lenin vio a tiempo la antítesis histórica planteada por nosotros y confirmada en el futuro.

En el famoso libro sobre «**El Extremismo Enfermedad Infantil del Comunismo**» —en el que la tendencia de la izquierda no es despreciada como pueril, sino considerada como elemento de crecimiento del comunismo, contra el derechismo y el centrismo, elementos de senilidad y descomposición, que contra la desesperada lucha de Lenin y después de haberle roto el cerebro triunfaron— en aquel texto tan explotado por los maniáticos del método electoral, Lenin se expresaba así sobre la lucha en el partido italiano; son los únicos pasajes:

Nota del 27 de abril de 1920: «**He tenido muy pocas posibilidades de conocer el comunismo “de izquierda” en Italia. Indudablemente la fracción “de los comunistas boicoteadores” (“comunistas abstencionistas” —en italiano en el texto) están equivocados, al propugnar la no participación en el parlamento pero me parece que en un punto tienen razón, por lo que se puede juzgar de dos números del periódico “Il Soviet” (números 3 y 4 del 19 de enero y 1 de febrero de 1920)... Es decir, en sus ataques a Turati y a los que piensan como él, quienes permanecen en un partido que ha reconocido el poder de los Soviets y la dictadura del proletariado, y siguen siendo miembros del Parlamento y prosiguen su vieja y dañosísima política oportunista. Tolerando esto, el compañero Serrati y todo el Partido Socialista Italiano cometen un error, que amenaza con el mismo peligro y grave daño que en Hungría, donde los señores Turatis húngaros sabotearon desde su seno el Partido y el poder soviético. Esta falsa actitud, inconsecuente y falta de carácter hacia los diputados oportunistas, produce por una parte el comunismo “de izquierda”, y por otra justifica hasta un cierto punto su existencia. Serrati se ha equivocado cuando acusa a Turati de “incoherencia”, mientras que incoherente es precisamente el Partido Socialista Italiano, que tolera a parlamentarios oportunistas como Turati y compañía.**»

A continuación está el «**Apéndice**», con fecha 12 de mayo de 1920. «**los números anteri-**

ormente citados del periódico italiano “Il Soviet” confirman plenamente lo que he dicho en este opúsculo sobre el Partido Socialista Italiano». A continuación sigue la cita de una entrevista de Turati al «Manchester Guardian», que evoca disciplina en el trabajo, orden y prosperidad para Italia. «Seguro, el corresponsal del periódico inglés ha confirmado en el mejor modo, que los compañeros del periódico “Il Soviet” tienen razón exigiendo que el Partido Socialista Italiano, si quiere estar realmente por la Tercera Internacional, expulse de sus filas cubriéndoles de vergüenza, a los señores Turati y consortes y se convierta en un partido comunista, tanto por su nombre como por sus acciones».

Está claro pues que el problema principal es la eliminación de los socialpacifistas del partido del proletariado; cuestión secundaria es la de si éste deba o no participar en las elecciones, tanto en el pensamiento de entonces de Lenin como en los sucesivos debates y tesis sobre el parlamentarismo del II Congreso, de poco después.

Pero para nosotros hoy está también claro lo que defendimos entonces: que la única vía para conseguir el traspaso de las fuerzas al terreno revolucionario pasaba por un enorme esfuerzo para liquidar, nada más acabar la guerra, la tremenda sugestión democrática y electoralista, que demasiadas saturnales había celebrado ya.

La táctica deseada por Moscú fue seguida por el partido de Livorno, disciplinado e incluso comprometidamente. Pero desgraciadamente, la subordinación de la revolución a las corruptoras instancias de la democracia estaba ya en curso internacional y localmente, y el punto de encuentro leninista de los dos problemas, además de su peso relativo, se revelaron insostenibles. El parlamentarismo es como un engranaje que sí se agarra por una extremidad tritura inexorablemente. Su empleo en épocas «reaccionarias» defendido por Lenin era proponible; en épocas de posible ataque revolucionario es una maniobra en la que la contrarrevolución burguesa gana demasiado fácilmente la partida. En diversas situaciones y bajo mil épocas, la historia ha demostrado que no puede encontrarse mejor engaño y desviación contra la revolución que el electoralismo.

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Desde la concesión a la táctica parlamentaria, con aplicación totalmente destructiva se deslizó poco a poco a posiciones que recordaban a las de los socialdemócratas. A estos, se les propusieron alianzas donde podían conducir a una mayoría de escaños, y ya que no tenía sentido valerse de este peso numérico sólo para realizar una oposición platónica y hacer caer a ministros, surgió la otra mal augurada fórmula del «gobierno obrero».

Estaba claro que se volvía hacia la concepción del Parlamento como vía para establecer el poder político de la clase obrera. Los hechos probaron que en la medida en que esta ilusión histórica resurgía, se volvía a descender de todas las posiciones antes conquistadas. De la destrucción del Parlamento con todos los otros engranajes del Estado por medio de la Insurrección, se había pasado a la utilización del Parlamento para acelerar la insurrección. Se recaía en la utilización del Parlamento como medio para llegar con la mayoría al poder de clase. El cuarto paso como estaba establecido claramente en las tesis que la Izquierda presentó en Moscú en 1920, 1922, 1924, 1926, fue el de pasar del parlamento como *medio* al parlamento como *fin*. Todas las mayorías parlamentarias tienen razón y son sagradas e inamovibles, aunque estén en contra del proletariado.

Turati mismo no lo hubiera dicho nunca; pero lo dicen a cada hora los «comunistas» actuales y lo inculcan muy profundamente entre las masas que les siguen.

Si recordamos estas etapas una vez más, es para establecer el estrecho lazo entre cada afirmación del electoralismo, parlamentarismo democracia y libertad como una derrota, un paso atrás del potencial revolucionario de clase.

El retroceso tuvo su complemento sin necesidad de velos, cuando en situaciones de asalto mortal el poder del capital tomó la iniciativa de guerra civil contra los organismos proletarios. La situación se había invertido en gran parte por el trabajo de la burguesía liberal y de los socialistas democráticos y de la misma derecha unida en nuestras filas, como Lenin decía para Hungría. En Alemania fueron los partidos esbirros los carniceros de los comunistas revolucionarios, en Italia no sólo favorecieron las falsas retiradas de Nitti y Giolitti, sino que dieron paso a la preparación de las abiertas fuerzas fascistas, usando para tal efecto magis-

traturas, policía, ejército (Bonomi) para contraatacar cada vez que las fuerzas ilegales comunistas (solas y en pleno pacto de pacificación firmado por aquellos partidos) conseguían éxitos tácticos (Empoli, Prato, Sarzana, Foiano, Bari, Ancona, Parma, Trieste, etc.). Que en estos casos los fascistas, al no poder hacerlo solos, masacraron a los trabajadores y a nuestros compañeros con la ayuda de la fuerza del Estado constitucional y parlamentario, y que se quemasen periódicos y sedes rojas, no constituyó el máximo escándalo: este estalló cuando la tomaron con el parlamento y asesinaron, ahora ya «**post festum**», al diputado Mateotti.

El ciclo había concluido. Más no el parlamento por la causa del proletariado, sino el proletariado para la causa del parlamento.

Se invocó y proclamó el frente general de todos los partidos no fascistas por encima de las diversas ideologías y de las diversas bases de clase, con el único objetivo de unir todas las fuerzas para derrocar al fascismo, hacer resurgir la democracia, y *volver a abrir el parlamento*.

Otras veces hemos reexpuesto ya las etapas históricas: el Aventino, en el que participó la dirección de 1924 de nuestro partido, pero del que debió retirarse por la voluntad del partido mismo que sólo por disciplina había soportado las directrices que prevalecieron en Moscú, pero todavía conservaba intacto su precioso horror, nacido de miles de luchas, a toda alianza interclasista; luego la larga pausa y la ulterior marcha a la emigración, hasta la política de liberación nacional y la guerra partisana como hemos explicado otras veces, el uso de medios armados e insurreccionales nada quitaba el carácter de oportunismo y traición de una política tal. No seguiremos aquí toda la narración.

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Desde antes del fascismo italiano y de la otra guerra teníamos bastantes argumentos para defender que en el occidente de Europa, jamás el partido proletario debía acceder a acciones políticas paralelas con la burguesía «**de izquierda**» o popular, de las que desde entonces se han visto las más impensadas ediciones: masones anticlericales primero, luego católicos democristianos y frailes de convento, republicanos y monárquicos, proteccionistas y libre-cambistas, centralistas y federalistas, etc.

En contra de nuestro método que considera todo movimiento «**a la derecha**» de la burguesía, en el sentido de arrancarles la máscara de las ostentadas garantías y concesiones, como una previsión verificada, una «**victoria teórica**» (Marx y Engels) y por lo tanto una ocasión revolucionaria útil, que un partido rectamente preparado debe acoger no con luto sino con alegría; está el método opuesto para el que en cada una de aquellas curvas se desmoviliza el frente de clase y se corre para salvar, como precioso tesoro, todo lo que ha desmantelado y desdeñado la burguesía: democracia, libertad, constitución y parlamento.

Dejemos pues la polémica doctrinal, proponible sólo en las confrontaciones con los anti-marxistas declarados, y veamos donde ha conducido aquel método rechazado por nosotros, ya que al mismo con el concurso de tantas fuerzas y de tantos cómplices, el proletariado, europeo e italiano, ha sido atado y clavado.

Resistencias nacionales, guerra de los Estados orientales y occidentales en el frente democrático, frenazo a los alemanes en Stalingrado, desembarco en Francia, caída de Mussolini y colgamiento por los pies, caída de Hitler. El correo de la democracia, al que los proletarios nada han negado: ¡sangre y carne, trama de clase de su atormentado movimiento de hace un siglo, está a salvo! Gracias sobre todo a los ejércitos de América, ella está a salvo para siempre: ¡Libertad, Democracia y constitución electiva!

¡Todo ha sido arriesgado y dado por tí, Parlamento, templo de la civilización moderna, y, cerrados los umbrales del templo de Jano, tenemos la alegría de volver a abrir los tuyos!

Un poco anhelante la humana civilización vuelve a tomar su camino generoso y tolerante, se compromete a ahorcar a la gente sólo por el cuello, vuelve a consagrar la persona humana que por necesidad había sido material idóneo para hacer tortillas con las bombas liberadoras: si históricamente todos estos apologetas tenían razón, el peligro de la Dictadura ha terminado, y desde hoy hasta el fin de los siglos no veremos algo tan terrible como para pensar en estar sin diputados y de prescindir de las cámaras parlamentarios. De Yalta a Potsdam, de Washington a Moscú, de Londres a Berlín y a Roma todo esto sucedía en mayo –¡siempre en mayo!– de 1945, totalmente solar y seguro.

¡Oigamos pues lo que dicen los mismos sujetos, y los transmisores de los mismos centros, en este mayo de 1953, no tan lejano pues, pero «**quantum mutatus ab illo!**». Todo estaba a salvo entonces, con el acuerdo de todos. Ahora al oír a cada uno de ellos todo puede perderse aún, todo debe empezarse de nuevo.

¡Admitamos pues al menos, que en 1922–45 nos han arrastrado en un método idiota y hediente!

Limitamos la demostración a las formaciones electorales italianas, previa aplicación de la máscara antigás.

Sustancialmente hay tres grupos en lucha, si dejamos aparte la tímida reaparición de los fascistas, que tenían todo el derecho a ser valorados, un hecho histórico cualificado como cualquier otro pero que con la papeleta en la mano en lugar del garrote representan la puerca figura de ser los más democráticos. Y efectivamente el democrático con más carácter en cada época es el que recita la parte de la víctima de las persecuciones de estado y las represalias de la policía. Libre apología del garrote, obteniéndose, ¡ahí va! con papelucho de voto. Son pues tres los grupos en los que se ha roto el frente antifascista y el bloque de liberación nacional –primer gobierno tras la caída de Mussolini. Tres grupos que se hermanaron en la recíproca certeza –y se dieron aval recíproco de que eran semejantes en la guerra santa, en la cruzada mundial contra las dictaduras. Ahora bien, escuchemos el juego de palabras de los portavoces y de los periódicos, aunque sea en tres o cuatro choques, porque no se consigue resistir más. Cada uno de los tres sectores pide votos con un único argumento; los otros dos personalizan el «**peligro de dictadura**».

Según la parte monárquica, que rechaza la definición de derechas, y se afirma democrática y constitucional sobre las tradiciones gloriosas de la época giolittiana que no duda en hacer chistes anti–vaticano, está claro que los comunistas dirigirán el país, si vencen, con la dictadura roja y por tanto mandarán al parlamento a freír espárragos. Pero no menos virulentos son cuando tildan de engañosa, policiaca y reaccionaria, a la democracia cristiana que, con sus aliados menores dirige Italia de nuevo bajo el despotismo de clérigos con gorro frigio. Por lo tanto, también aquellos ven en De Gasperi una amenaza al parlamento, que será sustituido por el concilio de los obispos, sustituyendo las elecciones por la comunión en la plaza.

Según la izquierda comunistoide, no es necesario explicarlo, no sólo los monárquicos preparan, ni más ni menos que un nuevo fascismo y absolutismo, sino que el centro democristiano es un agente de la dictadura de América y al estar lleno de maldad es peor que la milicia de Benito. Lo que, en cuanto es verdad, ha sido posible sólo por gracia de la política de bloque antifascista y de liberación nacional que ha hecho acoger «**military police**» y policías nacionales con los brazos abiertos, y con el inmediato desarme sobre la orden de los «**generales**» de pasillo de las «**brigadas**» obreras, apenas expulsados los fascistas y los *mil-iti republichini*.

Los democristianos y aliados, bombardeadísimos por las dos partes como personalizadores seguros del totalitarismo de mañana y del nuevo veintenio, y sobre todo envueltos en la acusación de traidores de la democracia con la enorme crueldad de la campaña sobre la ley fraude, se dicen nada menos que los salvadores de la amenazada Italia, libre de dos adversarios, y convergentes con el rechinar de dientes, ferocísimos totalitarismos: el neofascista por un lado, el comunista por otro, pintado con los trazos del pasado hitlerismo y mussolinismo, éste con las connotaciones actuales de soviétismo de Rusia ultraestatal y ultradespótico.

Así se ha desarrollado el ciclo. Punto de partida: leal alianza entre tres grupos igualmente fervientes amigos de la libertad para anular la Dictadura y la posibilidad de toda Dictadura. Muerte de la Dictadura Negra.

Punto de llegada: elección entre tres vías, cada una de las cuales conduce a una nueva dictadura más feroz que las otras. El elector que vota no hace más que elegir entre la Dictadura roja, la blanca y la azul.

Dos métodos se declaran aquí históricamente en bancarrota, bajo todos los puntos de vista, pero sobre todo bajo el de la clase proletaria que es el que nos interesa a nosotros. El primer método es el del empleo de los medios legales, de la constitución y del parlamentarismo con

un amplio bloque político con el fin de evitar la Dictadura. El segundo es el de conducir la misma cruzada y formar el mismo bloque sobre el terreno de la lucha con las armas, cuando la dictadura está gobernando, con el solo fin democrático.

Los problemas históricos de hoy los resuelve no la legalidad sino la fuerza. No se vence la fuerza más que con mayor fuerza. No se destruye la dictadura más que con una dictadura más sólida.

Es decir muy poco, que esta puerca institución del parlamento no nos sirve a nosotros. Ya no le sirve a nadie.

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Todas las alternativas alabadas y hechas por los tres frentes para asustar no tienen consistencia. Donde una de las fuerzas componentes prevaleciese, se escindiría enseguida y una gran parte de sus efectivos elegidos, pasaría al centro burgués atlántico y americano. Los monárquicos no son ningún misterio. Los llamados comunistas lo dicen menos abiertamente, pero sería la desembocadura inevitable de su eventual logro de mayoría que aparece imposible.

Poco cambiarán los efectivos de aquellos que se aferran «a otro banquete de cinco años» del que a los electores no les faltarán migajas.

Cuando la crisis Matteotti dijimos que se trataba de un movimiento sindical–corporativo de los diputados de profesión, que veían en peligro privilegios y prebendas y recurrían a la huelga.

Lo mismo decimos de la «histórica batalla» contra la «ley–fraude». La elección no sólo es de por sí un fraude sino que lo es tanto más cuanto más pretende dar, paridad en peso a cada voto personal. Todo el guiso lo hacen en Italia unos pocos miles de cocineros, subcocineros y pinches, que aborregan en lotes y «a medida» a los veinte millones de electores.

¡Si el Parlamento sirviese para administrar técnicamente alguna cosa y no sólo para atontar a los ciudadanos, sobre cinco años de máxima vida no le dedicaría uno a las elecciones y otro a discutir la ley para su constitución! ¡Hechas las cuentas de las horas de vocinglería, se dedican más de dos quintos! ¡Esta sociedad desinflada no es más que un fin en sí misma, y los pueblos que se han hecho matar para volver a ponerla en pie, han sido estafados en más del veinte por ciento de su parcelita de soberanía! Ahora ya muchos votan en el otro mundo. Si los parlamentarios de todas las fracciones burguesas se ríen del principio democrático, no se ríen menos los falsos comunistas. Esto, no porque retornen mínimamente a posiciones de clase y de dictadura después de la bancarrota y del blocardismo por libertad. Y efectivamente ellos recalcan el mismo camino, disimulando toda connotación de partido, y vuelven a edificar un bloque del sano pueblo italiano, de los iluminados y de los honestos, no sólo con la disminuida alternativa Nenni, que en el fondo promete lo que nosotros habíamos dicho: dadnos acceso al parlamento y gobernaremos con vosotros y como vosotros; pero suscitan todo un alineamiento de flanqueadores sosos, a los que la inexorable decrepitud y arterioesclerosis les ha impedido asociar los nombres más burgueses de la política: Bonomi, Croce, Orlando, Nitti, De Nicola, Labriola y similares...

Y están tan alineados pensando lejanamente en remontar el bajón, que no sólo son los más ardientes invocando legalidad y constitucionalidad, cuando reivindican contra De Gasperi al que consideran «austriaco» (la burguesía austriaca puede enseñar como se administra sin robar, a la italiana) la tradición de mayo de 1915, de la guerra por la democracia y Trieste, sino que se desgañitan para definirse más nacionalistas y patrioterros que nadie.

No es sólo el coherente y respetable Turati el que podría volver con la cabeza alta, sino también el Mussolini de 1914, maestros de aquellos por haber sabido traicionar al proletariado con la democracia, y la democracia por la dictadura.

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El enviado de un periódico londinense ha descrito una escena, a la que jura haber asistido con sus mortales ojos, muy sano de mente y libre de humos de drogas, en un valle del misterioso Tíbet.

En las noches de luna el rito reúne a personas, quizá millares, y los monjes vestidos de blan-

co, que se mueven lentamente, impasibles, rígidos entre largos llantos, pausas y reiteradas peticiones. Cuando forman un amplísimo círculo se ve algo en el centro: es el cuerpo de uno de sus compadres tendido boca arriba en el suelo. No está encantado o desmayado, está muerto; no sólo por la absoluta inmovilidad que la luz solar revela, sino porque el hedor a carne descompuesta, con un cambio de la dirección del viento llega hasta la nariz del aterrorizado europeo.

Después de dar vueltas y cantar ampliamente, y después de otras peticiones incomprensibles, uno de los sacerdotes abandona el círculo y se acerca a los restos mortales. Mientras continúa el canto incensante él se echa sobre el muerto, se tiende sobre él adhiriéndose a todo su cuerpo, y pone su boca viva sobre aquella que está en descomposición.

La petición continúa, intensa y vibrante y el sacerdote levanta el cadáver bajo las axilas, lo vuelve a levantar y lo mantiene ante sí en posición vertical. No cesa el rito y el llanto; los dos cuerpos comienzan una larga vuelta, como un lento paso de danza, y el vivo mira al muerto y le hace caminar frente a sí. El espectador extranjero mira con pupilas desmesuradamente abiertas; es el gran experimento de revivificación de la oculta doctrina asiática el que se pone en práctica. Los dos caminan continuamente en el círculo de los orantes. En un lapso de tiempo no hay ninguna duda: en una de las curvas que describe la pareja, el rayo de la luna ha pasado entre los cuerpos que deambulan: el del vivo ha relajado los brazos y el otro, por sí sólo, se sostiene y se mueve. Bajo la fuerza del magnetismo colectivo, la fuerza vital de la boca sana ha penetrado en el cuerpo descompuesto, y el rito llega a su momento culminante: por momentos o durante horas el cadáver, rito puesto en pie, por su fuerza camina.

Así de siniestramente, una vez más, la joven y generosa boca del proletariado potente y vital, se ha aplicado contra la putrefacta y maloliente del capitalismo, y le ha vuelto a dar con el estrecho e inhumano abrazo otro soplo de vida.

LO QUE DISTINGUE A NUESTRO PARTIDO

La línea que va de Marx a Lenin, a la fundación de la Internacional Comunista y del Partido Comunista de Italia (Livorno, 1921); la lucha de la Izquierda Comunista contra la degeneración de la Internacional, contra la teoría del “socialismo en un solo país” y la contrarrevolución estalinista; el rechazo de los Frentes Populares y de los Bloques de la Resistencia; la dura obra de restauración de la doctrina y del órgano revolucionarios, en contacto con la clase obrera, fuera del politiquero personal y electoralesco.

PROGRAMA DEL PARTIDO COMUNISTA INTERNACIONAL

Los fundamentos de la doctrina son los principios del materialismo histórico y del comunismo crítico de Marx y Engels, enunciados en *El Manifiesto de los Comunistas*, en *El Capital* y en sus otras obras fundamentales, base de la constitución de la Internacional Comunista en 1919, del Partido Comunista de Italia en 1921, y contenidos en los puntos del programa del partido publicado en «**Battaglia Comunista**», nº 1 de 1951 y vuelto a publicar varias veces en «**Il Programma Comunista**».

Se transcribe aquí el texto del programa:

El Partido Comunista Internacional está constituido sobre la base de los siguientes principios, establecidos en Livorno en 1921 en la fundación del Partido Comunista de Italia (Sección de la Internacional Comunista).

1. En el actual régimen social capitalista se desarrolla una contradicción siempre creciente entre las fuerzas productivas y las relaciones de producción, dando lugar a la antítesis de intereses y a la lucha de clases entre el proletariado y la burguesía dominante.

2. Las actuales relaciones de producción están protegidas por el poder del Estado burgués que, cualquiera que sea la forma del sistema representativo y el empleo de la democracia electiva, constituye el órgano para la defensa de los intereses de la clase capitalista.

3. El proletariado no puede romper ni modificar el sistema de las relaciones capitalistas de producción, del que deriva su explotación, sin la destrucción violenta del poder burgués.

4. El órgano indispensable de la lucha revolucionaria del proletariado es el partido de clase. El partido comunista, reuniendo en su seno a la parte más avanzada y decidida del proletariado, unifica los esfuerzos de las masas trabajadoras dirigiéndolas de las luchas por intereses de grupo y por resultados contingentes, a la lucha general por la emancipación revolucionaria del proletariado. El partido tiene el deber de difundir

entre las masas la teoría revolucionaria, de organizar los medios materiales de acción, de dirigir a la masa trabajadora en el desarrollo de la lucha asegurando la continuidad histórica y la unidad internacional del movimiento.

5. Después del derrocamiento del poder capitalista, el proletariado no podrá organizarse en clase dominante más que con la destrucción del viejo aparato estatal y la instauración de su propia dictadura, esto es, privando de todo derecho y de toda función política a la clase burguesa y a sus individuos mientras sobrevivan socialmente, y basando los órganos del nuevo régimen únicamente sobre la clase productora. El partido comunista, cuya característica programática consiste en esta realización fundamental, representa, organiza y dirige unitariamente la dictadura proletaria. La necesaria defensa del Estado proletario contra todas las tentativas contrarrevolucionarias sólo puede ser asegurada privando a la burguesía y a todos los partidos hostiles a la dictadura proletaria, de todo medio de agitación y de propaganda política, y con la organización armada del proletariado para rechazar los ataques internos y externos.

6. Sólo la fuerza del Estado proletario podrá aplicar sistemáticamente todas las sucesivas medidas de intervención en las relaciones de la economía social, con las cuales se efectuará la substitución del sistema capitalista por la gestión colectiva de la producción y de la distribución.

7. Como resultado de esta transformación económica y las consiguientes transformaciones de todas las actividades de la vida social, irá eliminándose la necesidad del Estado político, cuyo engranaje se reducirá progresivamente a la administración racional de las actividades humanas.

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La posición del partido ante la situación del mundo capitalista y del movimiento obrero tras la segunda guerra mundial se funda-

menta en los puntos siguientes:

8.– En el curso de la primera mitad del s.XX, el sistema social capitalista ha ido desarrollándose, en el terreno económico, con la introducción de los sindicatos patronales con fines monopolistas y las tentativas de controlar y dirigir la producción y los intercambios según planes centrales, hasta la gestión estatal de sectores enteros de la producción; en el terreno político, con el aumento del potencial policial y militar del Estado y el totalitarismo gubernamental. Todos estos no son nuevos tipos de organización social con carácter de transición entre capitalismo y socialismo, ni menos aún un retorno a regímenes políticos preburgueses; por el contrario, son formas precisas de gestión aún más directa y exclusiva del poder y del Estado por parte de las fuerzas más desarrolladas del capital.

Este proceso excluye las interpretaciones pacifistas, evolucionistas y progresivas del devenir del régimen burgués, y confirma la previsión de la concentración y de la disposición antagónica de las fuerzas de clase. Para que las energías revolucionarias del proletariado puedan reforzarse y concentrarse con potencial correspondiente al enemigo de clase, el proletariado debe rechazar, como reivindicación suya y como medio de agitación, el retorno ilusorio al liberalismo democrático y a la exigencia de garantías legales, y debe liquidar históricamente el método de las alianzas con fines transitorios del partido revolucionario de clase, tanto con partidos burgueses y de la clase media como con partidos pseudo-obreros con programa reformista.

9.– Las guerras imperialistas mundiales demuestran que la crisis de disgregación del capitalismo es inevitable, con la apertura decisiva del período en que su expansión no exalta más el incremento de las fuerzas productivas, sino que condiciona su acumulación a una destrucción repetida y creciente. Estas guerras han acarreado crisis profundas y reiteradas en la organización mundial de los trabajadores, habiendo po-

didado las clases dominantes imponerles la solidaridad nacional y militar con uno u otro de los bandos beligerantes. La única alternativa histórica que se debe oponer a esta situación es la de volver a encender la lucha de clase en el interior hasta llegar a la guerra civil de las masas trabajadoras para derrocar el poder de todos los Estados burgueses y de las coaliciones mundiales, con la reconstitución del partido comunista internacional como fuerza autónoma frente a todos los poderes políticos y militares organizados.

10.– El Estado proletario, dado que su aparato es un medio y un arma de lucha en el período histórico de transición, no extrae su fuerza organizativa de cánones constitucionales y de esquemas representativos. El máximo ejemplo histórico de organización ha sido hasta hoy el de los Consejos de Trabajadores, aparecido en la revolución rusa de Octubre de 1917, en el período de la organización armada de la clase obrera bajo la sola guía del partido bolchevique, de la conquista totalitaria del poder, de la disolución de la Asamblea Constituyente, de la lucha para rechazar los ataques exteriores de los gobiernos burgueses, y para aplastar en el interior la rebelión de las clases derrotadas, de las clases medias y pequeño burguesas, y de los partidos oportunistas, aliados infalibles de la contrarrevolución en sus fases decisivas.

11.– La defensa del régimen proletario, contra los peligros de degeneración ínsitos en los posibles fracasos y repliegues de la obra de transformación económica y social, cuya ejecución integral no es concebible en los límites de un solo país, puede ser asegurada por una continua coordinación de la política del Estado obrero, con la lucha unitaria internacional del proletariado de cada país contra la propia burguesía y su aparato estatal y militar, lucha incesante en cualquier situación de paz o de guerra, y mediante el control político y programático del partido comunista mundial sobre los aparatos del Estado en que la clase obrera ha conquistado el poder.

DE DÓNDE VENIMOS

El *Partido Comunista Internacional* viene de muy lejos y no tiene precisamente nada que ver con Mayo del 68, la contestación, los movimientos juveniles, y en general con la reacción infantil contra el estalinismo que se llama extremismo, espontaneísmo, activismo, obrerismo, etc., etc. Es una cuestión de diversidad radical, incluso diríamos «**genética**». Nuestro partido –aunque hoy sea pequeño, poco influyente, de escaso peso numérico– es la continuación ininterrumpida, por encima de los altibajos de una tremenda vicisitud de la contrarrevolución, de la gran tradición del movimiento comunista internacional de inicios del siglo XX. Él es como un río calizo que ha debido (y sabido) recorrer por debajo de la avidez y de las ruinas, del fango y de la descomposición. Intentemos volver a recorrer este largo camino, de un modo incluso muy esquemático y elemental.

1892 – Nace el *Partido Socialista Italiano*. Fruto de la confluencia de varias posiciones, y no todas claramente revolucionarias e internacionalistas, el PSI está dirigido por reformistas (que frente a los que los han seguido, especialmente tras la segunda guerra mundial, en la así llamada «**izquierda**», resultaban cuando menos respetables). Los años finales de 1800 e inicios de 1900 son un período de grandes luchas obreras, tanto en Italia como en el resto de Europa y en América, y la dirección reformista del PSI y de las grandes centrales sindicales choca a menudo con la combatividad de las masas.

1910 – En el Congreso de Milán del PSI emerge con nitidez una *Izquierda* decidida a combatir la dirección reformista del partido y de los sindicatos, en el fragor de luchas obreras en las que se encuentra desde hace tiempo en vanguardia. La *Izquierda* proclama enseguida, en los hechos, el propio internacionalismo, batiéndose con vigor contra la guerra de Libia (1911); y en el Congreso de Reggio Emilia del PSI (1912), se organiza en *Fracción Intransigente Revolucionaria*.

Precisamente de aquellos años procede también su lucha dentro de la *Fracción Juvenil Socialista* para contrastar las posiciones de quienes hubiesen querido hacer un organismo puramente cultural. Para la *Izquierda*, por el contrario, la *Fracción Juvenil* (y todo el partido) debe ser una organización de lucha: el oxígeno revolucionario debe pues llegarles, a los jóvenes militantes individuales, del conjunto de la vida del partido en cuanto guía del proletariado a lo largo del camino que conduce a la revolución, y no de una banal «**escuelita del partido**». Un papel decisivo, dentro de la *Fracción Intransigente Revolucionaria*, se realiza cada vez más, en Nápoles, por Amadeo Bordiga (1889–1970) y por el «**Círculo Socialista revolucionario Carlos Marx**», verdaderos puntos de referencia de toda la *Izquierda* del PSI.

1914 – Estalla la primera guerra mundial, y la *Izquierda* del PSI proclama la necesidad del «**derrotismo revolucionario**» en pleno acuerdo con las tesis leninistas, entonces prácticamente desconocidas en Italia. Frente a la quiebra de todos los partidos socialistas europeos (que apoyan el esfuerzo bélico de las respectivas burguesías, votando los créditos de guerra), y a pesar de los esfuerzos de la *Izquierda*, el PSI adopta la fórmula ambigua «**ni adherir ni sabotear**». Los «**intervencionistas**», con Mussolini a la cabeza, salen del partido.

1917 – Cuando estalla la Revolución de Octubre, la *Izquierda* se alinea sin dudas al lado de Lenin y Trotski, saludando el evento como la apertura de una fase revolucionaria internacional: *El bolchevismo, planta de todo clima* es el título del artículo de Bordiga que comenta en caliente la revolución. Gramsci y Togliatti, representantes del grupo turinés reunido en torno al periódico «**L'Ordine Nuovo**» (con grandes influencias idealistas y, por tanto, no marxistas), son por el contrario confusos y ambiguos: en el artículo *La revolución contra el capital*, por ejemplo, Gramsci sostiene que ¡la Revolución de Octubre desmiente la perspectiva marxista! En Italia, la *Izquierda* es la única formación interna del PSI que tiene una red organizada a escala nacional: a su iniciativa se debe la convocatoria de la Reunión de Florencia en 1917, en la que se remacha la total intransigencia del partido en la oposición contra la guerra. Apartir de 1918 –mientras que en el país sube la tensión social, se multiplican las huelgas, crece el descontento por los efectos de la guerra– la *Izquierda* (que posee desde

diciembre un órgano central de prensa propio, Il Soviet) se bate para que el PSI apoye sin vacilaciones a la Rusia revolucionaria, reconociendo abiertamente el significado internacional de la estrategia leninista.

1919 – Es el año crucial en toda Europa: el año de las grandes huelgas en Italia y de las tentativas revolucionarias en Alemania y Hungría, el año en que son masacrados Rosa Luxemburgo y Karl Liebknecht, el año de la constitución de la *Tercera Internacional* como partido de la revolución mundial. En Italia, estalla la polémica entre la Izquierda (que presiona para la creación de un partido comunista en condiciones de aplicar la experiencia de la revolución rusa al Occidente avanzado, y reafirma el carácter de ruptura social y política de los Soviets como órganos del dualismo de poder en un proceso revolucionario en marcha) y «**L'Ordine Nuovo**» (que pretende individualizar en los consejos de fábrica el equivalente a los soviets, organismos locales totalmente internos o encerrados en la organización social y política capitalista, dándoles una patente de «**prefiguración de sociedad futura**»). Siempre en 1919, precisamente gracias a la acción teórica y práctica de la Izquierda, se forma dentro del PSI la *Fracción Comunista Abstencionista*, núcleo del futuro *Partido Comunista de Italia*. Uno de los elementos que la caracterizan es la afirmación de que, en los países de vieja tradición democrática (Europa centro-occidental y Estados Unidos), el parlamento, además de no ser el lugar donde se vienen tomando las decisiones económico-políticas reales (como los clásicos del marxismo han enseñado siempre), ya no es ni siquiera una tribuna útil para hacer oír la voz de los comunistas: desde hace tiempo se ha convertido en un instrumento para desviar y dispersar las energías revolucionarias. Por tanto, no sólo el parlamentarismo debe ser combatido, sino que no se debe tomar parte en las elecciones políticas para darle el máximo relieve a la oposición contra el mismo y contra el Estado burgués, aunque sea «**democrático**». Otro elemento que caracteriza la estrategia de la Izquierda: es la concepción del «**frente único desde abajo**»; por consiguiente, no la ambigua o confusa convergencia de partidos u organizaciones dotados con distintos programas políticos, sino el alineamiento de los trabajadores de cualquier fe política o religiosa en un frente común de lucha, en torno a objetivos económicos y sociales concretos, de defensa de las condiciones de vida y de trabajo.

1920 – En el Segundo Congreso de la *Tercera Internacional*, la presencia de la Izquierda es de fundamental importancia. Su contribución es decisiva para hacer más severas las «**condiciones de admisión**» a la Internacional misma, para evitar que entren grupos y partidos que de palabra, y camuflándose en la oleada de una fase aún de luchas vigorosas, sí aceptan la disciplina y el programa revolucionario, pero luego, en los hechos, sabotean (sobre todo si la ola revolucionaria internacional ya se estuviese hundiendo) su puesta en práctica. La Izquierda es la formación comunista europea que con mayor claridad se alinea en una perspectiva internacionalista, concibiendo la Internacional como el verdadero y auténtico partido mundial, y no como una suma formal, aritmética, de partidos nacionales, que los deja luego libres para que cada uno tome la vía que considere mejor. En la Internacional, la Izquierda (que lucha en Italia para conseguir la creación de un verdadero Partido Comunista) se declara por la reafirmación integral del marxismo, por una perspectiva programática, estratégica y táctica internacionalista que recoja a proletarios del Occidente avanzado y a los pueblos del Oriente, por la necesidad del partido revolucionario, de la ruptura violenta del orden burgués y de la instauración de la dictadura de clase como puente de pasaje hacia la sociedad sin clases, por una disciplina interna en los organismos internacionales y nacionales, constituida no de un vacío personalismo o caudillismo, sino de una aceptación y comprensión plenos del programa revolucionario por parte de todos los militantes.

1921 – En el Congreso de Livorno del PSI, la Izquierda Comunista rompe con el viejo partido reformista y funda el *Partido Comunista de Italia*, sección de la Internacional Comunista. A pesar de las afirmaciones contrarias de la sucesiva historiografía estalinista, la función dirigente es totalmente de la Izquierda y de Bordiga: Gramsci, Togliatti y compañía están en esta fase totalmente alineados con la misma. Durante dos años, en la Europa occidental que trata de invocar la vía de la revolución, ofreciendo así su ayuda decisiva a la Unión Soviética, el PC de Italia dirigido por la Izquierda representa la parte más avanzada del «**bolchevismo, planta de todo clima**». Actúa en el plano sindical para constituir un frente de lucha real (y no de partidos) de las masas obreras independientemente de su filiación

política; dirige una valerosa lucha contra el reformismo socialdemócrata que engaña a los obreros con ilusiones pacifistas y legalitarias; combatió a cara descubierta al fascismo, que considera no una reacción feudal (¡como teorizará a continuación el estalinismo!), sino la expresión política del gran capital (industrial y agrario) colocado frente a una crisis económica mundial y a un proletariado militante; se crea su propio aparato militar de defensa contra la reacción evitando confundirse con reagrupamientos espurios y equívocos como los «**Arditi del Popolo**» («**Defensores del Pueblo**»); y, en todas las cuestiones tácticas y estratégicas afrontadas en años de progresivo reflujo del movimiento revolucionario, se coloca constantemente en una perspectiva internacional e internacionalista, denunciando desde su aparición las tendencias localistas y autonomistas y, sobre todo, el empuje hacia la subordinación de la Internacional misma a las exigencias nacionales rusas.

1923–24 – Aprovechándose de la detención de Bordiga y de buena parte de los dirigentes del PC de Italia (en el tardío 1923, el proceso se concluirá con una célebre autodefensa de los acusados y con su absolución), la dirección pasa a hombres más dóciles a las directrices cada vez más «**elásticas**» de la Internacional, y en el curso de 1924, aún habiendo obtenido la mayoría en la Conferencia Nacional de *Como* (en mayo), la Izquierda fue apartada de la dirección, confiada a la corriente de Centro dirigida por Gramsci y Togliatti, a iniciativa de Moscú. En los dos años siguientes, el proceso de desmantelamiento de la influencia de la Izquierda en el partido asume cada vez más los tonos y adopta los métodos que serán propios de la política estalinista: su órgano, «**Prometeo**», es suprimido tras publicar algunos números, las secciones en las que la *Sinistra* es dominante son disueltas, los compañeros de la Izquierda son alejados de los puestos dirigentes, sus artículos y documentos son censurados o no se publican, y se impone un régimen interno de desconfianza e intimidación, de disciplina caporalesca y burocrática.

1926 – En el III Congreso del Partido, celebrado fuera de Italia, en Lyon, las maniobras del nuevo centro (históricamente bien documentadas: por ejemplo, ¡el voto de los delegados de la Izquierda ausentes le es distribuido automáticamente al centro gramsciano!) se traducen en la completa marginación de la Izquierda, que es colocada en la imposibilidad de actuar y hacer oír la propia voz y viene marginada definitivamente dentro del partido. En el mismo año, en el VI Ejecutivo Ampliado de la Internacional comunista (Moscú, febrero–marzo de 1926), Bordiga se batió contra la llamada «**bolchevización**», lo que equivale a decir contra la reorganización del partido sobre la base de las células de empresa, que –con la demagógica pretensión de incrementar el carácter «**obrero**» del partido– acaba encerrando, por el contrario, a la base en el horizonte angosto de la empresa o sección individual, y por hacer indispensable la figura del «**funcionario–burócrata**» que «**marca la línea**», estableciendo un lazo ficticio y de caporal entre Centro y periferia. En la misma reunión candente moscovita, Bordiga toma la iniciativa –solo entre todos los oradores– de exigir que la grave crisis interna del partido bolchevique (preludio de la falsa y mendaz teoría del «**socialismo en un solo país**») se ponga en el orden del día de un próximo congreso mundial, puesto que «**la revolución rusa también es nuestra revolución, sus problemas son nuestros problemas y todo miembro de la Internacional revolucionaria no sólo tiene el derecho, sino el deber de colaborar en su solución**». El fascismo decidirá detener a Bordiga (junto a todos los dirigentes del PC de Italia) antes de que el nuevo Congreso se reúna; decidirá Stalin aislar a la Oposición rusa. Entre 1926 y 1930, los compañeros de la Izquierda son poco a poco expulsados del partido y, por tanto, o entregados a la represión fascista u obligados a la emigración. La campaña contra la Izquierda en Italia es paralela a la campaña contra Trotski en la URSS, aun cuando entre las dos corrientes existen puntos de desacuerdo que, sin embargo, no impiden a la Izquierda defender a la Oposición rusa en los años cruciales de 1927–28. Bordiga mismo viene expulsado en 1930 con la acusación de «**trotskismo**». Entretanto, primero con la traición de la huelga general inglesa de 1926, luego con la subordinación del partido comunista chino a los nacionalistas del Kuomintang durante la revolución china de 1927 (¡el éxito final será la masacre de la Comuna de Cantón por obra de los nacionalistas!), el estalinismo –expresión de las fuerzas burguesas en ascenso en la URSS, aislada tras el fracaso de la revolución en Occidente– completa el derrocamiento de los principios y del programa comunista.

1930–40 – Con Bordiga aislado en Nápoles, sometido a continua vigilancia policial, y la

Izquierda perseguida por fascismo y estalinismo, dispersa en la emigración, sofocada por la democracia, inicia una fase de nuestra historia que bien puede definirse heroica. La Izquierda se reorganiza en Francia y Bélgica como *Fracción en el Extranjero* y publica las revistas «**Prometeo**» y «**Bilan**», con las que continúa la propia batalla política. La situación es extremadamente difícil, porque los compañeros –pocos y dispersos– deben combatir en tres frentes: contra el fascismo, contra el estalinismo y contra la democracia. Y, sin embargo, denuncian la política de Moscú (los «**frentes populares**», la mano tendida a la democracia, las continuas cabriolas políticas sobre la piel de los proletarios más combativos, el pacto Hitler–Stalin, los llamamientos «**a los hermanos con camisas negras**» por parte de Togliatti), tratan de actuar vanamente para que, durante la guerra de España, las inciertas formaciones de Izquierda se orienten en sentido clasista, luchando contra el fascismo y el nazismo (en la Francia ocupada consiguen realizar sin rodeos propaganda derrotista entre los soldados alemanes), someten a la crítica todos los mitos democráticos que infectan, cada vez más, al movimiento obrero internacional (en el estallido de la guerra y en los años sucesivos, los obreros internacionalistas denuncian su carácter imperialista). Ahora ya es evidente que, con el estalinismo, nos encontramos frente a la más grave oleada contrarrevolucionaria, y los compañeros inician, aunque fuese con insuficiencias debidas al aislamiento en que se encuentran, el análisis de «**qué es lo que ha sucedido en la URSS**». Es ésta su tenaz resistencia, esta voluntad obstinada de no dejar que el «**hilo rojo**» se rompa, permitiendo el renacimiento del partido en 1943.

1943–1952 – Gracias también al retorno de algunos compañeros de la emigración, comienza en Italia el trabajo de rehacer una verdadera y propia organización. Se publica clandestinamente –desde finales de 1943– el periódico «**Prometeo**». Sucesivamente, se reanudan los contactos con Bordiga, se realiza una agitación revolucionaria entre los proletarios combativos desilusionados con el movimiento de la resistencia antifascista, se actúa para darle una directriz clasista al movimiento huelguístico que estalla finalizando la guerra, se trabaja en estrecho contacto con el proletariado obteniendo incluso significativos resultados (en varios casos, especialmente en las fábricas del norte, son los internacionalistas los elegidos como delegados en los comités de empresa). Nace finalmente el *Partido Comunista Internacionalista*, con el periódico «**Battaglia Comunista**». El choque con los estalinistas es abierto. Precisamente, mientras Togliatti, en su cargo de Ministro de Gracia y Justicia, decreta una amnistía general y pone en libertad a los cerebros y a los ejecutores fascistas, alabando al hombre nuevo y a la «**renacida democracia**», su partido denuncia como «**fascistas**» a los internacionalistas e incita a su eliminación física. Así, como culminación de una auténtica campaña de difamación e incitación al asesinato, los compañeros Mario Acquaviva y Fausto Alti (y otros militantes anónimos de los que no hemos conseguido saber nada más) vienen masacrados por los estalinistas. Esta primera fase de vida del partido todavía está marcada por las incertidumbres teóricas propias de la *Fracción en el Extranjero*, insuficiencias teóricas que se constatarán en 1952, cuando la exigencia de restablecer de un modo claro y monolítico (y contra toda prisa activista y superficial) el entero *corpus* marxista, desnaturalizado y destruido por el estalinismo, conduce a una primera fractura. En aquel mismo año, inicia pues su publicación «**Il Programma Comunista**»: en sus páginas, hasta la muerte en 1970, Bordiga desarrollará el enorme trabajo de reconstrucción teórico–política del Partido, que a mediados de los años 60 se convertirá en «**internacional**» de hecho y no sólo de nombre. Las tesis características del Partido–1951, las «**Consideraciones sobre la orgánica actividad del partido cuando la situación general es históricamente desfavorable**»–1965, la «**Tesis sobre la tarea histórica, la acción y la estructura del Partido Comunista Mundial**»–1965, y las «**Tesis suplementarias**»–1966, le darán luego al partido su definitivo encuadramiento teórico, político y organizativo.

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La civiltà dell'economia folle - Il marxismo e le elezioni - Lo spettro della riunificazione coreana sulla strategia della dominazione americana in Asia e nel mondo - Dietro le mistificazioni sull'Europa unita (I) - Contro la squallida "natura umana" borghese riaffermiamo la necessità della ripresa della lotta della classe rivoluzionaria

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Communiste

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