

# internationalist papers

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To the Reader • Capitalism's Continuing Quest for Oxygen • The Strategy "Terrorism-War" Is the Bourgeois, Anti-Working-Class Answer to the World Economic Crisis • The Continuity of Revolutionary Marxism Versus the Continuity of Imperialist War • The Martyrdom of the Masses in the Middle East Will Not End Until an International, Class Perspective Is Regained, Resisting and Opposing Any Temptation To Be Lured by National Interests • The "Anti-Global Movement" - After the "Events of Genoa" - The Only Real Perspective Is Revolutionary Marxism • The Historical Necessity of Communism • Gramsci, or the Poverty of Philosophy • Back To Basics: The Theses of the Abstentionist Communist Faction of the Italian Socialist Party (1920) • Where We Come From - A Brief Chronology

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# INTERNATIONALIST PAPERS 11

(SUMMER-FALL 2002)

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A supplement to number 5/2002 of "il programma comunista"  
(direttore responsabile: Bruno Maffi)

# TO THE READER

The articles that follow deal with some key events of the year that passed – namely, the aftermath of the Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> events (which we view not as an epochal turning point, but as the acceleration of a process already under way – i.e., the deepening of the inter-imperialist contrasts, leading to the preparation of a new world massacre), the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan (which we view not as a “war on terrorism”, but as the inevitable move on part of the U.S. capital aimed to control a vital area in terms of raw materials and especially of their passage), the bloody drama of Middle East (which we denounce as a tragic dead-end for the Palestinian proletarians – and, more at large, for the Middle-East exploited masses – as long as they continue to thread the path of national illusions and myths). These three themes are crucial today, because it is only around the political issues they contain that a real, consistent class realignment can take place, thus leading to that spreading of revolutionary Marxism (un-adulterated by stalinist, anarchist, reformist, democratic temptations and biases, and physically represented by the international communist party) which is so badly needed today, if we want to stop the never-ending butchery (on the shop floor as well as in still localized “splendid little wars”) which is called “capitalist mode of production”.

To the “historical necessity” of doing away with this mode of production and of opening the path to the classless society is then devoted another long article, which shows how ripe this turn is – not in the sense that the communist revolution is on the agenda today, but in the sense that only that perspective is nowadays reasonable, although still far away from the point of view of the objective and subjective conditions. Otherwise, capitalism will have once more a free hand in recurring to its own solution to its own historical crisis – precisely, a new world war.

With this in mind, it is urgent both to battle old, tragic

diversions from the correct way (as is shown by the article on Gramsci's "philosophy", completing the set of articles devoted to this champion of anti-Marxism which we started in "Internationalist Papers 10") and to reaffirm a correct tradition (as is brilliantly condensed in the "Theses of the Abstentionist Communist Faction of the Italian Socialist Party", 1920). And it is urgent to carry on a bitter and relentless critique of all those "new" positions, which tend openly to veer off from Marxism, towards a revival of past tragical experiences, as the "Anti-Global Movement" is doing (and the short article on the "Genoa Events" is just the anticipation of a longer and more complex article on the movement's ideology, which will follow in "Internationalist Papers 12").

The "Spanish Supplement" also contains important contributions:

- *El capitalismo esta a la continua busca de oxigeno*
- *Trás los "Eventos de Génova", la única perspectiva real es la del marxismo revolucionario*
- *Tesis de la Fracción Comunista Abstencionista del PSI (1920)*

On the whole, a dense issue, which aptly celebrates this journal's first ten years.

Let this be a good omen for that spreading of revolutionary Marxism (and thus of the party which represents it) of which we keep underlining the extreme urgency.

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The working class is revolutionary or it is nothing  
(Karl Marx)

# CAPITALISM'S CONTINUING QUEST FOR OXYGEN

We are amongst those few, against-the-current ones, who firmly believe that the 11 September, with the terrorist attack on American soil, was not the start of a new era. The contexts in which the attack on the US was made and in which their response matured were, instead, a further demonstration and confirmation of Marxist theory and analysis regarding the development pattern of capitalism and the role of crises and wars as essential moments in the accumulation cycle of the capital system.

We shall not dwell on the nature of the attack that the US suffered on its own ground. There is still much doubt as to how it was prepared and how it happened, hitting a series of iconic targets and defying all the sophisticated technological devices at US disposal. More than once in ancient and recent history, piloted “mass slaughter” has served to spark off or amplify a conflict, not to speak of the many pieces of stop-press information (including the number of victims) and front page news that was drastically revised over the following days after having produced the desired propaganda on public opinion. The fact remains that the leading economic and military power in the world was struck on its own territory and this (as happened in England, even though it was an authentic act of warfare at the time) is a hard blow to the country’s image in the eyes of its competitors. From a historical point of view it is further confirmation of a phase of decline, despite all the much-publicised ruminations over the “Empire” and post-imperialism. What also remains is the ridiculous ostentation of an outward anti-imperialism which – whilst desperately searching for a national flag with which to proclaim its own social-chauvinism – ends up by recognising in the most backward form of Islam (and therefore in the most reactionary ideology in terms of corruption of the proletariat: religion) some sort of claim to represent the material interests of the disinherited Arab masses – even though this may be indirect or due to some sort of historical nemesis. A further corroboration of Marxism, if this were necessary!

Lenin insisted that “there are no abstract wars or wars in general but only specific ones, bound to the actual situation in the historical period they arise in, and to the balance of power between classes and States throughout the world” (*Socialism and War*, 1915). What exactly is the actual situation today? It is essential to answer this question in order to understand what is happening, the causes of it, what the effects will be on the balance of relationships between States and between classes and what the attitude of the workers’ movement should be.

Although capitalism is developing internationally and nations and continents are becoming more and more thoroughly subjected to its laws, it cannot spontaneously do away with its national basis nor avoid dependence on its development patterns and contradictions or eliminate its own anarchical structure. The very accumulation of capital produces a growing excess of production and a gradual diminishing of markets on which to sell. Sooner or later its trajectory is destined to become an economic and social catastrophe, the violence of which is proportional to the use that has been made of measures such as credit or debts to support production and consumption. In an imperialist era the inequality of development is accentuated and the balance of power between States is constantly shifting according to the respective strength of their capital, so that

every State is obliged to wage an out-and-out battle on all sides to fight for a better position on the world market and a larger share of the areas of influence and world product.

Essentially, the theory of US “living space”, elaborated in 1983 by the Airland Battle doctrine, merely sanctioned, in terms of political relations (it should not be forgotten that politics is a distillation of economy), the beginning of the preparation for wars that could no longer be confined to a limited area but were of a “global” nature, because living space and American interests had expanded in these terms. Since then competing imperialisms have merely taken turns in searching for a military tool and a suitable type of organisation for sustaining it.

The world economic crisis that began in the mid-seventies speeded up the narrowing gap between US imperialism – whose powerful hegemony, inherited from the second post-war period, guaranteed the capitalist system a recognised centre for the stability it required – and its imperialist competitors, Japan and Germany in first place, which, however, were not yet prepared to assume the leading role. The process highlighted the aspects of conflict and instability pervading world capitalism, in particular after the collapse of the ex-USSR and the world order which had grown out of the second round of imperialist slaughter. This is the framework within which it becomes necessary to control the flow of goods and capital, the sources of raw materials (primarily oil and natural gas, in proportions that now amount to around 50% of physical exchanges), the transport routes for these materials and the commercial routes – a necessity that is aggravated by the growing crisis and the dwindling means available to capital to prevent it or regulate its effect.

Within this context, Central Asian regions, including Afghanistan, assume considerable importance for the politics of strengthening US capital. In Central Asia, Afghanistan plays a decidedly strategic role in the balance of economic and military power, both for the North-South axis (Russia/Indian Ocean) and for that of the East/West (China/Persian Gulf). It is also at the centre of the strategic interests – linked to the transport of oil and natural gas – of the US and Saudi Arabia (the organisers, financiers and suppliers, together with Pakistan, of the Taliban army, which was meant to allow the region to stabilise, thus weakening Russian monopoly on the transit of oil and gas pipelines), as well as those of Russia and Iran, China and Turkey, not to mention the European and Asian imperial powers that import raw materials for generating power. Through their support of the Taliban’s advance, the USs aimed to establish a new, indirectly controlled status quo. This would have allowed them to attempt to secure an alternative route for Gulf oil and to exploit the situation created by the fall of the Soviet Union and the consequent financial difficulties that prevented Russia from establishing a stable link with the new Caucasian and Central Asian republics. Also, this would allowed the US to deny their competitors the chance of finding alternative sources of supply beyond American control.

We were not mistaken, some years ago (1), in considering the US, Frankensteins – over-optimistic in their illusion that they would be able to control the monster they had created and use it at will as long as necessary.

1. See the article, “Il dramma dell’Afghanistan e dello Zaire sullo sfondo dei contrasti interimperialistici mondiali”, in our Italian newspaper *Il programma comunista*, n. 11/1996.

Despite the outcry by the bourgeois press and by the frightened half classes (2), we argue and demonstrate that there is no real “war” on, but merely a large-scale re-designing of inter-imperialist alliances in a phase that may represent the beginning of a crisis or a lull between wars, the duration of which will be dictated by the evolution of the world economic crisis and the length and intensity of this, as well as by the reaction of the proletariat to the inevitable worsening of their material conditions. The true, great “enemy” of imperialism is, in fact, another, or other, imperial powers, which are its direct competitors on the markets for goods and capital. In its contradictory pattern of development, capital has wiped out all civilisations, in order to assimilate and unite them in a single “civilisation” of capital: the law of value and of production for the sake of production. Within this pattern of development there is room for fierce conflict between capitals and for all sorts of “dirty dealing” in order to weaken the adversary, including warfare on a limited scale. However, to the agents of capital themselves, imperialist wars are external necessities, dictated by capital’s need to valorize itself, when the only solution that is left is the mass destruction of people and resources, so that the cycle of accumulation can recommence and worldwide inter-imperialist stability can be re-established.

Imperialist wars can never arise from an act of will, aiming to impose an ideology or a presumed set of values: no State or coalition of States has ever waged war for these reasons. On the contrary, warfare represents the greatest solidarity that capitalism is capable of, since its aim is first and foremost to safeguard the laws according to which capitalism itself operates: on the one hand, accumulation needs rapid and wide-scale destruction in order to start up again on a sufficiently large scale and to halt the fall of profit rate; on the other hand, wars are directed principally against the proletariat.

There is, therefore, no “clash of civilisations” between the world of democracy and the world of theocracy. Indeed, “western” finance and “Islam” finance, blessed by priests wearing “different” robes, have both proved to be an impersonal means for the bourgeoisie of whatever world latitude to extort plus-value and to centralise and direct world production of plus value and its distribution. Islam, in its various forms, exactly like the Christian religion, has – in its own field of influence, serving the cause of social stability in the Middle East and the interests of the Middle-Eastern and Asian ruling classes – been functional to the domination of the world confederation of imperialism and its struggle to preserve itself and reproduce against the interests of workers throughout the globe. The proletariat and the disinherited masses of Arab and Asian countries, who are now being encouraged to wage the “war” of the poor against the rich of the world and the “war” of religion, will never find their salvation in these outdated tools of sinister nationalism, as was demonstrated at the time by the Communist International when promoting the First Congress of the Peoples of the East (Baku, 1920) (3) and encouraging the common people of the non-white Continents to join the international struggle of the world proletariat to overthrow capitalism.

*The position of the International Communist Party is light years away from patriotic motivations, incitement and rhetoric, just as it is distant from any sympathy for so-called nationalist or religious vendetta, born of inep-*

2. We use the term “half classes” instead of “middle class”, because it is more consistent with the Marxist concept of those ever dithering shreds of social classes, both from the bourgeoisie and from the labor aristocracy, caught between conflicting historical and economic processes and thus utterly unable either to understand them or to express their own political program.

3. See “Appeal to the Workers of Europe, America, and Japan”, in *Internationalist Papers*, 6 (1997).

*titude, primitivism and political backwardness. It also opposes timid pacifism, an ideology typical of the half classes, incapable of grasping the true nature of war and therefore destined to serve as a tool at the service of imperialism, because of their disorienting and disorganising role amongst the proletariat rank and file.*

World capitalism is in the midst of an extreme crisis, revealed but at the same time glossed over by the burst of the speculative bubble of the years 1998-2000. The United States in particular find themselves in a situation which even bourgeois commentators have defined one of structural weakness, with “a net 2000 billion-dollar debt towards the rest of the world [...] with currency reserves covering a mere 4% of the figure; the growing commercial debt, which touched record peaks of 400 billion dollars in 2000, the errors of over-investment in the net-economy” (4). The duration of this chronic state of economic crisis was quite clear before the attack on the Twin Towers of New York and the Pentagon outside Washington. And the attack merely made it possible, without striking a single blow, to speed up certain operations, such as the “team game” involving the central banks, to safeguard the international system of payments, pouring in amounts of cash without precedent in the history of international finance and allowing US financial capital to inflict a few direct blows to its imperialist competitors in Asia and Europe, creating “ready cash” by means of huge sales on the European stock markets and, above all, preventing the collapse of US stock and allowing for a recovery of the dollar’s exchange rate (5).

These measures have aggravated the basic causes of inter-imperialist conflict, even though they have permitted the United States to chalk up a few easy points against their adversaries. The “return” to Keynesian policies of “deficit spending” that made their comeback due to the events, thanks to an immediate manoeuvre estimated at around 300 billion dollars, contributes to saving the airlines and rebuilding infrastructures, not to mention financing for scientific research and the arms industry and contributions that will soon (“by popular demand”) replenish the coffers of the defence budget (which, according to official figures, can rely on regular financing of 310 billion dollars a year) – this “return” to Keynesian policies in the US will sooner or later have to be followed by a European version, at present constrained within the “Stability Agreement”: which everyone would like to see an early end to, otherwise the USA will be able to score another point in their favour, unloading a considerable portion of the costs of the crisis onto Europe and Asia.

But a word of warning: this return of massive state intervention is not yet an indication of that “Keynesian rearmament” that our political current has always defined the explicit sign of preparation for an inter-imperialist conflict. *That* rearmament should coincide with an “unnatural” return of production activity and would involve widespread and obstinate (ongoing for at least a couple of years) increases in public spending and the state deficit, as well as in the defence budget, for all countries. We certainly find ourselves – and this is not an overnight phenomenon – in a phase that foresees its historical outcome in preparation for the future imperialist war or for revolution. However – and this is fortunate, in view of the state of the workers’ movement, which is still absorbed by an opportunistic framework – it will take world capitalism years to “prepare” the

4. See “Sarà l’Europa a salvare gli USA”, in the Italian financial daily *Il Sole-24 Ore*, Sept. 22, 2001.

5. See “Gli USA fanno cassa in Europa”, in *i-dem*.



launch of a war economy, the militarization of economy and, above all, the social conditions for managing warfare. In this space of time, the preparation and proletarian structuring carried out by the Communist Party becomes essential, so that an inter-imperialist war can be countered by a war on imperialism, with a relentless struggle against the national bourgeoisie as its starting point.

Paradoxical as it may seem to some innocent souls, the bourgeoisie could do with a war but is incapable of starting one. The same intricate web of interests involved in the transport of the main power sources more or less presided over by Afghanistan, also illustrates how very carefully US politics must proceed. The USA are attempting to move into position along the Balkans-Middle East-Central Asia axis and have certainly included Russia and China in their set of alliances, but must face the opposing demands of German and Japanese capital, at present obliged to act with extreme discretion. The USA cannot repeat the military tactic of campaigns such as that carried out in the Gulf: the feature of the land, the massive chains of mountains that offer opportunities for domination and escape to those occupying the heights and the enemy side, do not allow for a solution to be found in attacks from the air alone. The result is that the USA's only hope of success lies in an attempt to divide the Taliban front (and this they are trying to do at this very moment, with the mediation of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and the promise of financial aid), or in the exploitation of the anti-Taliban Mujaheddin front which, with its arms and equipment replenished, has already recommenced its advance and won important military successes, after having been forced for years to take refuge in 4-6% of the territory in the north of Afghanistan. However in either of the two hypotheses now being feverishly pursued by secret diplomacy halfway round the world, concealed behind the slogan of the "fight against international terrorism", the game would not be over, since the alliances are heavily influenced by a regional situation that would still be extremely unstable in terms of the inter-imperial balance of power – suffice it to mention the conflict between India and Pakistan or the one between Turkey and Iran – and therefore quite likely to be reversed (6).

An immediate consequence of these events will be the opportunity for all bourgeois States to tighten their control on the domestic front, in order to contain protests by the proletariat which might occur as a result of worsening material conditions brought about by the crisis. It therefore becomes important for the workers' movements of all countries to ignore the "siren's song" of pacifism and national solidarity throughout social classes, in order to avoid weakening even more the possibility of a future, independent, class-specific recovery. But we note with satisfaction that the most important victim on the battleground, although a "zombie" that may haunt us for a period, is that of the "anti-global" movement, which has hastened to take refuge beneath pope-like robes – in a traditional and foreseeable manner – in the name of non-violence, justice, peace and democracy. This already extinct movement demonstrates that throughout the world the petit bourgeoisie on the rampage has rapidly realigned with the policy of sacred national unity and this will provide substantial support for the "real" war of the national bourgeoisie when conditions are ripe. This, too, should serve as a lesson to the proletariat of all races and at all latitudes throughout the world.

6. It must be kept in mind that this article first appeared on our Italian journal *Il programma comunista* in late September 2001. Facts have since developed in the area which precisely confirmed these hypotheses of ours.

# The strategy “terrorism-war” is the bourgeois, anti-working-class answer to the world economic crisis

The prevailing ideology, as is well known, is that of the ruling class, which uses all possible means and circumstances to strengthen itself and thus to defend as efficiently as possible its supremacy and the material conditions which make this possible. The media impact of the September 11 attacks on Washington and New York was of use to all bourgeois States, both in the East and in the West, allowing them to minimise the various sorts of contradictions that were overwhelming them and which, in the end, can be traced back to the stubbornly chronic nature of the crisis – a crisis that is already beginning to raise problems of social control, particularly in areas that are less developed but richer in the natural resources essential to the overloaded industrial machinery of capitalism. The paralysing and stupefying effect of terrorist acts (and the consequent “military retaliation”) which are so skilfully exploited in the media should give us cause for reflection.

For example, it is a fact that in the weeks preceding the attack, the atmosphere in the United States had been strongly characterised by news of the ever-worsening trends in the economy. This was brought up by the “St. Louis Post-Dispatch”, for instance, which produced a headline to an article published four days after the attacks, reading: “U.S. industrial production falls for 11th month in a row” (Sept.15, 2001, BIZ 8). Or by

the “New York Times Magazine”, in a long article also published after the attacks, in which it argued, supplying ample factual evidence, that: “even before the attack, our economic condition was looking unusually precarious” (and it was shown that the attacks’ actual, direct consequences on the US economy were in fact only relatively serious) (Sept.30, 2001, p.38). Or, again – moving over to the other side – we ourselves have been clearly demonstrating this for some time: to quote an example, the article “The course of capitalism: USA”, which was published in issue 10/2001 of this very journal, was dedicated to a careful analysis of the US crisis (as is its updating, published in this number of *Internationalist Papers*).

It is undeniable that many essential sectors of the US economy (from the steel industry to high-tech, from infrastructures to the car industry) had been on shaky ground for some time, if not already in the midst of a real crisis. The airlines, too, had been in a precarious situation well before September 11, with waves of redundancies and mergers (not limited to the United States, as is demonstrated by the bankruptcy of none other than the Swiss airline, Swiss Air, the pride and joy of the country of finance par excellence).

The illusion of an end to economic cycles and unlimited increases in productivity due to the dawn of so-called “new economy” was shattered when

the bubble of speculation burst in spring 2000, clearly revealing the precarious balance of world economy. Its recent development had been based on over-speculation and the drugged growth of the American "engine", fuelled by the growing debts of industries and families financing luxury investments and consumption.

Both in the US and in the world a complex process was, and still is, taking place of economic reorganisation (restructuring, mergers, redundancies, etc.), whose aim was and is to sustain the growing weight of a crisis that is now spreading in its full, dramatic magnitude, even though it has not yet reached the limit of collapse and catastrophe. This is also the background to state intervention, which has become more widespread and insistent over the past few months (to the shame of all the rhetoric that has been spent on neo-liberalism and, on one seemingly opposing front, of the whining from the "anti-global movement" regarding the necessity of regulating liberal excesses). More importantly, this is the same scenario that sees the military-strategic repositioning strategies, which have been going on now for around a decade, since the time of the Gulf War, and whose aim is to control power sources and their transport routes over an area reaching from sub-Saharan Africa to Central Asia – an area in which inter-imperialist appetites, increasingly sharpened by the economic crisis, are engaged in what has now become open and inevitable conflict, in the attempt to re-draw the political-military map of regions that are precious both underground (oilfields, various raw materials, even water, etc.) and above ground (acqueducts, pipelines, gas-lines).

As demonstrated in the preceding article, the umpteenth military campaign in this area, whilst awkwardly camou-

flaged as "war against terrorism", is a confirmation of the state of crisis and necessity in which all economies are floundering, particularly that of the US, still the most powerful and capable of unloading the burden and effects of the crisis – be they commercial, political or military – onto the shoulders of others. But the confirmation reaches beyond this.

There can be no doubt, for instance, about the openly anti-proletarian nature of the "terrorism-war trap". For one thing, the attack on the Twin Towers of New York slaughtered an unknown number of workers, many of whom were clandestine or irregular and therefore non-existent to official statistics because of their families' fear to come forward and declare their losses (janitors, maintenance workers, heating technicians, messengers, waiters, plumbers, cooks, mechanics, hydraulic technicians, general factotums, etc.). For another, it sent the city's unemployment figures rocketing by several tens of thousands (and it was not only the employees of the stock exchange or up-and-coming brokers who were involved, but the companions of the workers previously mentioned). Moreover, the attack made "national heroes" out of workers such as firemen and – more recently, with the wave of "anthrax letters" – the postmen, who had recently been affected by a huge attack on their working conditions, promoted by the same organisations that now glorify them as an example of patriotism on the altar of a decidedly tentative national, cross-class solidarity.

This is an ideological move characteristic of "armoured democracy" – the same régime which, whilst cloaking itself in the appearances of democracy, has instead inherited from the régimes defeated in World War II the centralising, totalitarian stuff of fascism, both in

economic and in ideological terms. The outburst of patriotism that has been released after 11 September on both sides of the Atlantic has this precise objective: on the one hand, to deal a heavy blow to the working class throughout the world, fuelling its consternation, fear, sense of uncertainty and paralysis and, on the other hand, to project it, in its national segments, towards a patriotic dimension. Turning firemen and postmen into "national heroes" means erasing the class lines once again and suffocating the fact that these workers are the victims of contradictions and conflict within capitalism in a revoltingly sticky syrup of chauvinism; it means anaesthetising any beginnings of anger or indignation that might lead in the direction of a challenge to the status quo. The colleagues of the firemen and postmen who have died must replace the stars-and-stripes-decorated homage to the "national heroes" (and this will be a long and difficult path, where the need for the international communist party will again be felt) with a vivid and live memory of fellow workers who fell victim to a war that was not theirs, to the umpteenth massacre in an undeclared war that has been going on ever since the economic, social, political and economic vampire embodied by capital has been alive, prospering – and spreading destruction.

This ideological structure informs the entire field of action of the bourgeoisie throughout the world. The explicitly anti-proletarian nature of imperialist actions (in war as in peace: both are imperialist war and imperialist peace) does, in fact, lie behind the official proclamations that military campaigns aim to defeat international terrorism, just as it is behind the recurring disguise (used by *all* those involved) of the conflict as a "clash of civilisations" or "of religions", thus encouraging a

return by the working classes to the mystical-religious, the irrational fanaticism of faith which distracts them (and has always distracted them, whether they be Christians, Muslims, Buddhists or Hindus, etc-etc.) from any class-oriented prospects. Official proclamations from *both* sides have contributed to this and are often mere photocopies of one another: "God is with us", "We must fight Evil", "Those who are not with us are against us", etc. Every bourgeoisie must proclaim a disinterested, moral intention, in order to mobilise the entire population, within a framework that provides the essential basis and support network for its own bourgeois power politics. Moreover, the recent measures adopted by Bush to "strike a blow at terrorism" (a free hand in telephone and electronic bugging, stricter control over illegal immigration, the right to detain suspects in prison for several days, and so on: measures that the bourgeoisie throughout the world is hastening to imitate) are moving in the same direction of "armoured democracy" that we have always described as a characteristic of the second post-war era, together with corresponding measures to centralise the economy. The loudly-heralded Freedom of the Best of All Possible Worlds may thus be sacrificed "for a just cause", together with the increasingly scraggy Dove of Peace.

This "armouring" is also evident in other ways. The atmosphere of collective psychosis and the war effort have to be sustained in all fields, particularly in those that contribute to the much-praised formation of "public opinion". This is why, months ago, Hollywood was called to order with instructions to turn out products that could in no way be seen as "ambiguous", and why sources of information (newspapers and television networks) have received precise orders, a sort of "Decalogue",

as to what can and, above all, cannot be said – a Decalogue that immediately scandalised sensitive souls but which we see as further proof of a fascist-oriented process that has been going on for some time and is now, perhaps, speeding up. The same can be said of the military-oriented control of social life, which, under the pretext of taking anti-terrorist measures, produces further waves of widespread anxiety and an evident and growing difficulty in going about daily life. It is clear that the aim of this “armouring” is not to “capture and eliminate terrorists” (a lie that could only be believed by complete idiots), but rather to introduce measures and structures (as well as to create a general atmosphere of emergency), apt to take root in society in readiness for the period of social tension that the international bourgeoisie – with its century-old expertise in domination, crisis, and revolts – can see looming on the horizon, distant as this may be.

At the same time, the return of a chaotic “outward anti-imperialism”, “anti-American feeling” and “enthusiasm for the Third-World” that we have been witnessing over these few months (together with an accompanying and equally charlatan and servile “pro-American feeling”, with dunces of various shapes and sizes daubed with stars and stripes) merely serves to distract attention from the class perspective, throwing the straggling, divided, paralysed international proletariat back into a backward and more or less explicitly nationalist position, or even into support for one ideological or religious fundamentalism or another, disguised as “anti-imperialism” (and in reality the expression of upwardly-mobile national bourgeoisies), which exploit and manipulate the desperation of vast, hungry masses. In short, preparing the proletariat of all countries for a new world massacre,

in the name of “little homelands”, local or “area” interests, tired, irrational and mongrel mythologies.

It must be strongly emphasised that *this is a (limited) war for the control of power sources and to secure better positions in the division of the world, which are already deemed necessary by world capitalism, and thus, in the end, a (limited) war to divide and distract the world proletariat before binding it once more to capitalism's own need to preserve itself. The race by the various imperialist states to join the Holy Anglo-American Alliance Against Terrorism, far from representing a new-found unanimity, is the most explicit indication that each is looking to the “future” of its own national interests, keen to safeguard its individual share of the world's plus-value.*

In Italy, in particular, Stenterello (a character in traditional “commedia dell'arte”, representing the unfortunate common man) has set off once more with his personal distinguishing marks, accompanied by opportunistic rhetoric about “a red, white and green flag for every family”, by spectacular demonstrations of “solidarity” towards the USA, organised by the bourgeois government circle, and by “goodbyes” to the contingents departing from Taranto, arranged by the bourgeois circle of the opposition, whilst the rhetoric of timid and corrupting pacifism is once more to be heard in “alternative” gatherings where the social-chauvinists of tomorrow are being prepared. All united, however, in their appearance at the historical moment.

*However, it is not enough to provide brilliant analyses of the reasons why this war was, and is, inevitable: analyses which are certainly important but insufficient. Beyond this, it must be stated that war has been raging ever since the end of World War II and will*

*continue to rage as long as capital exists, because the daily extortion of plus value is itself an undeclared war that ferociously destroys human beings.*

*Beyond this it must be stated that this is a war to save capital itself, to destroy the proletariat as a historical force of opposition and to turn it from an obedient machine for the production of plus value today into flesh ready for slaughter tomorrow, when the necessity for another world conflict asserts itself.*

*Beyond this it must be stated most emphatically of all that the only prospect that must guide us in opposing the war of capital is that of building agitation and revolutionary defeatism, starting out from the ceaseless struggle against the actions of our own bourgeoisie, in peace as in war.*

*This means denying any claim to legitimacy by the rhetoric and practice of the Union Sacrée, becoming aware of the need to break any alliances with our own bourgeoisie, refusing all attempts at blackmail made in the name of the country's higher interests, of the national economy or of the motherland.*

*It means that the working class needs to strike a mortal blow to the heart of bourgeois power, where plus value is produced, returning to a consistent, constant, and uncompromising defence of its wage and working conditions, never failing to pursue the objective of economic self-defence, since the bourgeoisie will inevitably try to sacrifice this to its requirements for financing military venture.*

"The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie", states the

*Communist Manifesto* of 1848. This text and this agenda, which are today revealed in their full relevance and necessity, should once again become central to the action taken by the world proletariat.

All complicity must be broken off with the nation, the motherland, the "higher interests of the country" and all those (politicians, priests, policemen, journalists) who defend them, flaunting the illusory hope of improvements being made within the system, of modifications and reforms, of patching up a system that has merely become destructive and wasteful for humankind.

It is necessary to start once again to fight for our interests, for life and survival – not as individuals (because this would again mean ruin) but as a class, a class that now exists worldwide.

It is necessary to return to the path of an internationalism that is not moralistic or self-pitying but a true battle-cry of the exploited masses – masses that the pattern of capital itself, up to its present imperial phase, has now unified and turned into a single army whose aim is to challenge the political dominion of the world bourgeoisie, to overthrow it and begin a new mode of production functional to the effective development of the species and of Human Society.

This is the perspective, however arduous and long-term it may appear, within which the International Communist Party is working and moving against the current, to start preparing the conditions for the proletariat to emerge victorious from the future conflict that history will inevitably oblige it to undertake against its class enemies everywhere in the world, however they may be disguised.

# THE CONTINUITY OF REVOLUTIONARY MARXISM VERSUS THE CONTINUITY OF IMPERIALIST WAR

There is a clear line of continuity linking the present war in Afghanistan (to which “little Italy” can now make its obedient contribution, happily wagging its tail at...the honour!) to the war in the Balkans and, still earlier, to the Gulf war of 1990-91. The continuity is that produced by the economic crisis which began in the mid-seventies. But in actual fact capitalist society has always been at war: even limiting our considerations to the time of “peace” following the World War II, this has meant as many as 125 conflicts of a more or less extended nature, with around thirty million deaths! Capital is war: in the factories and in civil society, as on the battle front. As long as the law of profit continues to exist and society is based on it, war – in a more or less warlike form – will be inevitable and constant.

At the time of the Gulf War, we wrote that: “for capitalism in the extreme phase of imperialism war is in any case a periodic necessity to react against the trend towards a tendential fall in the average rate of profit, by destroying an excess of capital (of plus value that is capitalised on and open to capitalisation) that has remained idle or unable to valorise itself, and, as such, is in the midst of an accumulation crisis, in more or less the same way as the great crashes on the stock market, which follow one upon the other at an increasingly giddy rate, destroy their mountains of ‘fictitious capital’ (shares, obligations, etc.), not necessarily always of a speculative nature. This is a necessary condition for the cycle to start up again at a ‘decent’ growth rate, even if it is insufficient to prevent the mechanism from blocking again sooner or later” (1).

We also recalled the words of Lenin, in “Zimmerwald at the Crossroads” (1/1/1917): “Bourgeois pacifists and their ‘socialist’ imitators and spokesmen have always conceived of peace as being something distinct in terms of its very principles, in the sense that the idea that ‘War is a continuation of the politics of peace and peace is a continuation of the politics of war’ has always remained an enigma to pacifists of both colours. Both the former and the latter have never resolved to agree that the imperialist war of 1914-17 is a continuation of the imperialist politics of the 1898-1914 period, if not of an even longer one. Neither of them can bring themselves to agree that, if bourgeois governments are not overthrown by revolution, peace can only be an imperialist peace, since it is the continuation of an imperialist war.” (2)

A few calculations will reveal the continuity between 2001 and 1898 (if not even earlier)!

The economic crisis that began in the mid-seventies accelerated and aggravated this propensity towards war. And the last ten years, with the three se-

1. “No to imperialist war and peace!”, February 1991, Supplement to issue 1/1991 of our Italian periodical *Il programma comunista*.

2. Idem.

rious and bloody conflicts that have characterised the period (the Gulf, the Balkans, Afghanistan), are dramatic proof of this.

The past decade has thus seen repeated transformations of the economic crisis (a *structural* crisis due to over-production: too many commodities and too much capital being produced, an increasingly sharp drop in average rate of profit, capital left idle in the impossibility of valorising itself as rapidly and intensely as necessary). This has happened more frequently and more aggressively in open warfare – in wars whose objectives were: a) to destroy excess production (and thence rebuild), b) to exert control over areas of essential economic and strategic importance by the most powerful capitalism (in this case the USA versus all the equally lurid but weaker others), c) to strike another blow at the international proletariat, dividing and confusing them and driving them back into the arms of their worst enemy – nationalism in all its various shapes: democratic, fundamentalist, liberal, dictatorial.

This situation, which is being so dramatically repeated at present, to recur again tomorrow and the day after tomorrow until a new world conflict explodes, must be countered in the only way possible for Marxist revolutionaries worthy of the name: by means of revolutionary defeatism. This may seem a distant and unattainable prospect. Certainly the disaster brought about by the Stalinist and democratic counter-revolution is so serious as to have robbed it of credibility and made it seem impracticable at the present time. On the one hand there is no other way, and on the other the prospect still has to be prepared, right now, patiently and devotedly. Again at the time of the Gulf War we wrote: “Workers will increasingly refuse, and MUST refuse, to put the defence of their living and working conditions, and the physical life of their children, after the dictates of economic efficiency and the compatibility of their demands with the objectives pursued by the company and by the government, or social peace as a lever to the war effort. It is in constant and unconditional daily resistance to the attacks by capital and its State – resistance using the means and methods of class conflict including a general strike unlimited in time and scope –, in the refusal to serve the ‘motherland’ to the detriment of even the most basic interests of the class, that the conditions are forged for revolutionary defeatism, when, in any case, every workers’ struggle for the defence of their immediate and undeniable rights automatically sows the first seeds, whether intentionally or not. At the same time this, if carried out coherently, is the only form of struggle which, in given circumstances, is at least able to contrast and even prevent further entrapment [...] by the ruling class and by their government. No to war, then: no to national solidarity, no to the mock-strikes. Opposition to calls by the government, the parties, and the unions to social peace, to work discipline, to the acceptance of ‘sacrifices made necessary by the situation’ [...]. It is by means of this sort of struggle – our struggle – that the conditions are prepared for the final revolutionary victory: a great and sweeping *mass movement* against the bourgeois social order, responsible, amongst other infamy, of imperialist slaughter; the *revolutionary class party* as the essential weapon for the transformation of the class instinct into conscious action directed against the heart of bourgeois dominion, the State, in all its various ramifications. ‘If not today, then tomorrow; if not during this war, then during the next’ [Lenin, ‘The Situation and Tasks of the Socialist International’, 1/11/1914]. There is no solution to the problem of imperialist wars apart from the revolution of the proletariat. This is what we have to work for, obstinately, every day” (3).

3. “No to imperialist war and peace!”, February 1991, Supplement to issue 1/1991 of our Italian periodical *Il programma comunista*.

This is still, and always will be, our battle cry; this is still, and always will be, *our line of continuity*: with 1991, with 1939, with 1914, with 1898-1914: to say no to imperialist war, however it may be disguised in order to render it acceptable and digestible to its direct victims, the proletariat dispatched to tear one another to pieces on opposing fronts.



# The martyrdom of the masses in the Middle East will not end until an international, class perspective is regained, resisting and opposing any temptation to be lured by national interests

It has become a slow and bloody extermination. So much so that, as always happens in this "best of all possible worlds", a monstrous daily routine has set in of keeping tag on the new deaths in this war - an undisguised war between States, whether they be weak or strong, officially acknowledged or not, and whatever their connections to this or that imperialist power or shifting international front. We have already dealt with the "Palestinian issue" (which is in fact a "a general Middle Eastern issue" regarding a key area in capitalist geopolitics) on several occasions. For decades now the proletariat and the poor, newly-proletarian masses of this region have been paying a personal price as the hopeless, exploited victims of bourgeois class relations, because of the region's importance for raw materials (directly as far as the control and distribution of water resources is concerned, and indirectly as regards the necessity for American imperialism to control the oilfields of the Gulf through the *pivotal* State of Israel). They pay the price of the Arab bourgeoisie's cowardice, always ready to hire itself out to this or that imperialist power and terrorised by the thought of uprisings amongst the peasants and the proletariat. They pay the price of the role allotted to

Israel in the period immediately following the Second world war as a "gendarme" supposed to guarantee the region's stability, as well as the price of the deadly plague of nationalist prospects, dangled before their eyes in one way or another over the course of the decades but always a paralysing influence (from pan-Arabic prospects to Islamic fundamentalism). They pay for the economic, political and strategic impact of the world recession that started in the mid-seventies and struck the whole area, including Israel.

It is not only the armoured tanks and the air-force bearing the star of David that are massacring the Palestinians day after day. It is also the blind alley they have been chased into by nationalism: the slogan of the "State of Palestine" as a political solution to an endemic state of warfare, the subordination of their vital needs, work and daily survival to the interests of a Palestinian (and, in a broader sense, Arab) bourgeoisie which is just as foul and cynically anti-proletarian as its Israeli counterpart, the iron heel of purely national interests on both sides crushing their battle. Once again it has been demonstrated - on the scorched hills of Palestine, amongst the battered houses and on the battlefield of the streets - how *pertinent the call to revolutionary*

*defeatism still is*, with its refusal to fight alongside the national bourgeoisie in the name of so-called common interests. *There is no national issue still open in this area* that can contemplate the proletariat and the bourgeoisie rallying on the same side of the fence (even if politically and militarily independent) in order to get rid of suffocating imperialism and thus set up a capitalist mode of production. Capitalism has been alive and kicking in this area for decades and speaks both Arabic and Hebrew, just as it does English or German, French or Italian.

In this region the proletariat can expect nothing from Arafat or from one Arab-extremist military leader or another. The only hope for the proletariat here to break out of the blind alley of daily slaughter – the holocaust for a cause that is not theirs – is by disengaging themselves, *once and for all* from any nation-

alist prospects. They will only be able to do this in as far as the proletariat of the imperialist cities (and therefore the Israeli proletariat, too, which obviously has certain privileges compared to its Palestinian counterpart, but which is just as subject to the paralysing blackmail of the national myth) begins to take action and throw out all subjection or loyalty to its own bourgeoisie.

We shall be returning to this issue in greater depth. However, we urgently wish to re-state, loud and clear, the key to change without which this martyrdom will never cease but, instead, become more of a bloodbath day by day. The only real prospect for the Middle East, as in other similar key areas where social tension is building up day by day and ever-closer to exploding, is a communist, internationalist and class prospect. *Never – NEVER – rallying on national fronts.*

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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

W. I. Lenin, *What is to be done?*

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The “Anti-Global Movement” - After The “Events of Genoa”<sup>1</sup>

## THE ONLY REAL PERSPECTIVE IS REVOLUTIONARY MARXISM

The “events of Genoa” are too widely known for it to be necessary to summarize and recall them here. In the streets of the city, on the bodies of the tens of thousands of people who flocked to “demonstrate against the powerful of the earth”, a tragic performance was played out, an angry pre-scripted event, which resulted in one young man murdered, hundreds of people wounded and arrested, and above all in the usual ballet of lamentations and blame, indignation and cynicism. The whole affair, from the demonstrations against globalization to their brutal repression by the police and the aftermath, runs the risk of drowning a real and ongoing problem (*how to struggle against capitalism*) in yet another democratic, reformist, recriminatory and moralistic swamp, and thus of not taking a single step toward even a remotely class-based perspective: rather, to take a number of steps backward.

Whoever wishes, therefore, to really draw, seriously and lucidly, some *non-episodic* lessons from the “events of Genoa”, will necessarily have to do so by beginning from some general considerations. Let us look at them, while also referring the reader, for further am-

plification and context, to the substantial article on the “no-global movement” which will be put on the web in due time.

1) The state is not an organ above the different parts of society, a severe but just father who concerns himself impartially with the good of all. On the contrary- -and Marxism has always said so in theory and demonstrated it in facts—the state is a product of the division of society into classes and cannot be anything else but an instrument of the rule (and of the maintenance of this rule) of the class in power: in this instance, in the capitalist system, an instrument of the bourgeoisie, the social expression of capital as a world economic power. The bourgeois state is precisely at the service of the general interests of capital, both on the national and international level (and thus with all the contradictions this implies): independently of the puppets (real and authentic zombies) who are in this or that government, at this or that moment.

To think and (still worse!) to make others think that the bourgeois state can and should represent the “collectivity”, the “citizens” (and that if it does not, this is only because a handful of scoundrels and rogues have taken it over and sub-

1. For reasons of space, we have to postpone to *Internationalist Papers* 12 a wider article of analysis of the “Anti-Global Movement”, which however can be found in English in our website [www.ilprogrammacomunista.com](http://www.ilprogrammacomunista.com).

ordinated it to their own will) is tantamount to nourishing a disastrous illusion. To proclaim that the state must be “torn from the control of the multinationals” or of “corporative interests”, and “restored to its role as guardian of the collectivity” comes down to playing a role of mystification, of theoretical-political disarmament, of open deception and betrayal.

2) With its “special bodies of armed men, prisons, etc.” (Lenin, *State and Revolution*), this state is thus the organ of domination of the ruling bourgeois class. As such, it has been and will always be the *open enemy* of revolution and communism, as it is moreover the enemy of any partial struggle for the defense of the conditions of life and work of the exploited masses (the example of the steel workers roughed up in Genoa *well before* the G8 has been quickly forgotten by everyone, and this should be food for thought.) To complain because the state has exercised its real repressive role means not even minimally understanding what the state is, and the nature of the regime which emerged victorious from the second world massacre. It thus means to promote, and to accept, the theoretical and practical impossibility of resisting and fighting it. With the G8 of Genoa, the Italian bourgeoisie readily seized the occasion for some big military maneuvers, and for testing men and equipment, strategies and logistics, thus showing once again a) that it sees (with a perception developed through the experience of several centuries) the deepening and the spread of economic crisis as prefiguring critical times of growing social tensions b) that it must thus prepare itself, making it clear how it intends to respond, i.e. *with violence and repression*. In fact, the main force to which this message is addressed is the proletariat in its future struggles, against which open bourgeois violence al-

ternates with democratic clap-trap to defend the survival and the impersonal rule of capital, and only secondarily the middle classes, who today are protesting against their increasingly precarious situation, and who have to be rechanneled into more modest aspirations. The Italian bourgeoisie has also shown that it knows how to use the insipid and irresponsible character of the so-called “antagonistic movements” (movements of a spontaneous nature which, it is worth mentioning, have a long and dark tradition of sending into the fray forces politically and organizationally defenseless) to divide, fragment, intimidate, repress and paralyze.

3) “Police state”? “Chilean situation”? The bourgeois state constitutes its apparatus of control and repression in order to always maintain a level of potential violence in its confrontations with the working class, with the aim of unleashing it openly when doing so suits its needs. Whoever today blathers about “democratic police” is a cretin and a faithful servant of the bourgeoisie. For more than half a century, we internationalist communists have been arguing that the regime which emerged victorious from the second world massacre, behind its democratic facade, inherited from Nazism and fascism the latter’s profound economic, social and political substance: concentration of state powers, centralization of economic life with the direct intervention of the state for the preservation of capitalist interests, the growing militarization of social life, the integration of unions into the state, the constitution of big clientelistic lobbies, the media-driven creation of consensus, etc. And we have defined this regime as an “armored democracy”. Democrats, Stalinists, reformists, and spontaneists of all kinds, while throwing themselves into disman-

ting, piece by piece, even the memory of what Marxism, class struggle, revolutionary politics, and communism are, have found nothing better to do than to laugh at our “old and outmoded” analysis. Except, that is, when overwhelmed by the blows of police clubs, the streams of jeeps and a dead demonstrator, they shed crocodile tears over “desecrated democracy”. These people, whether they today call themselves the Rifondazione Comunista or “tute bianche” (2), Genoa Social Forum or Black Bloc, or find their affinities in the folkloric rainbow of colored (or colorless?) names and symbols, or are on the payroll of bourgeois institutions which pretend to fight, or are motivated by sterile and existential rebellion, are directly co-responsible for the disaster of collective experiences such as the “anti-G8 demonstration in Genoa”, a disaster which can only nourish frustration and a sense of impotence, or set off a chain reaction of adventurist efforts: all of them, however, having in common the refusal of a revolutionary perspective (and thus of preparation for it).

4) It is obvious that the “no-global” movement, or whatever one wishes to call it (in this race entirely turned upon itself to name something that has no substance), in addition to offering *no real response* to capitalist cannibalism and rot, is totally vulnerable to every kind of provocation, aggression, and infiltration: precisely because of its indefinite, fluid, “ecumenical” character, its non-existent political and programmatic dimensions, and its

eclectic, spontaneist, improvised nature. But the problem is not only that of provocateurs and infiltrators: the problem is that the “no-global” movement is completely without any theoretical-political discourse and thus places its trust in that “ethical mass participation” which only leads to disastrous defeats. In light of the verbal contortions of the operetta revolutionaries who were playing at being “hard” leaders of the movement, and who then squawked that “the police did not stick to the agreements”, the “events of Genoa” at least serve as a reminder that revolutionary politics, *in none of its forms*, from the anonymous work of theoretical preparation to propaganda and proselytism, from the strike to the picket line, from the blockage of production to the large demonstration, without forgetting for a moment the seizure of power and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship, that none of this is a country outing, nor a trip to the beach with a guitar and a bottle of beer, nor a “street rave” for reconnecting with old friends and for being able to say “I was there”, and finally not the latest occasion for acting out one’s own nihilist and individual rage.

Today, in order to struggle consequently against the regime of capital *in all its forms*, something more is necessary than some eruption of urban guerrilla warfare here or there in the world, or the bleating call for “alternative spaces”, or the vague and misguided “globalization from below” which is nothing more than a sinister reformism dressed up with Christian-tinged appeals to good will. To this end,

2. The “tute bianche” are those wearing entirely white clothes and identifying themselves with the “community centers” movement, formerly “workers’ autonomy”.

the necessities of today are revolutionary preparation, the destruction of every bourgeois and petty bourgeois myth (from pacifism to democracy, from ecologism to the “social state”, etc.), the reaffirmation of integral Marxist theory against all the attacks launched by the ideology of capital and the Stalinist counter-revolution, which has destroyed every tradition of international proletarian struggle, and finally the spread on a world scale of the international communist party. And what will be necessary tomorrow is the world revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, led by its party.

5) “Globalization” is not a perverse process set in motion in recent years by a handful of selfish interests (individuals, companies, states) which are daily trampling on “collective rights”, to be opposed by assembling a large, formless march every once in a while, or by wrecking a MacDonald’s, or destroying a field owned by Monsanto, or by smashing the windows of a bank (preferably an American one). What is improperly called “globalization” is the process through which, *since the beginning* and with different velocities and intensities according to the phase, capital tends to penetrate into every

corner of the world—an individuated process, one described by Marxism since the era of the *Communist Manifesto*, an “old” book from 150 years ago which some people would do well to re-read.

What we have been seeing for a quarter of a century is the intensification of this process, under the pressure of a structural economic crisis erupting as a consequence of the closing of the expansive cycle of the capitalist economy, which in turn was made possible by the enormous destruction of commodities (objects, infrastructure *and* human beings), caused by the second imperialist massacre. To

react to a crisis of such a scale, capital knows only a few methods, each of which is destined in turn to deepen the crisis: the intensification of commercial competition and control of markets, sources of raw materials, of commercial circuits (=sharpening of inter-imperialist rivalries); the introduction of ever-more sophisticated technologies (=expulsion of manpower with the growth of unemployment, contraction of the *living labor* which produces *surplus-value* and thus *profit*); proletarianization of ever-greater sectors of the world population to secure more tractable and cheaper manpower (=great migratory flows, growing social tensions, destruction of centuries-old balances in large areas of the planet, increase in the uncertainty of material conditions of life). And behind all this, when all this no longer suffices, the final solution: a *new world-wide massacre* which destroys everything that has been produced in excess (commodities and human beings), as happened already with the First and Second World Wars. This is a life-or-death necessity for capital, and not the result of individual egoisms or bloody wickedness: it is thus only by breaking this infernal cycle once and for all that it will be possible to prevent capital from destroying the human species.

6) From this point of view, it is obvious that neither the bleating ethical pacifism of hands in the air (an exemplary sign of surrender) nor the anarchoid rebellion of the window-breakers (with their absolute and unabashed lack of structure and political program), are an answer. The only answer is the return in force, after decades of devastating counter-revolution (carried out by Stalinism, fascism and democracy) of the *international working class*: not because it is “genetically revolutionary”, as some ingenuous soul would have it, but because it has the

potential power to block the vital arteries of capitalism, to strike at the point where surplus-value is produced, and thus to seriously threaten bourgeois power. And this return is prepared, abetted and rendered possible day after day: with a constant labor of clarification, of organization, of leadership, struggling against all those reformist, legalistic and democratic positions which divert the working class from its path, which involve it in perspectives which are not its own, which tie it to the rotten cadaver (but one still unfortunately on its feet) of the capitalist economy, of its state, of its nation. While the economic crisis is laying the foundations, eroding reserves and guarantees, illusions and convictions, this return is being prepared with patience and seriousness, lucidity and consciousness, and at the same time with that passion and ardor which characterized generations and generations of revolutionary communists: without sliding back into the phantasms of spontaneism, subjectivism and rebelliousness, of “everything and now”, of

the “concrete here and now”, but working for a tomorrow which can only have its roots in today, for a today which has meaning only when projected in a tomorrow, no matter how distant.

This can and must be done. But it can be done only by returning to revolutionary Marxism: with the hard but bracing work of revolutionary preparation, of propaganda and proselytism, of spreading communist theory and program, of continuous specific struggle against all the openly enemy or, worse, deceptively friendly ideologies, of the education of new revolutionary generations destined for days more luminous than today, of guiding and steering proletarian struggles throughout the world in an openly anti-capitalist direction, of the international grounding of the class party, solid in its organization and its doctrine.

This may seem a distant prospect; in reality, it is the only possible one, and the only realistic one, if we wish to avoid other, *and much worse*, disasters.

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Communism is the positive abolition of private property, of human self-alienation, and thus the real appropriation of human nature through and for man. It is therefore the return of man himself as a social, i.e. really human, being, a complete and conscious return which assimilates all the wealth of previous development. Communism as a fully developed naturalism is humanism and as a fully developed humanism is naturalism. It is the definitive resolution of the antagonism between man and nature, and between man and man. It is the true solution of the conflict between existence and essence, between objectification and self-affirmation, between freedom and necessity, between individual and specie. It is the solution of the riddle of history and knows itself to be this solution.

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K. Marx, *Economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844*

# THE HISTORICAL NECESSITY OF COMMUNISM

One of the characteristic arguments of the ruling capitalist ideology is that which considers (or, rather, would like to consider) the present system of life and production eternal. The argument runs that this system is the ultimate and definitive result of a millenary development of human history, and that the level of 'civilization' achieved is such that the economic and social relations which lie at its base can be improved upon but need not be altered at all. Consequently, it is argued, the market, money, companies, commodities and wage labour are 'natural' categories of man (re-baptized, as it happens, 'homo aeconomicus') which, perfected over time, have reached the more complete and rational forms of today.

As an expression of the economic and political domination of the ruling class, this false representation pervades all layers of society. Naturally, this idea of the 'eternal' capitalist world and its 'categories' crops up continually in a number of different guises with a view to strengthening control over and disarming the proletariat, the class on which all the economic and social power of bourgeois domination rests.

Indeed, it is human activity and

power (also understood in terms of the work of preceding generations and the development of productive forces) which leads to the materialization of wealth, but capital mystifyingly takes possession of that power and qualifies itself as being 'productive'. In other words, what happens is that "the contrivance of present day society and the weight of traditional ideas with which it is infested lead to the vain belief that productive forces are an innate characteristic of capitalism. As a consequence, the modern social character of large scale production (whose performance levels have eclipsed those of a more lacklustre past) is attributed to the power of capital rather than the collective power of human work" (1).

## Is Communism Dead?

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the explosion of the USSR and its closely knit alliance of states (the first general consequence of a *historical crisis* gnawing away at the capitalist system, a crisis which began hitting the weaker links in the chain during the mid-seventies), proved useful ammunition in the bourgeois battle to uphold the underlying argument that capitalism is eternal. 'Com-

1. "Report on the Subject-Matter in the Unpublished Sixth Chapter of Marx's *Capital*" (Party General Meeting in Florence, 1965), now in *Raccolta delle Riunioni di Partito*, vol. XIV, ed. Il Programma Comunista, p. 75.



munism' was dead, or so the papers said! (just as it had been 'created': conveniently, most forgot to mention the fact – whether out of ignorance or calculation, it matters not – that communism is the *total negation* of the bourgeois economy!). At last the road was clear for the universal affirmation of Democracy and Liberty, Wealth and Peace, brought forth by peaceful commerce and the world market.

"Left wing" opportunists wasted no time in joining the bandwagon. They changed their names and symbols, tarted themselves up to ply the same rank wares of yesteryear at the table of the conservative bourgeoisie and darted in among the rank and file of a proletariat who was so disoriented and disarmed as to be unable to defend its own standard of living. All this at a time when capitalism – albeit in haphazard and uneven manner – was starting to offload the cost of the crisis.

Never was a conclusion so rash! Right from the beginning, it was clear that (*non-existent!*) communism was far from death's door. But another thing was also clear: notwithstanding the means at its disposal, the bourgeoisie was incapable of explaining the phenomena afflicting the world, in history as in nature, and this failure is due to its *parasitic* (and therefore *superfluous*) nature. This was a reminder of the fact that as far as the further development of productive forces was concerned and, more importantly, the necessity for a rational and fully aware organization of the human species, bourgeois

social relations had by now become something of an obstacle.

The 'deification' of the categories embodying bourgeois relations lies at the heart of the indirect declaration of 'eternity' of the bourgeois system, as made by its open supporters, as well as by the theorists of opportunist parties and by the half classes. This deification synthesizes the domination of the bourgeois class at the levels of ideological and consensus superstructures. And the necessity for the Communist Party to conduct an all-out theoretical battle derives precisely from this. The theory, which came into being at a determined time as a *historical programme of a class emancipation*, really is, in fact, a weapon, a social force which takes over the masses when they are in motion. The possibility of constantly supporting "the interests of the movement as a whole" through "the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through" is indissolubly bound up with the theoretical 'advantage' of the communists. This allows them to understand "the lines of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement." (2)

Generally speaking, as Marx observed *à propos* Proudhon, it is precisely the inability to understand the mechanisms and laws of development of economic capitalism and the social situation which lies at the heart of absurd and idealistic philosophical theories. (3)

2. Marx-Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Ch.II, "Proletarians and Communists"), in *The Portable Karl Marx* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), p.218.

3. Cf. Marx, "Letter to Annenkov" (18/12/1846).

On the contrary, the scientificity of dialectical materialism rests on the fact that "the final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in man's better insight into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the modes of production and exchange. They are to be sought not in the *philosophy*, but in the *economics* of each particular epoch." (4)

The struggle against the 'best-of-all-possible-world' apologists of capitalism (like the battle against the *petit bourgeois* reformists who advocate capitalism without all its evil frills) has always been more than simply a question of theory: in substance, it has also provided an opportunity for the scientific verification of the theory in relation to the development of the historical process. Nowadays, the thesis of Bastiat (whose theory of harmonious capitalism saw capital as the democratic, philanthropic and egalitarian power *par excellence*) (5) lies buried beneath the rubble of capitalistic contradictions in an imperialist phase: unemployment, growing insecurity, hunger and misery on the one hand, and overproduction, wastage and mean, superfluous luxury on the other. All these things derive from the laws of expanded reproduction of capital.

### The Limits of Capitalism

Capitalism is in the midst of its imperialist phase: monopolistic and parasitic in economics, reac-

tionary in politics. With the creation of a worldwide market and the replacement of the personal ties typical of feudal social relations with the system of economic dependency fostered by the bourgeoisie (even if, as Marx and Engels observe, truthfully speaking, individuals are less free because they are more subject to an objective force), capitalism has exhausted any progressive historical function. Finally, it has revealed its inability to make use (as capital) of all the means of production which have been created and the existing workforce. Capitalism is, therefore, unable to 'manage' the forces of production, whose social character is increasingly at odds with the mean-spirited bourgeois relations of appropriation and exchange.

As all our articles have demonstrated over the last one hundred and fifty years, it is precisely these productive forces which are seeking to shake off their capitalist character in an effort to overcome the limits of capitalism and, at last, resolve the contradiction between what is – by now – the social character of production and the as yet private character of the capitalist appropriation of the social product.

From time to time, the capitalist system is shaken to its foundations by crises which reveal a grotesque world where a surplus production of commodities and capital sit side by side with the misery and degradation of the growing mass population of the world. As we have seen, these

4. F. Engels, *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific* (1892), in F. Engels, *Selected Writings* (Penguin Books, 1967), p.206.

5. Cf. Marx "Unpublished Sixth Chapter of *Capital*", where reference is made to Bastiat's text of 1850, *La gratuité du crédit*.

crises represent, on the one hand, a means of temporarily solving the fundamental contradictions between productive forces and bourgeois relations (thanks to the obligatory *en masse* destruction of productive forces); on the other, they cannot but lay the ground for further general crises of an even more violent nature, diminishing at the same time the means whereby those selfsame crises might be averted (6).

During these crises the *phenomenon of centralisation* becomes more common: by this is implied the removal from power and the ruin of numerous capitalists (especially those lower down the scale, although the big shots are by no means exempt) in favour of an increasingly select minority of capital resources in the form of stock companies. Recent statistics (see the Italian *Rapporto Ricerche e Studi*, July 1999) point out that there are 241 industrial and energy groups in charge of 34.000 companies which account for over 17 million employees worldwide. What is more, during the last ten years the average size of these mega groups has grown by 67% in Europe and the USA and by 60% in Japan, a result which must be attributed in part to the widespread spate of mergers and takeovers and the growing interpenetration between banks, finance companies and industry.

This process of concentration is a global phenomenon: it is the direct result of the internal dynamic of capital development, and a consequence of its crisis. Concentration inevitably magnifies such consequences and at the same time intensifies the submissive position of the state in relation to capital, while also broadening the range of state intervention and strengthening the more important states themselves (de-

spite the process of ephemeral geographical dismemberment bound up with the proliferation of micro-states which are independent in name only). In the end, the rule of financial capital extends and intensifies *conflicts among states* which are, unavoidably, tied to the imperialistic carve-up of the planet, the inevitable imbalances of capital, and changes in the respective power relations.

Notwithstanding the much hyped progress of industry and technology, the torment of work has become more intense, over a billion people are unemployed or under-employed and more still live with the real threat of hunger and starvation. To the wage-earners the future has become an enigma, thus adding to their misery (which resides in tomorrow's uncertainty, rather more than in low wage levels). And, with the intensification of the global market and typically bourgeois mercantile relations (i.e., that ensemble of historically specific and determined social relations) the contradictions of the capitalist system have become more intense and widespread.

### The Historical Condemnation of Capitalism

Marx and Engels observed that, from the introduction of manufacturing onwards, commerce takes on a political importance: various nations become rivals in a no hold barred trade struggle. As confirmation of this, conflict and destruction have always figured high on the agenda of spreading 'pacific' trade: only through these phenomena can capitalism temporarily resolve its cri-

6. Cf. Marx-Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Chapter "Bourgeois and Proletarians"); and F. Engels *The Evolution of Socialism*.

sis, partially eliminating its suffocating levels of overproduction and allowing it to raise that profit rate which is the mainspring of the entire mechanism of reproduction of capital. The periods of imperialist peace which follow imperialist wars are no less destructive for the proletariat and are nothing more than a ceasefire: intervals during which more acute crises and wars are prepared. Capitalism can only preserve itself by wielding destruction with an increasingly heavy hand.

All this is in the very *nature of capital*. While examining the periodic destruction of capital Marx noted down in his fundamental text, *Grundrisse*, the following extract from the bourgeois economist Fullarton: "A periodic destruction of capital has become a necessary condition for the existence of any kind of current profit rate. From this point of view, these terrible calamities which we have come to expect with so much unrest and apprehension, and which we are so anxious to avoid, are necessarily the natural and indispensable remedy for a plethoric and artificially inflated form of opulence – a *vis mendicatrix* [healing force] which, on a periodic basis, our present social system is geared to exploiting so as to free itself of the recurring gluts threatening its existence. Hence the system acquires anew its sheen and sparkling condition."

That capitalism is experiencing a historical crisis is evident from the increasingly jaded economic figures and the growing imbalance in society in favour of a parasitic, bone idle minority which (via stocks and shares – those 'property' options on other people's work) takes possession of a social product obtained through the employment of the wage earning population.

Yet not only. The capitalist has turned into a *rentier* and the bourgeoisie is, to all effects, now a superfluous class. The crisis also manifests itself in the inability of the bourgeoisie to control the *environmental devastation* which its own lust for wealth has generated. For example, in the United States the temperature recently rose to 40° – nothing strange about that, you might say. But if a situation of this kind leads to the deaths of hundreds of working people and the poor, it becomes a *social fact*: since its organisation is founded on profit – and, therefore, on money and commodities as instruments of mediation of social needs – capitalism must carry the can.

The short and tall of the matter is that capitalism, in its frenzy to accumulate on an ever larger scale, takes social degradation and the wastage of human resources and materials resulting from human activity to ever greater heights. This degradation and wastage corresponds to the 'rationality' of capitalism which is bent on producing capital and not goods, exchange values instead of use values, and is obliged to produce profits instead of satisfying needs. And this is its historical condemnation.

The aim of capital is accumulation, the production of surplus value extorted from living labour and, consequently, the constant and widespread reproduction of those capitalistic relations which actually allow for this process (first and foremost, the wage-earners). Yet the immanent laws of capital are such that accumulation can only be built upon successfully at a price which implies *increasingly destructive wars* and crises: these allow for the depreciation of superabundant and surplus masses of capital produced beforehand (ma-

chines and raw materials). However, the dialectic of enlarged reproduction of capital simultaneously engenders the *conditions of its being supplanted* and the economic basis for *a mode of production at once antithetical and superior: communism*. In boosting the forces of production, capital nourishes and increases the social productivity of labour. And yet at the same time, greater production in use values (= greater quantities of a given product) leads to a reduction, on the one hand, in the value of commodities, and on the other, in the profit rate (i.e., the relation between surplus value and the total amount of advanced capital:  $p/c+v$ ) as a consequence of the relative reduction of the advance in employed workforce as opposed to the other means of production engaged.

This occurs because for every worker employed, the portion of surplus value increases in relation to the labour required for its reproduction (and, therefore, in relation to wages). This is so because the value (and not the price) of the commodities personally consumed by the worker diminishes. The social product will, therefore, contain a relatively smaller mass of labour and, consequently, the production of surplus value in relation to the total capital employed will – given the absolute physical limits of the working day – decrease as well. As mentioned above, the profit rate is the mainspring of accumulation: every time it decreases, capitalism responds with measures which necessari-

ly lead to greater productive forces and new methods aimed at producing relative surplus value (= more intense working days) which increase its mass, yet fail however to halt its downward trend.

Marx called this “a typical expression of the capitalist mode of production and the incessant development of the social productivity of labour [ ... ] separate from any distribution of this surplus value among different categories” (7) and therefore from the reciprocal relations which derive from it. The most important historical law of the capitalist mode of production, the tendency of the profit rate to decline (which can be read in the analyses of industrial production and the gradual reductions in production figures) demonstrates the *transitory nature of capitalism* as a mode of production: its failure, in the sense that its self-valorisation (the valorisation of the character of capital of the means it actually employs) necessitates of destruction.

### The Historical Necessity of Communism

The historical necessity of communism resides in this capitalist incapacity to dominate the forces which historical development has generated by accommodating them within the destructive character of capital. First and foremost, we are dealing with *a deterministic and not a voluntaristic conclusion*, because the foundations of a new mode of

7. Marx, *Capital*, Vol.III.

8. Marx-Engels, *The German Ideology*.

production are already present in the womb of the old. They are themselves products of its dialectical becoming. Yet the transition from one mode of production to another is neither pacific nor immediate. It requires, first of all, revolutionary political action which will entail the *violent demolition* of the superstructure of power and domination erected by the established ruling class. Secondly, and by no means less important, such a transition necessitates of a period of time during which a *dictatorship of the revolutionary class* is organised as the rule of the dominant class, necessary to resist the inevitable counter-revolutionary attempts, to reorganize society along totally different economic and social lines, and finally usher in the classless (and only then also stateless) society – communism.

In fact, during the imperialistic phase – when the economic apparatus and forces of capitalism are most highly concentrated – a gradual, pacific and evolutionistic solution to the crisis (without a civil war between proletariat and the international bourgeoisie) is unthinkable. Thereafter, a dictatorship of the proletariat would serve to suppress any attempt of the defeated class to return to power. It would also work for the international establishment of the revolutionary process and, lastly, carry out those *despotic interventions* in property rights and the bourgeois mode of production which inevitably mark the phase of transition to a new and superior mode of production.

If, then, communism is not an ideal or something which can be established voluntaristically, but rather “a real movement which abolishes the current state of things” (8), and whose conditions ensue, therefore, from existing presuppositions, it follows that the “volition” (insofar as it exists) regards only the Party in determined historical periods and to the extent that it acts in accordance with historical necessity. Revolutions cannot be radio-controlled (a well established anarchist fixation). But what is really fundamental is the organisation – military and otherwise – of the proletariat in the Party (in opposition to all other parties) representing its interests, so that it is able to win and take control at the decisive moment. In Marxism, the conception of the relationship between class and Party has always been openly *anti-democratic*: the Party does not follow the class, it directs it, and the selfsame proletariat is nothing without the Party. In its absence, the proletariat is incapable of historical action.

There is no autonomous political movement on the part of the proletarian class (an artless, spontaneist and labourite fancy): “What counts is not what this or that proletariat – or even the proletariat in its entirety – temporarily establishes for itself as its aim. What counts is what it will be historically impelled to do in conformity with its being. Its end aim and its historical action have already been established in advance, in concrete and irrevocable form, in terms of its existence

and in the overall organisation of the present bourgeois society." (9) As in all Marxist works, the term "being" here stands to indicate *social being* (which determines social awareness), since the life of men is founded upon the existence of social relationships which are independent of their will. The proletariat itself will have to be educated by the revolution, and this revolution is therefore "not only necessary because the ruling class can be overthrown in no other way, but also because it is the only means through which the class that provokes its demise can throw off all the old filth and corruption and put itself in a position to lay down the new foundations of society." (10)

Summing up, if the foundations of communism are rooted in the dynamic development of capitalist contradictions (*economic* in the last resort, but strictly bound up to the materiality of the transmission mechanisms of the crisis, its political and military prolongations, and the leading role of the Party as the embodiment of the historical emancipation programme of the proletarian class), the transition phase towards a communist society will still require a state as the political organ of the victorious class. It will also imply a political instrument of prohibition and control alongside the initial, budding collective administration on part of the proletarian masses.

Communism is not an ideal and neither is it an imaginative construct on the part of well inten-

tioned men. In this it is different from the vision held by Utopians whose leading exponents, during a determined historical period, nourished aspirations which were legitimate yet based on idealistic (and, therefore, vain) foundations: in this epoch, the problem of how to go beyond capitalism had not yet been confronted fully because the material bases of its development were inadequate. In a letter to E. Pease dated 27/1/1886, Engels wrote that "our ideas concerning the differences between a future non-capitalist society and the society of today derive from precise deductions based on historical facts and processes of development. If such ideas remain bereft of this close fitting bond with these facts and becoming , they have no practical or theoretical value."

The *harmonisation between production and distribution* which communism will bring into being – commencing with the destruction of capitalist appropriation relations – must necessarily begin with those elements of economic socialisation which capitalism is itself responsible for producing. If this does not occur, any attempt at revolutionary transformation is destined to remain a hollow *petitio principii*. From ancient primitive societies to the *necessary* communist society of tomorrow, Marxist theory is scientific criticism of all pre-history and human history. This scientific character rests on the historical determinism of the material conditions of development in society. In turn, it admits the definition of the condi-

9. Marx-Engels, *The Sacred Family*.

10. Marx-Engels, *The German Ideology*.

tions underlying the transition from an inferior mode of production to a superior one, as well as the general outline of a society no longer blindly subordinate to extraneous-seeming economic forces, but a society which is finally able to integrate those forces within a process of complete and omnilateral development of man as a *social being*.

In the first place, communism defines itself as the *negation of the cardinal anatomical characteristics of capitalism*, a system which it supersedes (dialectical negation). On a positive note, it represents a *classless* society where life and economy will be organised by a management which is fully aware of the relationship between needs, enjoyment and nature: a management which identifies itself with an organic plan for the species and not a state (a class-ridden body which will be consigned to past history). The Party of today is preparing for the tasks to be undertaken tomorrow, and as these anonymous and impersonal preparations take place, communism is "the declaration of permanent revolution, the class dic-

tatorship of the proletariat as a necessary transition point for the abolition of general class differences, of all the means of production which said differences are based upon, of the entire network of social relationships running parallel to these means of production, and of all the ideas which originate from such social relationships." (11)

This is what is meant by our being "explorers into tomorrow". Not an illusory and metaphysical vision of a fanciful tomorrow, like that of the myriad denigrators and small time politicians haring around in pursuit of the 'concrete' present, losing sight of life in general and failing to reflect on the actual situation surrounding us today. No, it is, rather, a sure-fire forecast based on the material facts of the past and the present – facts which assert the communist society to be the necessary outlet of the process of historical becoming currently underway, and the *only scientific alternative* (hence incredibly real) to the appalling waste of men and resources that the rotting capitalist system sacrifices on the altar of its own conservation.

11. Marx, *The Class Struggles in France* (Ch. 3).



# GRAMSCI, OR THE POVERTY OF PHILOSOPHY <sup>1</sup>

“Philosophy bears to the study of the real world the same relationship as does onanism to sexual love.”

Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*

## 1. The Tenacity and Resurgence of “Gramscismo”

For Marxists good strategy and sound tactics cannot develop from a heterodoxical “philosophy” that posits itself outside of dialectical materialism. We understand the proletariat’s revolutionary theory to be of one piece: a unified *body* of ideas and practices that delineates the entire cycle of human society and anticipates an inevitable revolutionary change. From a demonstration that Gramsci’s philosophy is anything but Marxism – and this despite his statement to the 1926 Congress of Lyons, (2) or subsequently, that Marxism is “a philosophy that is also a politic and a politic that is also philosophy” (3) – there follows necessarily that his politics could not be fused as one with an authentically revolutionary program, at the time defended in the international arena only by the *Sinistra*, (4) a strenuous effort continued throughout the second postwar without regard to the precarious condition in which it labored.

But why bother with Gramsci’s philosophical views today?

First of all, if only because Gramsci produced an interpretation/deformation of Marxism that was destined to have a large international resonance, well beyond its merits. These views are at the center of a well-orchestrated ideological wave that is given favorable acceptance in numerous social strata, to be found in advanced or developing societies. Studies on Gramsci and in *gramscismo* – the patterns of thinking he gave rise to – pop up like mushrooms everywhere. There is Gramsci the “workerist” and “councilarist,” the representative of the Third International and Bolshevization, the “anti-Stalinist”, the forerunner of the united fronts and national assemblies, the proponent of peasant alliances, the eulogizer of the petty-bourgeois intellectual. Additionally, there is Gramsci the philosopher, the *litterateur*; the anti-scientific Gramsci, the anti-materialist, the anti-American (or the “Americanist”: the consensus here is not really clear). In sum, a man for all seasons, and a model for innumerable counterrevolutionary ideologies – local, regional, national or international.

One thought that the Gramsci Institute of Rome would have been sufficient to spread the spores of *gramscismo* throughout the world. Not so. The

1. This is the continuation and conclusion of a two-part article, “The Laboratory of Counter-Revolution”, published in *Internationalist Papers* 10. Throughout the text, unless where otherwise possible, we translated from Italian editions of Marx, Engels, Lenin, as well as of our own texts. In quoting from these Italian editions, we gave the Italian title, followed by its translation into English.

2. Citing Amadeo Bordiga, at the Congress Gramsci announced, in so many words: “I give notice to the *Sinistra* that I finally adopted and share their view that to adhere to Marxist communism means not only agreeing to a view of economics, history, and politics, but accepting a vision, quite distinct from all others, of the entire material universe.” Cf. “Comunismo e conoscenza umana [Communism and Human Consciousness]” (1952), now in *Elementi dell’economia marxista* (Milano: Edizioni il programma comunista, 1971, 1991) p.113.

3. A. Gramsci, *Il materialismo storico e la filosofia di Benedetto Croce* [*Historical Materialism and the Philosophy of Benedetto Croce*], (Torin: Einaudi, 1949), p.87, henceforth referred to as *MS*. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations both from Gramsci and from the *Sinistra* (or from other Marxist classics) are from the Italian, in our translation.

4. The term “Left” has unfortunately undergone so many ma-

latest creation was the International Gramsci Society constituted in Rome in 1988, with offices in Italy and the US. It affirms that Gramscian thought can provide the most diverse schools of intellectual thought with a surprising commonality, even an identity, and the better if they are animated by the most disparate cerebral considerations. No surprise, therefore, that Havana boasts – and could it be otherwise? – a chair of “Gramscian Studies”! We don’t know if that desirous position has been filled, and suggest that the intellectual barons of numerous house-trained “lefts” apply immediately. Equally, we don’t find surprising, the proliferation of committees, conventions, institutes all devoted to the subject. All of this is not a sign of a rising revolutionary tide, we regret to add. On the contrary, it is the assassin’s voice of counterrevolutionary opportunism, dressed today in Gramscian ideology, and ready to stand tomorrow behind the fusillade against the insurgent proletariat.

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 *us*.

5. “A salient characteristic of Gramscian thought is its materialism.” L Maitan, *Attualità di Gramsci e politica comunista* (Schwarz: 1955), p. 9.

6. “E’ proprio solo stupidagine? [Is it only Stupidity?], *Avanti!*, September 10, 1920.

7. “L’unità nazionale [National Unity],” *Ordine Nuovo*, October 4, 1919.

8. According to statistics reported in the Italian journal *Il contemporaneo*, February 28, 1987, citing John Cammett, as of that date there were some 500 studies on Gramsci in the US, an indication “of the degree to which Gramsci has been accepted in American scientific circles at least as a ‘subject of historical research.’” We don’t doubt it. The little that is Marxist and revolutionary in Gramsci is not recognized in American academic circles.

Secondly, one must concern oneself with Gramsci because the recourse to his fixed philosophy, insultingly categorized by his epigones as “materialistic,” would disseminate (and is already disseminating) further confusion amongst the ranks of any proletariat arduously seeking to reestablish its doctrinal clarity. (5) For example, in searching to trace the Gramscian views of the historical role of the working class, one reads: “The working class is the only force capable of representing the interests of the Italian nation in the areas of liberty and international cooperation. [...] it is the only agency with the ability today to rescue Italy from the abyss into which it has been plunged [...] by capitalists greedy and hungry for personal riches and immense political power.” (6) And elsewhere: “Today, the proletariat is the ‘national’ class, the multitude of workers and peasants, of Italian workers who cannot permit the nation to fall to pieces, because the unity of the state is the organizational form of production and exchange constructed by Italian labor, [and it] is the patrimony of social wealth the proletariat wants to bring to the Communist International.” (7)

Don’t these formulations simply confuse the objectives of the bourgeois and proletarian revolution? Doesn’t this manner of presentation confound the bourgeois order of production, Italian or other, with a socialist economy which scorns all hymns to hyper-technology aiming for hyper-productivity, and instead will bring about a deflation of those sectors of modern production given to the manufacture of an overabundance of wasteful goods, at the moment that capitalist economy will have been abolished?

Thirdly, one must take up this matter because, notwithstanding what was said and will be supplemented later, the valorization of the role of Gramsci in the ranks of the international working-class movement has misled a number of activists who, not knowing or not having looked into the theoretical analyses from the early years of the Third International, see in him a courageous bulwark to Stalinism. (8) The “discovery” of Gramsci, particularly in the English-speaking countries, has centered around concepts of “hegemony,” “organic intellectual,” and “historic bloc.” Proponents of

these views are commonly found nestled in various academic departments given to discussion of sociology, literature, history, and structuralism, and their influence cannot be discounted. Even today there remain in Italy those who see him as the “principal theoretician of the Italian workers’ movement” in that he “sought to apply the rigors of materialism to assimilate and enrich Marxism,” an interpretation that belies what he did and obfuscates his true heritage. (9)

The stance in polemics that seeks to win by misrepresenting what has been said is not sound and we will not stoop to it; nor do we have to. Rather, we will make use of long citations from Gramsci so as to get to his original thought. In fact, we are quite sure that during the Red Biennial (1918-1920) Gramsci, on the cusp of the revolutionary upheaval then in process and beginning to open himself to revolutionary communism despite errors and hesitations, never intended that his unfortunate formulations should be employed, as they were a decade later by his followers, for the most outrageous class collaboration. Nonetheless, many of his original statements, which never even in error could have been written by a militant member of the *Sinistra*, were revealing of a tendency, of an incomprehension of the theory and practice of revolutionary struggle. In the years and decades that followed, these writings would provide the best of protective cover for an International already bent on enacting “socialism in one country” and entertaining alliances with the middle classes.

## 2. Gramsci’s “Fortune”

Gramsci’s postmortem “fortune” - and that of numerous publishing houses in various nations - rests on philosophical disquisitions in which he sought to improve or correct Marxism: or, at least, he thought so. Decades after his death, these views were taken up and drew substantial attention only because the genuine revolutionary program had been defeated on a world scale.

In the Western world the elements drawn to this involvement were found on the one hand in the labor aristocracy and in the intellectuality of an intelligentsia nourished by “left anti-fascism” views and, by necessity and self-identification, “non-party” loyalties. On the other hand, one found politically disoriented workers, along with multitudes of callow students accepting a skewed view of the history of past class struggles, given the absence of live struggles from which to learn. This in parallel with an anti-establishment and, later, an “anti-globalism”, revolt that saw no need for “fundamental principles” other than the “movement” itself, and therefore continued to view the future through a self-deluding *ad hoc* multi-class pacifism – also boisterously anti- and non-party.

In the “developing world”, the elements bestirring Gramsci’s influences are found in the various “national liberation” movements, in the politics of alliances, and in popular national parties, even in what is called, not sur-

9. Cf. “Il marxismo rivoluzionario di Antonio Gramsci [The Revolutionary Marxism of Antonio Gramsci]”, *Bandiera Rossa*, 69, 1997, p. 75. It should be noted that, along with others of Trotskyist origins, in this essay Gramsci’s heritage is totally endorsed as an integral part of what is erroneously indicated as revolutionary Marxism. The article closely associates Gramsci with the tactics of the democratic revolutionaries (councils) as well as with the alliances of the middle classes. The petty tactics he employed to carry out, on orders from the International, the liquidation of the *Sinistra* leadership of the PCd’I are presented as brilliant examples of Gramscian “thinking” and “initiative,” based on the fundamental texts approved by the first four congresses of the International, whilst overlooking the contribution made by the *Sinistra* to the Conditions of Admission to that body; one has to have some cheek to mention the Second Congress, where the international communist movement attained a peak performance in restoring a rigorous Marxism, and all counter to the inter-classist tripe that Trotskyists have subsequently maintained. The text obscures the fact that, after having maneuvered to create a faction in 1923, from 1924 Gramsci turned against the *Sinistra* charging it with factionalism, when, in reality, the latter represented the majority of the party. It affirms that the united-front tactic, the very same that had brilliantly contributed to a terrifying succession of proletarian tragedies in Germany leading to a subsequent downfall of all the workingclass political organizations, was Gramsci’s way of strategically rearming the Italian party. It justifies Bolshevikization, of which Gramsci was the diligent applicator, maintaining that given the heterogeneity of the Comintern, in the final analysis a clarification was needed, which saw the in-

→ Introduction of methods associated with Stalin, but never informing the reader that such “clarification” was never again used. The article desires to create the impression that Gramsci was opposed to the policies of party and International in the crucial time of 1930, while remaining silent on all the hesitations that the International had exhibited about the German question, as well as on Gramsci’s “off the rails” views on the Russian question and the “socialism in one country” debate. On all these questions, the *Sinistra* handled itself correctly, at a time when Gramsci enthusiastically followed all the zigzagging directions coming from Moscow. After these falsifications of Gramsci’s political actions, the brochure turns to Gramsci’s philosophical views, and it does so, as we have seen, in a manner respectful of “historical reconstruction. “One can not ever be too scrupulous,” they aver (p. 37). We cite the following relating to hegemony as an example of their practice. This excerpt from Gramsci is well known: here Lenin is supposed to have “advanced philosophy as philosophy to the degree he was able to advance doctrine and political practice. The creation of a hegemonic apparatus, to the degree it creates new ideological terrain, signifies a change of consciousness and of the methods of awareness, [and] is a fact of knowledge, a philosophical fact.” (MS, p. 39) Similarly well known is the fact that in Lenin (*Two Tactics*, 1905) the concept of hegemony simply indicates that with the democratic (bourgeois) revolution, the urban proletariat will exercise a leadership role with the peasants. But the mere reference of Gramsci to Lenin was and is used by sympathetic writer/s to joyously proclaim that on this question no one can oppose Lenin to Gramsci! (pp.52-53).

10. This monstrous marriage is particularly popular in Brazil.

prisingly, the “theology of liberation; (10) as well as in those movements that struggle rifle in hand, yes, but for objectives clearly bourgeois. In the present circumstances, this means deluding oneself in being able to divert some financial crumbs from the predatory states to the victims. In these past months, Argentina and Nicaragua are only the most graphic examples of the end result of those processes.

The “reality of gramscismo” does not reside, therefore, in its ability to foresee a movement leading to the overthrow of world capitalism. On the contrary, it is founded in the heterogeneous compilation of ideas, reflections, and considerations whose keystone consists of anti-materialism in philosophy, voluntarism and spontaneity in politics.

Contrary to what is alleged by the sympathetic press, Gramsci’s “fortune” – a misfortune for international revolution – is not tied to internationalism in his thinking. The very opposite is the case: the elements of Gramsci that are crowned with success are those that derive from his non-internationalism, from his narrow views of local problems: the Italian South, the intellectuals, the peasantry, the Vatican *und so weiter*. The very elements that every local movement around the world will adapt to its own needs or to its own locally opportunistic tendencies, thus transforming the ideology of Gramsci into a spurious internationalism, whose base of support – monolithic and unitary, regardless of formal and other differences – remains the petty bourgeoisie of the middle class. In all instances, these intellectuals reinterpret theories meant for the proletariat to fit their own ends, using the latest vogue to transform them to movements that “concretely advance,” that “better develop the process of a unitary restructuring of the forces of the left,” and so on.

In this lies Gramsci’s sad reality. Under the false label of Marxism, he provided recipes for salsas of all types and for all tastes, and the results were lamentable. His “historic bloc” laid out under the flag of the democratic national popularity inevitably evolved toward the most opportunistic of class collaboration; his “hegemony” was seen by the most avid self-seekers as the antithesis to the dictatorship of the proletariat; under the mystifying term of “anti-economism,” he concealed his own incomprehension of economic determinism, the very element that revolutionaries defend in historical materialism; and his “revolutionary ethic” was applied merely to a social reform or economic change. In the following pages we will quote and confront Gramsci’s “philosophy” as he expounded it in the *Quaderni del carcere* (*Prison Notebooks*), although the elements that constitute his philosophy are his indelible signature and are to found in all his works, early or later, young or old.

It’s likely that were Gramsci here today, the Gramsci momentarily allied with the *Sinistra* in the early years of the PCd’I, the Gramsci of the great strikes of 1919-1920, *that* Gramsci would be properly indignant at the uses his heirs have put his ideas to. And yet, the first to consciously produce

enormous distortions of Marxism through the use of non-materialistic bases was he himself. We have in mind not only Gramsci of the prison manuscripts, but Gramsci of the first hour, of those great class battles at the end of the First great war. For a fact, it follows that from those theoretically confused expressions, which conceded so much to the class enemy, there would emerge the dominant policies championed by all the Stalinist parties, becoming their sycophantic executors before flip-flopping to a convergence with Western democracy.

### 3. What is the Philosophy of Praxis?

Gramsci did not use the term “philosophy of praxis” to deceive the fascist censors and as a substitute for “historic materialism”. Instead, as critics have noted, (11) it was introduced to avoid too compromising a terminology that sounded to him to be “too intimately associated with a deterministic and degraded conception of Marxism.”

Hence, the original “philosophy of praxis,” what we stubbornly insist on continuing to call the “historic dialectics of materialism”, was not “the brilliant flash of philosophical thought” maturing in the young Marx of *The Criticism of Hegel’s ‘Philosophy of Right’*. Instead it is the consolidation of the revolutionary theory of the proletariat resting on the uninterrupted number of past revolutions and is applied to the latest of the relations of production within the body of class society.

As it were, it is absolutely false that the philosophy of praxis – that is, Marxism – is intended to lead the masses to a superior form of living, which is no more than a cerebral conception going back to the old Angelo Tasca. The contents of Marxism, assuming that it can be synthesized, is not encapsulated in an ideological expression, whose superiority amongst other things is justified by a better use of the dialectic and of formal logic, to lead a proletariat enslaved by a wage system. Its essence lies in confronting history with a war cry against the entire structure and substance of modern society, in both its material and ideological forms.

Precisely such a voluntary and intellectual deformation and reduction of Marxism is expressed by the ideology of Gramsci with its various petty projects, “the construction of a mass-based intellectual bloc,” and so on, that emerged in the second postwar, with the class-collaboration politics of the workers’ parties, characterized by their so-called “mass” character. Their tactical warhorses were: workers’ culture, the development of participatory democracy, the improvement of the civics and ethics of politics, gradualism, and voluntarism. Better still, if all these elements can be made to concur on the level of the individual voter. For, above all, one must *never compromise* with the sacredness of the “ballot,” even if the class is dead and buried, and the kingfishers who have usurped history continue their tranquil fornication with bourgeois power!

→ Cf. C.N. Coutinho, “Democrazia e socialismo in Gramsci [Democracy and Socialism in Gramsci]”, in G. Baratta e G. Liguori (a cura di), *Gramsci da un secolo all’altro* [Gramsci from One Century to Another], (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1999), pag. 39.

11. See R. Mondolfo, *Intorno a Gramsci e alla filosofia della prassi* [On Gramsci and the Philosophy of Praxis], (Milano: Critica Sociale, 1955), p. 31.

In this fashion Marxism is reduced to “a matter of conscience,” applicable to all demands - the demands of the peasant owners, and of the landless who aspire to ownership of a miserable homestead that would render them slaves for a lifetime. There was not one national communist party that has not, in its quest for market-place popularity, stooped itself to these demands. They raised the flag of people oppressed by foreign capital, only to liberate and encase them in additional exploitation by other capital waving the national colors. The warhorse of communist and social-democratic movements of all climes was/is the “national question,” but completely watered down. Worst of all are the platforms of those intellectuals who have opened themselves to every eclecticism, to every compromise, to all alliances, to all “historic blocs,” for the sole purpose of masking their lurid identity as future lackeys of the bourgeois order, and to that end are suckered by the parliamentary parties of “the left.”

Hence our opposition to all cultural revolutions, from the junkets and street theatre lampoons of Europe – Students Against the Authoritarian Academy, Women Against Phallocratic Domination – to the more serious and armed counterparts in Asia. We affirm that such “cultural” dishes will always leave the proletariat famished at the table, will remain circumscribed by the national bourgeoisie, and have nothing communist about them. For too long the world’s proletariat has awaited its own liberation from the hands of other classes, and for too long has it sacrificed itself to the revolutions of others. The proletariat’s theory and culture is embedded in the historic program of the class party which no bourgeois culture can surrogate. For two hundred years, the bourgeoisie has planted its culture over the entire planet. It remains for the armed proletariat to carry out the historic task and destroy it. The basis of proletarian culture that we recognize at this historic turning point are those expressed by arms in the hands of the class, and turned first of all those against all who define power in terms of a “revolution of conscience,” of “cultural conquests,” etc. The proletariat to whom we turn, and in whom alone we spy the progress of history, is made up of illiterate barbarians who will become men and women when they give their heads and hearts to the service of Communism.

#### 4. A Posthumous Dialogue

In the course of his 1922-1923 sojourn in Moscow, Gramsci quite possibly may have had contact with the works of the Menshevik philosopher A. Bogdanov. In the latter’s works, one encounters reflections that appear to strike an echo in the *Quaderni del carcere*, amongst them that true Gramscian warhorse, “proletarian culture”. As is known, this is the same Bogdanov thrashed by Lenin in *Materialism and Empiricriticism* for his continuing slide toward an explicit form of objective idealism.

Somewhat apart from Bogdanov, Gramsci, who is entirely taken by his rediscovery of Marxism by way of Croce and, at times, Bergson, places himself one step below Russian empiriocriticism. He is rather the exponent of a school of immanent subjectivity, who by means of a conjuring trick has the natural world disappear only to reappear in the “consciousness” of the subject, be it historical or a-historical. Here we are dealing with one of the many contemporary philosophical schools that serve to defend bourgeois ideology from the assault of the proletariat, expressed at its highest point by the dialectics of historical materialism. The bourgeoisie’s spiritual withdrawal from all ideologi-

cal forefronts, following its revolutionary ascension culminating in the mid-19th century, is very evident in philosophy and science, and Gramsci is merely one of the many false idols that misled the proletariat of the 20th century along the painful road of defeat. Erroneously identified as “the founder of the PCI” by a hundred charlatan historians most of whom knew better, Gramsci clearly stated his aversion to Marxist materialism in a thousand ways and with a maximum of emphasis while acclaiming idealism and subjectivism. Therefore, we have here a philosophy that cannot avoid falling into voluntarism, and turns the party into a *part of the class* from which it distinguishes itself only because animated by the “sacred fire” of consciousness. A philosophy that by opposing will to matter, and historicized subjective consciousness to external reality, becomes a bloodless dualism in which the former is in no manner a reflection of the latter. This is the “reversal of the praxis,” to be sure! But it is simultaneously “the reversal of the praxis of revolutionary Marxism!” As summarized in one of our texts:

“Experience substitutes for matter, and the dialectic (which for Herzen was the ‘algebra of revolution’) is decisively altered. Already limited and circumscribed by Hegel through the addition of a metaphysical limitation (the State as superior to the contradictions of civil society), thus consecrating the insuperability of the capitalist world, dialectic is thus replaced by an ‘innocuous evolution,’ much like what Marx identified as the ‘shitty positivism’ of Comte and Spencer. Or it is debased, as in Proudhon and in the revisionism from Bernstein on, to the shopkeepers’ ‘double entry’ of transactions ‘good’ and ‘bad. Or finally it is mortified and castrated in Croce’s neo-idealism, which in opposition to Hegel negates the dialectics of nature and denies that it develops through contrasts or opposites, postulating instead a peaceful and ascetic dialectics of ‘distincts.’” (12)

But let us now look more closely at the central features of Gramsci’s vision.

a. *The Trinitarian Formula of Saint Antonio: empirio-monism, immanen-tism, and subjectivism.*

Asks Gramsci: “What are phenomena? Are they something objective, that exists in itself and for itself, or are they qualities that man has distinguished in consequence of his practical interests [...] that is, from the necessity to find order in the world and to write and classify things? [...] Posited the affirmation that what we know of things is nothing other than ourselves, our needs and our interests, that is, that our knowledge is our superstructure [...] it is difficult to avoid that we might think of something real beyond this knowledge.” (MS, pp. 40-41)

Further on a bit, citing the famous passage from the *Critique of Political Economy*, according to which the juridical rapports and the nature of the state cannot be understood in of themselves or as an evolved form of the hu-

12. *Storia della Sinistra Comunista* [History of the Communist Left], Vol.II (Milano: Edizioni il programma comunista, 1982), p. 189. Henceforth *SD-SC II*.

man spirit, but only in their relationship to the material relations of existence, commenting in his own manner, Gramsci asks himself: “But is this awareness limited to the conflict between the material forces of production and the [social] rapports of production [...] or does it refer to all knowable knowledge? [...] In that case what does the term ‘monism’ mean? Certainly not materialism nor idealism, but contrary identities in a concrete, historical setting, to wit, human activity (history-spirit) in the concrete, indissolubly connected to a certain organized ‘matter’ (historicized), of a nature transformed by man...” (MS, p. 44)

The above quote clearly underscores that Gramsci, never having abandoned his youthful idealism, limits himself to accepting a reality “external” to man only to the degree it has been “*historicized*,” meaning only what has been lived by man across human experience. Drawn further, this means that, before man and outside of man, reality in the form of matter which has its own history and its own evolutionary autonomy, and even as a social reality, *does not exist!* “Knowledge,” the cognitive act of knowing, is made possible only to the degree that act corresponds to the man’s intervention and “transformation” of nature. If you apply this vision to the class struggle, it’s a bit clearer why Gramsci remains locked in a vision of revolution that is spontaneous and voluntarist. For him, the class becomes revolutionary only when it “understands” its historic destiny, a knowledge acquired thanks to “culture” and to its role in the productive process.

By contrast, in the proper Marxist view, strenuously defended by the *Sinistra* in the PCd’I, in the halls the Third International, and finally during the difficult restoration of theory undertaken across the last half century, will and consciousness are attributed to the party. But this view also “denies that it can be formed from the concourse of the consciousness and will of individuals of a group, and that the group can in any way consider itself outside the physical, economic and social determinants of the entire class.”(13) And likewise: “The party is not formed on the basis of individual consciousness. It not only is impossible for each and every proletarian to be conscious of the class doctrine, much less master it intellectually; but such a thing is not even possible for each party militant taken separately. Such a guarantee cannot even be given by the leaders, but only exists in the organic unity of the party. Therefore, just as we reject every theory of individual action or of mass action independent of a precise organizational tissue, we also refuse any conception of the party as an assemblage of erudite, enlightened, or conscious individuals. Instead, the party is a tissue, a system, which has the organic function within the proletarian class of fulfilling the revolutionary tasks in all their aspects and through all their complex phases”. (14)

Not so with Gramsci, who scanted the party to give preference to the immediate class bodies, i.e., the factory council, which he confused with the Soviet, but through which he hoped for workers’ control of production. Thus for all of his life Gramsci would find good reason to see in the work-

13. “Teoria e azione nella dottrina marxista [Theory and Action in Marxist Doctrine],” in *Partito e classe* (Milano: Edizioni il programma comunista, 1972), p.121.

14. “The Fundamental Theses of the Party (1951),” in *Internationalist Papers* 1, May 1992, p. 55.



er, not the wage laborer who produces surplus value, but a producer who is also a “technician,” a responsible creator of social wealth, and who, from within the capitalistic system and thanks to the forms of workers’ associations to which the Second International was so inclined, was getting conscious of himself and of his powers. “The [workers’] association has as principal goal to educate disinterestedly: honesty, work, initiative become goals of themselves, leading to intellectual joy, morality amongst people, and no privileges of sorts. The wealth that each can produce to the amount above the needs of immediate living belongs to the collective, is social wealth [...]. Work has become a moral duty, activity is joy, [and] not a cruel struggle.”(15)

From the fantasized premises of this “historization,” or remaking of reality, a truly furtive manner of reinterpreting reality as a re-creation by man in the process of becoming historic, one moves to a type of idealism, whether vulgar or not is of no consequence, but with which Gramsci outlines the contours of his philosophical speculation. “Not only is the philosophy of praxis connected to immanentism [ i.e., for Gramsci, reality is beholden to the mind of man, of God for the theist], but also to the subjective concept of reality, to the degree that it is inverted [and] explained as a historic fact, as ‘the subjectivist history of a social group...’” (MS, p. 191) In this view, all is encapsulated: “Without man, what is the sense of the universe?”, he asks in anguish. (MS, 55) And continues: “Without the activities of man, the creator of all values including the scientific, what would ‘objectivity mean’? A chaos, that is, nothing, a void [...] for, in reality, if one can imagine that man does not exist, then we could not imagine language and thought” – which evidently are for Gramsci the objective reality: we are not far here from the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum!* Again, we find understandable that here, as elsewhere, Gramsci confirms all his subjectivism by identifying it with his objectivism –i.e., the existence of a world outside man – as a creative act, almost godlike.

On the bases of these presuppositions, it follows that “East and West are arbitrary and conventional constructions, that is, historic, since, outside of real history, East and West everywhere are identical at the same point in time...” (MS. 144) With this logic, one would have to concede that *E-unice viridis*, a small and innocuous sea animal, which for millions of years reproduces with Swiss-like precision in Polynesian atolls during the fourth quarter of the October and November moons, a creature that cannot even be considered a *lusus naturae*, joke of nature (since it does not enjoy autonomous life), is to be set apart as a “moment of arbitrary and conventional construction, that is, historic”. On the other hand, with Gramsci, something is real to the degree it is rational, meaning thinkable by man and socialized into reality: “rationality and reality are identical.” (MS, 144) From all this jargon, it becomes clear we are not only distancing ourselves from a history of the modes of production, but also from a possible informative history of nature.

15. “Individualismo e collettivismo [Individualism and Collectivism]”, *Il grido del popolo*, March 9, 1918.

And finally, after having ground up into one heap both structure and superstructure, or, according to the circumstances, having made the latter dominant, and negating the principle of causality – which he reduced to a miserly and failing logical-rhetorical expedient of a “vulgar” materialism – , Gramsci concluded that a social science cannot analyze the historic course of a mode of production, since “a structural phase [that is, a mode of production] is open to an actual study and analysis only after it has completed all of its development, not during the actual process, except as hypothesis and clearly stating that we deal with a hypotheses...” (MS, 97)

How distant we have come from Marxism as a theory in itself and, at one and the same time, a scientific economy, a science of capitalist economy, an interpretation of human history, the theory of historic development on the basis of dialectical materialism, a program of revolutionary action, and a definition of communist society! How distant we are from the affirmation found in the “Preface” of the first edition of *Das Kapital*, which describes the methodology of the study and analysis of capitalistic economics, of its workings in the rapports of production and exchange, “and of these laws themselves, of these tendencies working with iron necessity towards inevitable results [...] the ultimate aim of this work [being] to lay bare the economic law of motion of modern society...” (16)! How remote from the clear and well-known *Sinistra* pronouncement: “With every decisive historical development, we have continued to emphasize that, just as natural phenomena are handled through experimental research, so the conditions of the human environment, economy, sociology, history must be treated with the same scientific concern, thereby eliminating revelation or speculation, and replacing ‘natural philosophy’ with science. All arbitrary suppositions and transcendental or speculative precepts are eliminated.” (17)

How close Gramsci remained to Croce’s idealism was indicated in our statement from a half-century ago: “For Croce, historiography is possible, but it is reduced to an endless registration of incessant facts, and he abhors all consideration of causality. Croce’s historiography is a meteorology of human events, which prohibits all prognostications and all predictions of weather. Hence its antithesis to Marxism, its horror at the pretense of indicating the events of the morrow.” (18)

*b. “Dead philosophical idealism grips live Marxism.” (Lenin)*

Wrote Bogdanov: “Truth is an ideological form, an organized form of experience [...]. The objective nature of the physical world consists in the fact that it exists not only for me individually, but for all, or that, depending on my conviction, it has for all the same determining significance it has for me [...]. Generally speaking, the physical world is a socially coordinated, socially harmonized experience; in a word, a *socially organized experience...*” (19) And he continued: “We have admitted that the same ‘physical

16. K. Marx, “Preface to the First German Edition of *Capital*”, in *The Portable Karl Marx* (Penguin Books, 1983), p. 434, 435.

17. “Sul metodo dialettico [On the Dialectical Method]” (1950), in *Elementi dell’economia marxista*, cit., p. 99.

18. “Comunismo e conoscenza umana [Communism and Human Knowledge]” (1952), in *Ibid.*, p. 117.

19. A.A. Bagdanov, *Empirionismo*, cited by Lenin in *Materialismo and empiriocriticismismo* (Riuniti: 1963), p.117. The italics are in Bogdanov.

nature' is a *derivative* of the immediate complexes (to which 'psychic' coordinates belong), that it is a reflection of these complexes in other complexes similar to them, but of a more complex nature (in the socially organized experience of human beings)...” (20) Bogdanov also critically analyzed the same passage from *Critique of Political Economy* that, as noted above, had drawn Gramsci's attention. But note what he, Bogdanov, said: “the old definition of historic monism, without ceasing to be essentially correct, no longer fully satisfies us [...]. In their struggle for existence men cannot but unite through their *consciousness*; without consciousness there is no social life. Hence in all its manifestations, social life is a *conscious* [and] *psychic life*. Sociability is indivisible from consciousness. *Social being and social consciousness, in the preciseness that these terms convey, coincide.*” (21)

The consequence of this view – that truth is a form which organizes human experience – necessarily means that there can be no reality outside of any human experience, be it subjective, social, or “historic” *a la Gramsci*. And since science is the organized experience of the human society of labor, there follows the need to establish the foundations of a *proletarian culture*. Further, given that at the moment science as an organizer of social labor is dominated by the bourgeoisie, the proletariat must take its possession even before the revolution! Isn't this another case of *gramscismo* of the first hour? More clearly, when translated into the political action by the class, this leads more or less to the “workers' control of production by means of factory councils.” Meanwhile, the power of the bourgeois state enforcing social relations remains untouched. What greater example can there be of the invariance of opportunism?

### c. Marx, Engels, and Lenin Teaching.

In *The German Ideology*, after spending two pages describing four fundamentals of any economy (i.e., creation of immediate means of life, production of new needs, reproduction of the individuals, and formation of material ties amongst those inside each specific mode of production and exchange), Marx and Engels continued, “Only now, [...] do we find that man also possesses ‘consciousness’ [...]. Consciousness is therefore from the very beginning a social product [...]. Consciousness is at first, of course, merely consciousness concerning the immediate sensuous environment and consciousness of the limited connection with other persons and things outside the individual who is growing self-conscious. At the same time it is consciousness of nature, which first appears to men as a completely alien, all-powerful and unassailable force...” (22)

That the “young Marx” is pleasing to the diligent Neo-Kantians of yesteryear and today is usually explained on the basis of a “coquettishness” (23) with regard to Hegel, but one, we must hastily add, that led Marx to overthrow the entire edifice of German idealism. How does one

20. *Ibid.*, p.224.

21. *Ibid.*, p.317.

22. K. Marx & F. Engels, *The German Ideology*, in *The Portable Karl Marx*, cit., pp.173, 174.

23. There is no self-styled agnostic Marxist “philosopher” who has not underlined with pleasure the alleged “concessions” that Marx is said to have made to idealistic Hegelism. To clarify things one has to allow Marx to speak. “How is it that men have put these illusions [about religion] into their heads? These very questions opened for German theoreticians the road to a materialist conception of the world, which is not free of presuppositions but sees the materialist presuppositions as such and is, it alone, the truly critical conception of the world. This was already indicated in *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbucher*, in the writings of *For a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of the Right*, and in *The Jewish Question*. Since they were written using philosophical phraseology, traditional philosophical expressions that slipped into those writings, such as ‘human essence,’ ‘species,’ etc., they gave German theoreticians the wished for occasion to misunderstand the real course of ideas and to believe that it was a matter only of giving a new attire once again to their worn theoretical vestments.” *L'Ideologia tedesca* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1958), pp. 228-229.

reconcile this “theory” with the thousand youthful pages in which we read of his explicit break with all the philosophies of yesterday, today, and tomorrow? Or with that other page by a not-so-young Marx: “The concrete totality, as totality of thought, as thought in concrete, is *in fact* a product of thought, of understanding, but never of a concept that generates itself and thinks outside or above intuition and representation, but rather the elaboration in concepts of intuition and representation [...]. The real subject remains, both before and after, firm in its independence outside of the mind”?(24)

And Lenin wrote: “Bogdanov’s [and Gramsci’s] negation of objective reality is subjectivism and agnosticism [...]. [It] is a radically false idealistic definition, and the physical world exists independent of men and human experience...” (25) And again: “A philosophy that teaches that nature itself is a derivative is a clerical philosophy, pure and simple. ..If nature is derived, it follows that it cannot but arise from something larger, richer, vaster, more potent than nature, from something that exists, since ‘to create’ nature one must exist independent of nature. Hence something exists *outside* of nature which also *creates* nature. In the common language this is called God. The philosophical idealists have always tried to modify this term, to make it more abstract, more nebulous and at the same time – to make it more probable – closer to the ‘psychic,’ like a ‘complex given’, the given that does not need to be proven. The absolute idea, the universal spirit, the universal will, ‘*the universal substitution*’ of the physical by the psychic, is always the same idea, presented in various manners. Every man knows, and science makes it the subject of investigation, the idea, the spirit, the psychic as a normal function of a human brain; to detach these functions of the organized matter in a purposeful fashion, to transform them into universal functions and in a general abstraction, then to ‘substitute’ this abstraction for all of nature is the extravagance of idealistic philosophy. It means scorning the natural sciences...” (26)

Moreover, “this theory of the identity of social being and of social consciousness [in Gramsci, it is “historicized reality,” but it is the same indigestible sauce] is *a total absurdity* and *a totally reactionary* philosophy [...]. Social being and social consciousness are not identical, no more than being in general and consciousness in general. From the fact that men enter into reciprocal relations in society as conscious beings, *it does not follow* that their social consciousness is the same as their social being [...]. Men who enter into society *are not aware* of the rapports that are created by them, of the laws by which these rapports are developed [...]. Social consciousness *reflects* social being: this is the essence of Marxist doctrine [...]. In general consciousness reflects being: this is a theory common to all materialism. It is not possible not to see the direct and *indissoluble* tie with this materialistic thesis: social consciousness *reflects* social being.” (27) Is further comment necessary?

24. K.Marx, *Per la critica dell'economia politica* [For a Critique of Political Economy] (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1957), pp. 188-189.

25. Lenin, *Materialismo ed empiriocriticismo*, cit., p.120.

26. *Ibid.*, pp.224-225.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 317-319. For this reason, all the pro-Gramscian commentators consider *Materialism and Empirocriticism* little more than rubbish. According to Gerratana, its harsh polemics condemns it to being amongst Lenin’s most “disharmonious” works: cf. V. Gerratana, *Teoria del materialismo storico* [Theory of Historical Materialism] (Florence: La Nuova Italia: 1977), p. X. According to Tamburrano, Lenin falls into a divinization of matter: cf. G. Tamburrano, *Antonio Gramsci* (Milano: SugarCo., 1977), p. 237. Or, to be charitable, Lenin is caught between the contradiction of a subjective voluntarism of his political works and a gnostic objectiveness of the philosophical ones: cf. *Ibid.*, n 244.

## 5. Behind the Philosophy of Praxis, the Hidden Conservative Praxis of Decadent Bourgeois Philosophy.

The “fecund osmosis” between the Gramscian re-elaborations of history and Croceian idealism to which Gramscian views are traceable leads to a repudiation of determinism and every form of economic prognostication. Properly speaking, with historical materialism having been turned into the “philosophy of praxis”, proletarian thinking (?) absorbs what remains vital from the ideology of the dominant classes, and the dialogue closes with the reaffirmation of the values typical of the man: liberty. The opposition that Gramsci invokes at every step between “materialism” and “dialectics” has only one import, which he attempts to clarify often. He invokes dialectics *against* the world of nature so as to grant to the subjective world, to the “human” world, to thought, a status of being both autonomous and antithetic.

But the elimination of materialism is not an easy task. Marx spoke of vulgar materialism (and of vulgar economy) to identify those movements that sprang up everywhere after the bourgeois revolutions in order to serve social conservatism. One found it in the scientific materialism of positivism, the materialism of Comte, Ardigò and Spencer. This was the physiological materialism that attributed all to the individual, that “explained” society by a resort to psychology, and psychology to physiology. Therefore, it remained a philosophy that fell back upon itself, in which there was no place for an analysis of the rapports between individual and society, between individual and the class.

But Marx spoke also of classical materialism, the findings of the Encyclopedists. That was the philosophical school of the revolutionary bourgeoisie in its struggle against every manifestation of fideism in the material world and spiritualism in the social world. On this subject, we wrote in 1958:

“But the victory of capitalist society brings these classical doctrinal developments to a stop; it reduces economic science to vulgar economics, concealing the extortion of surplus value and surplus labor in the same manner that it reduces the classical materialism of Diderot and D’Alembert to a vulgar philosophy that does not affect bourgeois domination, and defends economic oppression after having condemned the same in the areas of culture and law [...] The difference between the two materialisms does not rest on the fabricated view that Marx may have decamped from monism to establish the questionable parity between nature and man, a form of neo-dualism, but on the fundamental criterion that we don’t rely on the inaccessible determination that plays within the single individual and his personal mind; we don’t seek the empty phantasm of ‘personality’, but found the relationship on the material conditions of a social community, with all of its manifestations and historical developments. On these grounds for good reason and with an abundance of evidence we affirm that the influence of the individual on the social

event is nil, and that history and human sociology must be taken as one of the areas of analysis in which the knowledge of nature is arranged, without this distinction and separation being assigned a pre-eminent value above all others. In this sense, it is correct to say that in Marxism the science of human society is to be found in that of material conditions, and in fact the elaboration of the second must of necessity precede the first. (28)

The arguments made by Gramsci's idealism used the expurgated body of dialectics to eliminate the body of materialism, in particular historical materialism as social science. The "historicization" of social events consists in fact in their historic actualization undertaken by society, by social man who is the protagonist of his own history. As a consequence, the philosophy of praxis is a philosophy that is also a policy and a policy that is also a philosophy. "One is surprised", Gramsci maintains, "that the nexus between the idealistic affirmation that reality in the world is the creation of the human spirit and the affirmation that the historicity and the frailty of all the ideologies on part of the philosophy of praxis [...] has never been affirmed and handled properly" (HM, 139). It is in fact stupefying how all the idealists masked as "Marxists" pretend to base their philosophical fantasies on non other than the historic materialism of Marx, the Marx of the "theses on Feuerbach". And it is in the III Thesis in which Gramsci would like to find confirmation of his own ideas, there where it is written, "circumstances are changed by men and [...] the educator himself must be educated [...] The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-change can be comprehended and rationally understood only as *revolutionary practice*."(29)

When Marx wrote his famous Theses, the time had come to settle once and for all with Hegelian idealism. It required overturning the philosophical tower conceiving the world as arising from the ideas, by tracing them back, materially speaking, to the primacy of concrete acts of life, of production and reproduction, of rapports amongst men and amongst social classes. The insistence on human activity in Marx has nothing to do with making man the maker and originator of an environment which is separate and dependent on him, since Marxism is a monistic conception of reality. It declares revolutionary war, and this is waged by one historic class and is not the expression of ideas reflected by unknown social rapports. Therefore, no compromise with idealism, but turning it right side up. Dialectics cannot be made to serve in order to substitute man for nature.

"One must not intend that dialectics consists in saying: the economy makes politics, but then politics [...] in its own fashion remakes the economy. This is an inversion of theses and not the synthesis of a fecund thesis and antithesis. Marx said that men make their own history: and this is on old objection by feeble-minded objectors. Men surely make their own history, with their hands and feet, even with mouths, and with arms in hand; materially men *make* it, but what we deny is that they make it *with their minds*, or that they are able to build it [...] on a model or a plan fully

28. "La teoria della funzione primaria del partito politico, sola custodia e salvezza della energia storica del proletariato [The Theory of the Primary Function of the Political Party, Sole Custodian and Salvation of the Historic Energy of the Proletariat]", *Il programma comunista*, n. 21, 1958.

29. In *The Portable Marx*, cit., p. 156.

*worked out*. They make it, yes, but not as they had hoped, had foreseen or desired” (30).

Therefore, Gramsci’s philosophy of praxis is a repudiation of all determinism. It denies that Marx defined his thinking as materialistic; it posits the unity of structure and superstructure; it believes that objective reality cannot be demonstrated without a recourse to man and his history. Tamburrano correctly noted, (31) that from such premises there would emerge a new and very different Marxist philosophy: “Objective always signifies ‘humanly objective,’ which can correspond exactly to ‘historically objective,’ that is, objective would stand for ‘universally objective.’” One cannot deny, Tamburrano concluded, that this synthesis that stands for the “overcoming” of both materialism and idealism ends on a position very close to idealism, and leads to a subjective conception that disassociates itself from (Soviet?!) dialectic materialism (32). “From a radical criticism of every determinism, there derives the affirmation of the possibility, and not the inevitability, of a new society. Socialism is reduced to an outcome which is only possible” (33).

On the other hand, having overturned the dialectic rapport between structure and superstructure and reset them on idealistic bases, the philosophy of praxis arrived at its logical conclusion: that “consciousness” and “education” pose man in an active reaction to structure. In so doing, one affirms “the unity of the process of the real,” a dynamic synthesis of subject-object; the revolution occurs simultaneously in the mode of production and exchange and in the head and consciousness of men. The class evaporates amidst the fumes of the “philosophy of praxis,” and Sorel’s “historic bloc,” in which the “material forces are the content and the ideologies the form” (HM, p. 49) precisely caught “this unity sustained by the philosophy of praxis” (HM, 231).

Gramsci’s criticism followed this logical procession: 1) in the Theses on Feuerbach Marx resolves the antinomy “thing in itself/thing for us” in the sense of the historization of consciousness; that is, consciousness develops in the course of human history. From this exact consideration, Gramsci, performing a 180 degree inversion, concluded that 2) the object of consciousness is also “historicized”, is itself the product of social evolution; therefore it cannot exist outside of human history, and, *tout court*, outside of man; from this would come 3) the “overcoming” of historical materialism, in the sense that object and subject come to coincide, and the coincidence occurs exactly in history.

We can arrive at the same result – Gramsci’s idealism – through a *a posteriori* demonstration: that it to say, starting from the affirmation common to Gramsci and all the “immediatists” and “voluntarists,” who believe that socialism is first of all an intellectual and cultural conquest by the proletariat, first within the productive process, and then in the general movement of society. There are numerous passages in Gramsci, clearly derived

30. *Ibid.*

31. G. Tamburrano, *Op. cit.*. Especially pp. 228-275, to see what he makes of *gramscismo*.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 243.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 252.

from Tasca, in which one finds that thought. For example: “Thus, there is a struggle for objectivity, to liberate oneself from partial and fallacious ideologies, and this is the same struggle for the unification of mankind” (HM. 142). Or as regards the much invoked “collective popular will”, the work of the latest demiurge: “The modern Prince [*the Party, in Gramsci’s words*] must be and cannot but be other than the announcer and organizer of an intellectual and moral reform, which means preparing the grounds for a further development of the collective national popular, leading up to the establishment of a wholly superior modern civilization”. (34)

But not only culture will redeem mankind. It will be able to do this only through the class party, all of whose members must be considered intellectuals, because the real, final function that Gramsci assigns to the revolutionary party is “directive and organizational, that is, educational, that is, intellectual” (35). Now, one case is Lenin’s proper treatment in *What Is To Be Done?* where he borrows from Kautsky the view that socialist consciousness is imported into the class struggle from the outside, and this is done above all thanks to the action of bourgeois intellectuals. This compelling argument was used by Lenin to oppose and head off a dangerous “workerist” and “spontaneous” deviation developing in the young Russian revolutionary movement at the end of the 19th century. It is something else to give the class party the task of importing culture into the class, an idealistic conception that reflects an erroneous analysis of the rapport between party and class and is diametrically opposed to the Leninist vision and to Marxism in general. “The greater is the *spontaneous surge of the masses*, the more the movement grows, all the more there increases – in a manner incomparably more rapid – the need for consciousness in the theoretical, political, and organizational activities of social democracy [read: communist party]” (36). In actual history, the masses are moved into spontaneous action by the pressure emerging from the economic and social crisis; acting as the conscience of the masses, the role of the party is not a didactic one, but a leading one. The lack of preparation by the Italian party at that time (1923-1926) – and of its falsely majority faction, the Gramscian faction – paralleled by a similar weakness found in the other communist parties of Europe, and not the insufficiency of critical consciousness amongst the masses, lies at the base of the difficult reprise, even today, of the loose threads torn by counterrevolution. (37)

In the same fashion and with the same objectivity Gramsci has Marx say the contrary of what he wrote: “The traditional saying that the ‘anatomy’ of a society is its ‘economy’ is simply a metaphor [sic!] taken from discussions revolving around the natural sciences and the classification of animal species [...] The metaphor was justified also by its ‘popularity’, that is, by the fact that it offered even to a public not intellectually refined a schema that is easily understood”. We will leave to the “refined” Gramsci the responsibility of such a statement on *Zur Kritik (A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy)*, a text that for complexity of analyses and boldness of conceptualization is equal to its bigger brother *Das Kapital!*

34. A. Gramsci, *Note sul Machiavelli, sulla politica e sullo Stato moderno* [Notes on Machiavelli, on politics, and on the modern State] (Torino: Einaudi, 1949), p. 8.

35. A. Gramsci, *Gli intellettuali e l’organizzazione della cultura* [Intellectuals and the organization of culture] (Torino: Einaudi, 1949), p. 13.

36. Lenin, *Che fare?* [What Is To Be Done?] (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1958), p. 365

37. A lack of preparation not so much and not only in the organizational structure, already shattered by the process of Bolshevization imposed by the International on all the sections, but above all in not knowing how to prepare the party to defend the program and theory both in the base and at apex of the party, to keep themselves anchored to principles in an era evolving rapidly toward counterrevolution. Not a running after the masses, not united fronts with opportunistic parties, but a rigorous defense of the class’s autonomy: such was the long battle conducted in the International by the *Sinistra*, unheeded.



Gramsci writes: “This fact has never been properly evaluated: that the philosophy of praxis, *which proposes to intellectually and morally reform certain strata that are culturally backward* [our italics], resorts at times to metaphors that are ‘gross and violent’ in their appeal” (HM, 68). Hence, a total liquidation of historical materialism, which appears “gross and violent” to Gramsci’s refined and reactionary Bogdanovian-Kantian sub-idealism! Could it be otherwise?

Considering that Gramsci’s various apologists and supporters, in all their hues yesterday and today, celebrate their saturnalia on the remains of the “young Marx,” we dedicate to them these sentences taken from *The German Ideology*:

“Since, according to their fantasy, the relations amongst men, all their doings and actions, their chains and their limitations, are products of their consciousness, the Young Hegelians logically put to men the moral postulate of exchanging their present consciousness for human, critical or egotistical consciousness, and thus of removing their limitations. This demand to change consciousness leads to another demand, to interpret reality in another way [...]. The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premises [...]. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live, both those which they found already existing and those produced by their activity. *These premises can thus be verified in a purely empirical way.* The first premise of all human history is, *of course, the existence of living human individuals.* Thus the first act to be established is the *physical organization* of these individuals and their consequent relation *to the rest of nature* [that evidently Marx and Engels in their ‘gross materialism’ consider external to the individuals]. What does it mean, the natural conditions *found* by man [found by man as pre-existing man and not immanent or subjectively historicized]? These are the geological, orohydrographical, climatic, and so on, conditions. Any historical writing *must always set out from these natural bases and their modification in the course of history through the action of men* [our italics].” (38)

However one wishes to flip the omelet, it will always emerge bright and clear that “the philosophy of praxis”, with its contortions to reconcile the irreconcilable, conflating idealism with materialism, eclecticism with determinism, cannot ever present itself as a revolutionary theory to substitute for historical materialism. (39) On the contrary, at every nodal point it reveals itself as surrendering to the ideological flatterings of the ruling class: indeterminism, agnosticism, voluntarism; and, at the head and tail of this entire concourse, we arrive at a full-bodied idealism. The fact that Gramsci may not wish to see himself as a solid idealist is not enough for a Marxist analysis. “To believe that philosophical idealism disappears because the consciousness of the individual is replaced by the consciousness of humanity, or that the experience of an individual is replaced by a broad social experience, is the same as believing that capitalism should disappear with

38 *L'ideologia tedesca* [The German Ideology] (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1958), pp.16-17.

39 With emphasis Gramsci negates the existence of a science of society, a science with its laws and its possibilities of foreseeing the historic road: “by means of a strange overturn of perspectives [...] the historic methodology was conceived ‘scientifically’ only if and as an abstract ability to ‘foresee’ the future of society. Hence the research into essential causes, in fact of the ‘first cause’ of the ‘cause of the causes.’” *HM*, 135.

the introduction of share ownership”. (40) This last quote was by Lenin, who had Bogdanov in mind: with Gramsci we read of the “the unitary cultural system” supposedly arising from “the historically unified human race” (*HM*, 142). It is in fact a reactionary theory that by basing its gnosologic presuppositions on the “unification” of the human race – a condition that capitalism has brought about for the first time in the history of the succession of the forms of production – finds a thorough justification the moment the bourgeoisie becomes, *urbi et orbi*, the fully dominant power, on the material as well cultural level; a moment which is rooted in a glorious past, indeed revolutionary, but exclusively *bourgeois*.

## 6. From Absolute Historicity to the Disappearance of the Material World

“Absolute historicism” is the keystone of Gramsci’s idealism, the nexus which ties him to Croce and Hegel. Historicism sees reality – which Marxism accepts as existing both as a social and a natural reality, since for us there is no difference between the two – as history, as becoming. In the classic exposition of idealism, historicism is the manifestation of the Spirit in the process by which it embodies itself in the world. Both Hegel and Croce identify this moment in all things. For that reason historicism equates philosophy and history; for that reason Gramsci can arrive at the idealistic absurdity of stating that the philosophy of praxis, that is, absolute historicism, is the worldly embodiment of thought. Hence, the Spirit, or thought, incarnated, has descended among us humankind. Communism is no less than the embodiment of thought, of the Spirit! At this point not much would be needed to convert to some religious fundamentalism!

As Lenin would say, a philosophy that teaches that physical nature is itself a derivation – be it also historicized – is clericalism pure and simple. (41) But neither the young nor the old Gramsci gave much thought to this problem. In his scheme of things, Marx, not he, is the idealist. For “Marx was not a philosopher by profession, and sometimes he just dozed off on the job. What is most certain is that the heart of his ideas is dependence on philosophical idealism. One must just consider the ponderous use socialists have for the word ‘consciousness’ [...]. [There] is implicit in this language the philosophical conception that ‘one is’ only when ‘one is aware’ of being”. (42) After that passage, if anyone still has any doubts on where in Gramsci stands, behold the final indication: “Marxism is founded on philosophical idealism, [that] is a doctrine of being and consciousness, according to which these two conceptions are identical and reality is that which we know theoretically, our own self”. (43)

Given the above, is it a wonder that academic scoundrels, beginning with his more or less ex-party comrades whose pedigree was best established by the number of revolutionaries they allowed to perish in Siberia, exalt him as a “Marxist, a Leninist, a Bolshevik”, “the first Marxist of Italy”, a “Socialist figure”, one of “the greatest geniuses of today’s Italy”? (44)

40. Lenin, *Materialismo ed empiriocriticismo*, cit., pp. 225-226.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 224.

42. A. Gramsci, “Misteri della cultura e della poesia [Mysteries of Culture and Poetry]”, *Scritti giovanili* [Early works], (Torino: Einaudi, 1958), p. 328.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 327-328.

44. P. Togliatti, *Gramsci* (Ed. Parenti 1955), pp. 8-9, 83, 85.

But what is Gramscian *praxis*?

In the “Theses on Feuerbach”, written by Marx as notes during his studies of Hegelian philosophy, he made it very clear that thought and sensible intuition are not abstract forms, but practical activity; likewise objective consciousness is a “purely scholastic issue”, if not subjected to the test of practical human activity.

This reference to human activity (principally revolutionary activity: “the real movement that abolishes the state of present things” and, as such, operates in the bowels of contemporary society) formally, but not in its essence, constitutes the sense of the Gramscian “philosophy of praxis”.

It has been clearly ascertained even by so-called specialists that the term “philosophy of praxis” was adopted by Gramsci to substitute for Marxism, the more coherent terminology, and not simply to evade the censor. His use of the expression actually identifies a philosophy that departs at many crucial points from the dialectical historical materialism that Gramsci submits to severe criticism.

He departs from materialism when he asserts that in the cognitive process reality is transformed – one of the many examples of his idealism, shared by a substantial element in contemporary physics – or when one admits, in a typical Gramscian view, that knowledge and action are identical. In its total defense of Marxism, the communist *Sinistra* has always attempted to clarify that in the revolutionary process *action and consciousness are two separate moments*, whose conflation, whose welding, occurs only in rare moments of history, when the masses and their party find themselves united in the struggle to conquer political power.

With this understanding it comes as no surprise that Gramsci spontaneously adhered to the new idealistic tendencies flowering at the end of the 19th century which moved even into the philosophy of nature, greeted by many as a liberation from “the naturalistic and positivistic incrustations” (Gramsci) contaminating Marxism. (45) These “positivistic incrustations” that Gramsci explored in Marx not only lie at the source of a materialism that is accepted and defended against every deviation or neo-Kantian suggestion, idealistic or spiritualistic, by all Marxists; it is also the foundation upon which we posit our view of the future of mankind, the rapports between structure and superstructure, and between reality and knowledge.

Whereas Gramsci sees the emancipation of the proletariat in “the organization, the disciplining of the interior I, which means taking into possession one’s personality, conquering a superior consciousness” (46), Marxism counterpoises the impossibility for individual or class to arrive at any form of “understanding” on the basis of “opinions” and “realizations”, which always result in a poorly disguised act of class

45. A. Gramsci, “La rivoluzione contro *Il Capitale* [The Revolution Against *Capital*]”, *Avanti!*, November 24, 1917.

46. In *Scritti giovanili* [Early works], cit., p. 24.

conservation. First of all, our school denies that society is established and managed on the basis of thoughts transmitted from mind to mind on a sort of hierarchical ladder. Moreover, we deny that “consciousness” can in any fashion precede action by the classes (within which individuals move and act ignorant of the historic destiny of their own class), and this abstracting from the historic role assigned to these classes on the basis of the material relations of production. This is so true that all class struggles in the most diverse historical forms of production during past centuries and millennia were not resolved because of a “manner of thinking” that differed from the dominant belief, and for the reason that before the arrival of capitalistic relations of production no class had come to the fore on the historic stage able to claim for itself the ability to eliminate all classes. Also, heretofore ruling classes along with their destroyers poorly understood their historic roles. This understanding can come only to the modern proletariat: and not because it is the incarnation of some “spirit” or “historic becoming” or “new conceptual immanence”, but because it is the last and only class in human history to be deprived of any resources and thus to be forced by the laws of capitalism, by the social mores and juridical acts that are the system’s make-up, to sell itself in order to reproduce itself as a social class. Such a consciousness is never brought about by an infusion of knowledge. Quoting from one of our texts from 1953:

“The individual fighter from within the mass, anonymous and unknown to history, takes position in the civil war in favor of his class’s claims, and in so doing he is animated by a collective egoism, i.e. by the need to alleviate his own economic conditions, and so on. And, well before he joins schools of thought and gets there his degrees or even embraces a new faith, in the process of struggle he manages to overcome a purely conservative instinct [...]. Not a soldier, but an unknown volunteer of the revolution. This operator of cudgels or rifles is caught up in the common action even before he is aware of the benefits allotted the orphans of the fallen and the medals to his memory. Having forgotten himself first, he will be forgotten by all”. (47)

In his desperate attempt to reconcile idealism and materialism, and failing to convincingly demonstrate that Marx can be coupled with Hegelian and Kantian views, Gramsci turned to an old ruse: Marx wrote philosophy, he remarked, but was not a philosopher; historical materialism is a good tool for today, but on the morrow idealism will be triumphant (*HM*, 96). Besides (still paraphrasing Gramsci), we all know that Engels was so enveloped in the natural sciences, he used expressions close to, believe it or not, the “neo-scholastic Casotti.” (*HM*, 143).

47. “Fantasime carlailiane [Carlylean Ghosts]”, *Il programma comunista*, September, 1953.

Having made these observations, how could he extract himself out of such an infernal mess? Clearly, by visiting the “intellectual debts” of the Founding Fathers! Hence, as happens with all who indignantly distance themselves from Marx, passing themselves off to on-looking goofs as more “up-to-date improvers”, one turns to the “youthful works” – the very ones that already and securely lay down the unquestionable autonomy of the

revolutionary perspective – in order to trace a direct affiliation with idealism or with Kantian criticism. Well before these elucubrations by Gramsci – who was in fact not that familiar with these works, not enough to have detected “postitivistic encrustations” – one could read in the Postscript to the Second Edition of Volume I of *Capital* a somewhat opposed position. Here is Marx quoting the Russian critic, M. Block: “At first sight judging from the exterior form of the exposition, Marx is the most important of the idealistic philosophers, that is, in the bad German sense of the term. In reality, he is infinitely more realistic than all his predecessors in the area of economic criticism... There is no possible way of fashioning him into an idealist”. Further on: “Marx considers the social movement as a process of natural history informed by laws that not only are independent of will, of consciousness, and of the intentions of individuals, but on the contrary shape the will, the consciousness, and the intentions . . . If the conscious element occupies such a secondary position in human history, it follows that criticism whose object is the same history cannot ever have any foundation or resultant deriving from that very consciousness. This means that the phenomonic datum, and never the idea, serves as point of origin”. Commenting on this view, Marx himself asks, “By illustrating in such a pertinent fashion what the author calls my actual method. . . what has he shown if not the dialectical method?” (48)

48. *Il Capitale*, Libro I (Turin: UTET, 1974), pp. 84, 86.

Thus capitalism is a process of natural history informed by laws, using the expressions that appealed to Marx. Not so with Gramsci’s capitalism, for which there were laws, but “not laws in the natural sense and in the sense of a speculative determinism, but in a ‘historicist’ sense” (HM, 91). By so doing, scientific socialism was returned to its distant precursors – to the Cabets, the Babeufs, the Buonarrotis, and other utopians. Revolutionary, yes, but impotent given the immature material conditions.

## 7. About Some Executors

What had happened in Germany in the first half of the 19th century happened again in Bogdanov’s Russia and in Gramsci’s Italy. That was the time when Hegelian idealism, a gigantic system of philosophy that wrote the words “the end” to philosophy at the same moment that it summed up its whole development in a grandiose pattern (see Engels’s *Ludwig Feuerbach*), imbued the sciences and the arts, penetrating, consciously or unconsciously, into the heads of the “critical” intellectuals. A man like Gramsci, an intellectual who from head to toe had formed in the school of idealism, could not free himself ever from the dominant ideology. All of his misunderstandings on the decisive moments of class struggle, developing during the span of his lifetime, are, in the final analysis, attributable to his attitude vis-à-vis dialectical determinism – which he always forced in the direction of voluntarism and subjectivism. With the result that, when the objective situation began to worsen, such policies became inevitable as those of the “united front”, of the “acculturation of the pro-

letariat”, of a “subalternity” dominating (and responsible for) the mass economic activity (*HM*, 14).

And it is the consequence of this same “cultural” bent that led Gramsci to continuously express admiration for Illuminism and the Encyclopedia movement, interpreted by him as a large intellectual and moral reform at the popular – even peasant – level. Such a reform, by coming together and placing itself at the leadership of the French Revolution, would forge the national and patriotic tie between the masses and the intellectuals whose absence Gramsci identified as the reason for the absence of an Italian bourgeois revolution, and which he hoped to realize in his projected Constituent Assembly, from 1924 on. Thus while in the international arena a decisive struggle was deciding the fate of communism for decades to come, and the international *Sinistra* movement strove to have the Russian question examined by the International, not vice-versa; while in the International and in each national section the methods of work are discussed, as well as the need for reorganizing a revolutionary movement faced with a growing fascist threat and suffering huge losses; while on the agenda was an unbending defense of revolutionary and international Marxism against all economic, political and social deviations – while all this dramatically took place, well, Gramsci simply fell back to a defense “of the large number of peasant cultivators” who by erupting onto the Italian political scene “will agree to the formation of a national-popular collective will”! Let the reader beware: this was not the Gramsci of the prison writings, cut off from political life and confined to his fascist cell. This was the Gramsci of 1924, when still a representative of the Communist International! The very Gramsci who declared in polemics with the *Sinistra*: “You are for an international minority, [and] we are for a national majority”(49).

We shall not comment on Gramsci’s legacy to his party. In due time that party would change from “section of the Communist International” to “a national communist party,” and then disappear completely leaving behind inconsolable ex-Stalinists who would recycle themselves as Greens or parliamentary “dissidents”.

From the humus of subjective idealism and voluntary spontaneity would flower intellectuals with confused heads. To begin with, we have in mind “workerism,” always present whenever genuine class movements spill over into the streets. Then there is that view of “factories as the center of power and social conflict” à la Toni Negri. Likewise, the anti-party spontaneity often associated with factory origins, a site that can be more noxious in some ways than prison from whence some would have sprout the first tender shoots of a “communist society,” as well as other views all hostile to any political organization. Finally, mention should be made of “immediatism”, always blooming where living and working conditions are such as to give rise to impromptu workers’ reactions, but unable, because of the very narrow and local nature of those struggles, to raise questions of power on a national and international scale.

49. In a letter written by Gramsci on 9 February 1924 to Togliatti, Terracini and others, from which we cite, there is a sort of “analysis” of the Italian and international situation that is very revealing of the party’s murky circumstances after the substitution of the *Sinistra* majority in the Central Committee. Some of Gramsci’s observations deserve further and deeper consideration. For example, he maintains that in 1917 Lenin and a majority of the Bolshevik party passed over to “Trotsky’s conception.” The October Revolution is described as a “coup d’état,” implying the substitution of one group by another, rather than the seizure of power by the Russian proletariat in defense of its class interests, understood immediately by the *Sinistra* (See “*Avanguardia*”, 12/2/1917, in *SDSC*, I, p. 339). The supremacy of the Russian party in the International, against which the *Sinistra* vainly battled, was justified (Gramsci speaking of the Soviet regime) “by a material base that we will not have perhaps even after a revolution and that gives their supremacy a permanence difficult to challenge.” Here was an anti-internationalist servility that would be promptly picked up by Italian representatives who settled in the Hotel Lux of Moscow.

Marxism being the product of a struggle between two classes that would continuously confront each other on an international scale could not have been born as a theoretical, political and tactical doctrine of the proletariat before the middle of the 19th century. Having entered the fray for its own final goals, the working class thus opposes a deterministic and dialectical historical materialism to bourgeois ideology.

Was there an unconscious intent on the part of Gramsci? Evidently that of formulating a revised and corrected Marxism, a system of “upside down” consciousness (and worse, action), in which dialectical idealism rules.

For our political current, Marxism was not born because Marx was or was not “incrusted” with positivism, or because he was or was not a “good philosopher” or a “good economist”. Marxism was born the way it is because it was and will be the theoretical expression of a real class, which fought and will fight for its own goals, and will undertake the gigantic task of abolishing all classes. Our choice is not between a “more dialectic” or a “less materialistic” Marx. Our “choice” is between one class or the other. There is no “open” terrain in between, the way there is no “compromise” between wages and capital, between wage labor and the extortion of surplus value. The idea that on the basis of presumed new epistemological findings Marxism must be subjected to editing is for those who do not have the courage to make a class choice, who have not yet recognized the sure road that leads to the overthrow of capitalism. It arises from a hidden need to evade revolutionary conclusions – the total break with bourgeois ideology – , by relying on the support of intermediate social strata.

In addition to his idealism, what is pleasing in Gramsci to some contemporary intellectuals is the assertion – or implication – that Marx’s “philosophy” is incomplete, that it needs to be emended, improved, restudied, and, in the end, “re-invented”.<sup>50</sup> Since Marxism is a totality of history, economics, politics, it is most opportune to advance a more complete theory, to go beyond to a theory of theory!

In his criticism of Bukharin and of other Marxists, Gramsci continuously lamented the excess of materialism and the defects of dialectics. He insisted that dialectics operates in history, and in dialectics was manifested all the power of Marxism. He reduced materialism to a mere acknowledgment, an eleemosynary fee paid by Marxism to the bourgeois revolutions of the 18th century.

As for us, we remain faithful to the binomial “dialectical materialism”. Since these terms, in their indissolubility, represent the synthesis of natural reality, and, as a consequence, of social reality, we see no need to attribute greater power to one or the other of them. It is true, on the contrary, that a peculiar stress was placed on the term “dialectical”, always in an idealistic sense, by the scientific tendencies of the 20th century: which, compelled by the mass of evidence, have to acknowledge the dialectics of na-

50. Consider these affirmations by Althusser: “Marxist philosophy in which Marx set the basis in the act of establishing his theory of history is in great part yet to be constructed [...] the theoretical difficulties which we debated during the night of dogmatism [...] resulted even in large part from the non-developed condition of Marxist philosophy”, in L. Althusser, *Per Marx* [For Marx] (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1967), p. 14. Doesn’t this bring to mind Gramsci’s “Marx is not a philosopher”?

ture (just to cite some of the innumerable examples: the concept of mass-energy and that of wave-particles, in the camp of physics, the concept of individual-species and that of gene-environment, in biological evolution). But, while they are obliged to do so, at the same time they all reject materialism, to the point of arriving at fideism and spirituality.

### **Stalinism, Americanism, Fordism... the Whirling of Waltzes by Way of Concluding**

Just as he had unbounded admiration for the mechanized industry of postwar Turin, so when it came to the highly automated American industry, i.e., Fordism, Gramsci saw in it a confirmation of his theories of hegemony, “which is born in the factory and to establish itself only needs a minimum number of intermediary professionals from politics and ideology”. (51) This was viewed as the consequence of the defeat of the workers’ movement, unable to counter a wide penetration of bourgeois ideology into all aspects of life. “Rationalization has dictated the imperative to develop a new human type, conforming to the new system of work and productive process [...] This is still the phase of a psychophysical adaptation to the new industrial structure, sought after by means of high salaries”. (52)

As so understood, American “hegemony” found its alter ego in the Russian economy, where there was taking shape “a reform of consciousness and methods of knowledge, it is a matter of knowledge, a philosophical fact” (*HM*, 39). Therein lay the greatness of Lenin (Gramsci speaking) who “advanced philosophy as philosophy to the degree he was able to advance doctrine and political practice” (*HM*, 39). With this criterion, even even Ford, and before him Taylor, “advanced philosophy as philosophy.”

On the other hand, this rationalization of the productive process, which is intrinsic to capitalism, had to be part of the organization of work in the Soviet Union which lacked discipline and order, where habits were not up to the demands of modern labor. We can well understand, affirms Gramsci, the strong Tayloristic impulse given Soviet industry by Trotsky. With Gramsci, as with all the Stalinists of the period, there existed the necessity to “construct socialism”, and constructing it precisely by resorting to the technical and productive apparatus and the organizational and police mannerisms displayed by the most advanced capitalistic industries, seen especially with American Fordism. Given that with the failure of revolution in the West the Russian Revolution had fallen back on itself, Gramsci’s hegemonic views were hurriedly aligned on the theory of “socialism in one country”: “The concept of hegemony is one in which the demands of a national character are co-joined [...] A class of international character, to the degree it is leads social strata very obviously national (intellectuals), and even less than national, particularistic and municipalistic (the peasants), must in a certain sense ‘nationalize itself’”.(53)

51. A. Gramsci, *Note sul Machiavelli...*, cit., p. 317.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 317.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 115.



It became clear why a man who in 1916 esteemed “socialism to be a problem essentially of intense production” (54), would twenty years later declare “the principle of coercion, direct or indirect, in the management of production and work is proper”. (55)

This at the time of the 5 Year Plans, when, despite a different set of longitude and latitude coordinates, capitalism was devouring its victims with great voracity, above all in the paradise of “really existing socialism”.

It is precisely for these reasons (Gramsci’s interest in the forms of labor exploitation being perfected in the US in those years) that we can understand the growth of the interest of American intellectuals in Gramsci during the 1970s, that exploded in a seemingly “commercial manner.” Gramsci was praised for his criticism of economism (defined as Marxism), for the primacy of politics, the autonomy of civil society, and the role of the intellectuals. (56) In this manner Gramsci’s “hegemony views”, idealism, historicism and subjectivism found their definitive and necessary consecration in “left” US circles, alongside the critics of authoritarianism and of sexual repression: Reich, Marcuse, and the representatives of the Frankfurt School. Against this background, Michel Walzer published a “critical” analysis of Gramsci and Marxism, which was well received in radical US circles. (57) Correctly, the author underlined Gramsci’s dubious Marxist orthodoxy, observing his break with the revolutionary tradition by proclaiming that only after the creation of a proletarian culture was revolution possible in the West. “Gramsci’s great discovery,” affirms Walzer, was the impossibility of the proletariat taking power in the West. What is needed instead is a “war of position”, that is, “the conquest of civil society [...] a long and exhausting cultural war in which the new world slowly and painfully replaces the old”.

Wide sectors of the “people of Seattle” have subscribed (perhaps without knowing it) to these positions: from Trotskyists always on the look for new phases of transition so long as they are not identifiable with the dictatorship of the proletariat to the Third World activists meeting in Porto Alegre – all seemingly united in the creation of a “new popular will”, and in the delineation of a “common goal”, in which, with Gramsci at the head, the role of the party becomes clear. No more a class party, by which is meant a party of *one* class, but a heap of intellectuals, defined, who knows why, as organic. No more a revolutionary program, laid out in all its details, but “culture itself, from philosophy to religion, to the most common notions of health and illness, love, matrimony, work, interchangeability, honor and solidarity”... Inside this vision of cultural gradualism, in which the proletariat is transformed into a quiet *petite bourgeoisie*, acculturated to Gramscian ideas that, according to Walzer, “aim to substitute political economy with a sort of cultural anthropology,” the revolutionary party is finally dissolved into a nebulous aggregation of intellectuals “organically” soldered to... the dominant ideology.

Here the trajectory of Gramsci finally comes to a close. Starting in 1914

54. A. Gramsci, *Sotto la Mole* [In Turin] (Torino: Einaudi, 1960), p. 93.

55. A. Gramsci, *Note sul Machiavelli...*, cit., p. 329-330.

56. Cf. N. Urbinati, “La sua fortuna americana [His American Fortune]”, *l’Unità*, 1/15/91, Supplement.

57. *The Company of Critics* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

from clearly idealistic grounds that quickly translated into support for Mussolini's interventionism, he remained a "defensist" during the war even after Caporetto and the October revolutionary seizure of power, moving to a voluntaristic intellectualism with *Ordine Nuovo*. In those issues his "historicism" found expression in the misinformed and misapplied exultation of the factory council movement of Turin, depicted as an autonomous and innovating example of the revolutionary process. Since then, Gramsci was in no position to comprehend the role of the class party, and this lack of understanding contributed to the tardiness with which that party was born, a delay that prevented it from co-joining into the incendiary outburst Italy experienced in the red biennial of 1919-1920. But even the party that Gramsci headed between 1924 and 1926 quickly turned to a no-holds-barred struggle against the *Sinistra*-leadership and the rank and file base, in numbers a majority of the party. As heir to the formerly *Sinistra*-led party, he never understood or assimilated concern for an intransigent defense of the political program, of the class autonomy, and of the arduous effort needed to assure the solidity of theory and tactics without opening the door – as would actually happened in later times and in the worst of conditions – to local and national "choices", entrusted to "groups of thought" or factions, without a political line except that coming from Moscow.

The voluntarism that impregnates Gramsci's ideology from before his Turin years led him, and the party he headed for a time, to situate himself amongst the masses, which, seen in clearer light, meant at the tail end of the masses. And when these defeated masses relented in their strivings after years of heroic efforts, the only opening that he could espy was that of "forcing" the historical situation by manipulating Culture, Intellectual Progress, and a Historicized Subjectivity. His "modern Prince" recast in the form of a modern party succumbed to total defeat and decomposition, when faced with the twin menaces of fascism and Stalinism!

And whilst outside his cell a counterrevolutionary terror destroyed a whole generation of revolutionaries, and in Russia Stalinism buried within a few years the party of the October Revolution, Gramsci, faithful to his views, carried on his silent battle against dialectical materialism in the name of philosophies and currents that during the preceding decades had been opposed and fought by Marxists. Here is how the *Sinistra* summarized them:

[The "voluntaristic" and "immediatist" schema] was typical of petty-bourgeois corporativism, hence opportunistic and reformist (Prudhonism, anarcho-syndicalism, workerism, *Ordinovismo*, council socialism, and English laborism, etc.). It clearly fits in with a liberal viewpoint of which it is a variant. Therein, the individual, always placed at the basis of any process, becomes aware of the physical and economic impulses that compose the substratum of his existence. The resulting conscious-

ness conditions the will and in turn the action. The confluence of individual consciousnesses leads to economic and political organizations, and the class results from the summation of networks of these immediate organizations. Such positions are totally alien to any notion of historical direction. There is never any awareness in the Marxist sense of a class *in itself and for itself*. (58)

In opposition to this Gramscian view, we affirm an integral return to Marx:

Historic-dialectic materialism, counterpoising its views to those drawn from illuminism and idealism, does not see in ideology, that is, in the *mystified* and *reversed* representation of what is real, the results of an *error* to be corrected so as to open the eyes of the blind, but the inevitable outcome of a real process that corresponds to actual material rapports, the very same that ideology distorts in its projection. This distortion arises in turn from the historical situation of the social forces that express themselves through ideology and impose it on the social body, the dominant ideology being always that of the dominant class [...] Marxism's opposition to the ideologies of the past, still reigning today, is, therefore, *historical* and *dialectic*. Which does not preclude, on the contrary implies, that the *global science* with which it identifies can reconstruct the real processes that underlie the ideological construction, making known *how* ideology mystifies the underlying reality, quite apart from all individual and collective 'consciousness'. (59)

Let this be the epitaph over every future attempt to "revert" to explanations of the real world that, by moving from the individual, from thought, and from the subject, come to embody the historical enemy to be overcome in the name of the only brotherhood of class – the revolutionary one.

58. *Partito e classe* (*Appendice*) [Party and Class. Appendix] (Milano: Edizioni il programma comunista, 1974), p. 128.

59. *Ibid.*, p.127.

*Back To Basics*

# THE THESES OF THE ABSTENTIONIST COMMUNIST FACTION OF THE ITALIAN SOCIALIST PARTY (1920)

## Introduction

The *Theses* which we are publishing here were drawn up for the national conference of the Communist Abstentionist Faction of the Italian Socialist Party in 1920 (1). This faction, to which we trace the origins of our party today, was to split from the Socialist Party in January 1921 to form the Communist Party of Italy. Although the Faction was officially formed in July 1919, it had already organized itself in the end of 1918 around the newspaper *Il Soviet* and had a long history of far-left opposition within the Socialist Party behind it. This opposition dated back to the struggle in 1912-1914 against reformism, electoral blocks with the bourgeois left, and the Libyan war (where our current opposed the annexation of Libya for internationalist reasons); later, during World War I, a small group of young Italian Marxists firmly and resolutely adopted the stance of revolutionary defeatism as advanced by Lenin.

The decisive question which confronted the Faction in May 1920 — just a month before the convening of the Second Congress of the Communist International — was the split from the Socialist Party. In the words of a motion adopted at the conference, the SP was “*absolutely incapable, given its present make-up and function, of assuming the leadership of the proletarian revolution. Its many deficiencies are the result of the presence within it of*

*a reformist tendency which inevitably will take a counter-revolutionary position in the crucial moment of the class struggle, and of the practice of a verbal support for the communist program [this refers to the centrist current, the so-called Maximalists] coupled with the opportunist practice of traditional socialism in the area of political and economic action*”. The problem in short was that of laying the foundations of the Communist Party of Italy, Section of the Communist International. This party was born approximately six months later, on January 21st, 1921, on the basis of the same principles formulated in the document we are translating here. While it upheld the *tactic* of abstaining from elections and the parliament in such countries as Italy where the bourgeois revolution had long since been achieved and where there existed a long corrupting democratic tradition, it did not in any way turn this tactic into a matter of principle which might keep it from supporting the political, theoretical and programmatic platform of the Third International. On the contrary it unreservedly shared its cardinal points.

The importance of the *Theses* of the Faction lies in the first place in their international perspective, which is something that has always characterized the Italian Left. They do not present the platform of a *national* party but instead are a synthesis of the theoretical, programmatic, and tactical positions which necessarily distinguish the party of the *world* communist revolution. The *Theses* do not confine themselves to the Italian locality (which is not even mentioned in any of

1. This conference was held in Florence on May 9, 1920. The *Theses* were published in nos. 16 and 17 of *Il Soviet* (June 6 and 27, 1920).

the theses) but formulate the principles which delimit the communist party from every other, supposedly working class political organization and which must guide every communist party in any area of the world and in any phase of the era opened by the first world war and the Russian Revolution. This aspect of the *Theses* has a special importance in that one of the central demands of the Left at the Second Congress of the International was precisely that a single program for all communist parties should be formulated, a program binding for all without any exceptions because of supposed "national peculiarities".

In the second place the *Theses* respect the criteria which we also would have liked to have seen centrally applied at the Second Congress even if it were to be done in a condensed and even schematic form. The *Theses* develop the questions of theory and principle separately from the question of tactics and take up the tactical directives only after clearly defining the theoretical and programmatic foundations and ultimate objectives of the communist movement and only after clearly showing that tactics and program are closely interconnected and inseparable. The *Theses* thus respect perfectly the dialectical schema which Lenin, at the Third Congress of the Communist International, correctly reproached the infantile extremists and theoreticians of the "offensive at all costs", for having forgotten — or for never having learned; a schema in which doctrine, principles, final aim, program, and tactics each have their precise place and can not be lumped together indiscriminately in a terminological confusion. On the other hand the *Theses* very firmly insist on the bond without which the unity between theory and praxis, between thought and action — one of the cardinal points of Marxism — would be broken.

Accordingly, the *Theses* are divided into three parts. The first summarizes the fundamental premises of the communist doctrine and of its vision of human histo-

ry. This history is the history of class struggles which culminate in the conquest of political power by the class whose very existence expresses the antagonism which has become unbearable between the forces of production and the relations of production. This conquest of power can only be achieved — and in fact has only been achieved — through violent revolution, which has as its necessary corollary the dictatorial exercise of political power by the victorious class. The *Theses* insist on the necessity of a centralized military organization of proletarian forces against the assaults of the counter-revolution. They also give a picture of the economic and social transformations which the proletarian dictatorship will implement by means of "despotic inroads" extending up to the point of the complete suppression of capitalist economic relations, the abolition of classes, and consequently the dissolution of the state as a political apparatus of power which will be progressively replaced by the collective rational administration of economic and social activity.

Above all the *Theses* clearly bring out the primary function of the party. They state: "*it is only by organizing itself into a political party that the proletariat constitutes itself into a class struggling for its emancipation*" and further that "*the dictatorship of the proletariat will [...] be the dictatorship of the Communist Party*". These two concepts were very strongly insisted on in the "Theses on the Role of the Communist Party in the Proletarian Revolution" adopted at the Second Congress of the Comintern; they were the criterion used by the Communist International to distinguish itself from all other supposedly close political currents. Many of these currents, although abstractly recognizing the principle of revolution and therefore of violence, ignored or worse yet denied the following imperatives: 1) that this violence be guided before and after the conquest of power by a consciousness both of the general objectives and of the methods required to attain them, and 2)

that it be directed by a centralized organization.

For Marxism this consciousness and this organization can only be materialized in the party. Nothing could better distinguish our current from the innumerable contemporary variants of workerism, immediatism, and spontaneism represented in Italy by "Ordine Nuovo", the anarcho-syndicalists or the anarchists themselves, and in Germany particularly by the KAPD. Nothing could prove with greater clarity that our view of the revolutionary process and its premises was exactly the same as the Bolsheviks'. The question of the role of the party and the process of revolution and dictatorship was central to the great polemics of Lenin and Trotsky against both the infantile extremists and Kautsky; the positions of the latter two confirm the fact that *all* the variants of opportunism sooner or later end in the centrist negation of the very bases of the revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Only a weak echo of these polemics reached Italy, yet this did not prevent the Italian Left from assuming once again a principled position on these questions that was identical to that boldly advanced by the Bolsheviks amid the cries of dismay from all the philistines flourishing in the ranks of the Western proletariat. In this respect as well, the *Theses* bear a clear international imprint, which makes them the *one* real support given by the West to the great task of re-establishing the cardinal points of the Marxist doctrine undertaken by the Third International. All this shows, moreover, that we not only had nothing whatsoever in common with the infantile extremists but were at the *opposite* pole from them.

The second part develops a critique of all the ideologies which communism openly criticizes and combats: philosophical idealism and its translation into political terms, that is to say parliamentary democracy; petty-bourgeois and Wilsonian pacifism, utopian socialism in all its manifestations, from its classical form up

to its most extreme offshoots, the latter of which see the forms of organization assumed not only by the struggle for revolutionary preparation but by the conquest of power, and even by the exercise of the dictatorship, as a transposition of the immediate organizations in which proletarians are assembled under the domination of capital (that is according to their positions and their short-term interests within the bourgeois mode of production); reformism with its theory that the proletarian class can take power gradually, moving little by little from its position as an oppressed class to that of a ruling class, including here its conception of the exercise of this class rule; and finally anarchism which has its direct origins in bourgeois idealism and consequently is a reflection of the capitalist form of production and distribution.

In the third part, the entire spectrum of activities which the party is summoned to pursue as the representative of the general and permanent interests of the class is deduced from the theoretical and programmatic principles of communism: theoretical work, propaganda, proselytism, active participation in the life of trade unions and economic organizations, anti-military propaganda within the army, revolutionary preparation including legal and clandestine work, and finally the revolutionary insurrection, the attempt to seize power. The *Theses* reiterate our rejection of the tactic of participating in elections and parliamentary activity in the countries with a long democratic tradition. This tactic clearly is rejected not for reasons of principle, valid in any period, but on the basis of arguments founded on the Marxist view of the historical period in which the revolutionary seizure of power is posed as the single, direct perspective for the proletarian class. In particular this rejection flows from a recognition of the enormous obstacle which is created for revolutionary preparation in the advanced capitalist countries by the persistence not only of democratic institutions, but also of illusions nurtured by the exploiting class a-

mong the oppressed class concerning the possibility that it can attain its emancipation by means of these institutions.

The *Theses* proceed to emphasize the refusal on principle of "agreements or alliances with other political movements which share with it [the Communist Party] a specific immediate objective [or even which accept insurrectionary action against the bourgeoisie] but diverge from it in their program for further political action". As was made more explicit in our critique of the slogan of the "political united front" advanced by the Comintern in 1921, this refusal did not exclude the call for united actions by union organizations — including those linked to other political movements — in the area of the defence of the living and working conditions of all proletarians, whatever may be their ideological or political affiliation. Point 13 dealing with the soviets is in complete accord with the *Theses* later adopted by the Second Congress; it very explicitly states that soviets are not in themselves organs of revolutionary struggle, but become revolutionary to the extent that the party conquers a majority in them. Whereas on the one hand they can constitute a precious instrument of revolutionary struggle in a period of acute crisis, they can likewise present a serious danger of conciliation and combination with the institutions of bourgeois democracy whenever the bourgeoisie's power is reinforced. Noteworthy also in light of future polemics is point 3 which does not make the approval of the majority or some gross numerical coefficient a pre-condition for the party's action.

It might seem strange that the *Theses* reject the idea that majority approval is necessary in the area of class action led by the party, but state with respect to the internal functioning of the party that "the party functions on the basis of discipline towards the decisions of the majority and towards the decisions of the central organs chosen by that majority to lead the movement" (part III, point 2). One must not forget however that for our current,

as was stated in the *Rome Theses* (1922), "the proclamation of the Party's program and the selection of people for the different functions of the organization results in appearance from a democratic vote by delegates of the party. In reality, however, they are the products of a real process which accumulates the lessons of experience, and prepares and selects leaders, thereby enabling the program and the hierarchy of the party to take shape". (2) Discipline is the result of this "real process" in so far as this process has no break in continuity. It cannot result from a mechanism which, like any mechanism, can have no *intrinsic* value independent of the purpose for which it has been devised and can produce results opposite from those for which it was intended. It is for this reason that our party later on utilized the formula of "organic centralism" (in place of "democratic centralism") which better expresses the party's mode of functioning (see especially our text *The Democratic Principle* which we published in issue ... of this review).

The *Theses* conclude with two formulae which express the unequivocal Marxist position which renounces, in the Blanquist theory the idea of a coup by an audacious minority, the voluntarist act not based on an appreciation of the real relationship of forces in society as a whole; but which claims Blanquism as its own and as the very substance of Marxism, inasmuch as it is the theory of armed insurrection, dictatorship and civil war.

With the exception of the formulation of the tactic of electoral abstentionism — which was very important for

us in regard to the formation of real communist parties from the elements and currents within the old socialist parties in the West — there is not a single point in the *Theses* to which the Bolsheviks could not then subscribe. When barely seven

2. "Rome Theses of the Communist Party of Italy", part I, point 4. These *Theses* were adopted by the CPI at its Rome Congress in March 1922. The Italian text can be found in *In difesa della continuità del programma comunista*, the French translation in *Defense de la continuité du programme communiste*.

years had elapsed, the Italian Left, at the Third Congress of the Communist Party of Italy at Lyons and at the Sixth Enlarged Executive at Moscow, was obliged to remind the Leninist Old Guard — which was then locked in a tragic struggle by the vise of counter-revolution mounting within the very ranks of the party — that Marxism is a single global vision of the world and of history, and that tactical maneuvering has and must have a limit because it necessarily has repercussions on a factor which plays a great role in the influence of the party on the class: namely, the continuity of principles and program openly proclaimed, translated into practice consistent with them, and implemented by a close-knit organization.

I  
Theses of the Abstentionist  
Communist Faction  
of the Italian Socialist Party  
(May 1920)

1. Communism is the doctrine of the social and historical preconditions for the emancipation of the proletariat.

The elaboration of this doctrine began in the period of the first proletarian movements against the effects of the bourgeois system of production. It took shape in the Marxist critique of the capitalist economy, the method of historical materialism, the theory of class struggle and the conception of the development which will take place in the historical process of the fall of the capitalist regime and the proletarian revolution.

2. It is on the basis of this doctrine — which found its first and fundamental systematic expression in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 — that the Communist Party is constituted.

3. In the present historical period, the situation created by bourgeois relations of production, based on the private ownership of the means of production and ex-

change, on the private appropriation of the products of collective labour and on free competition in private trade of all products, becomes more and more intolerable for the proletariat.

4. To these economic relations correspond the political institutions characteristic of capitalism: the state based on democratic and parliamentary representation. In a society divided into classes, the state is the organisation of the power of the class which is economically privileged. Although the bourgeoisie represents a minority within society, the democratic state represents the system of armed force organized for the purpose of preserving the capitalist relations of production.

5. The struggle of the proletariat against capitalist exploitation assumes a succession of forms going from the violent destruction of machines to the organization on a craft basis to improve working conditions, to the creation of factory councils, and to attempts to take possession of enterprises.

In all these individual actions, the proletariat moves in the direction of the decisive revolutionary struggle against the power of the bourgeois state, which prevents the present relations of production from being broken.

6. This revolutionary struggle is the conflict between the whole proletarian class and the whole bourgeois class. Its instrument is the political class party, the communist party, which achieves the conscious organization of the proletarian vanguard aware of the necessity of unifying its action, in *space* — by transcending the interests of particular groups, trades or nationalities — and in *time* — by subordinating to the final outcome of the struggle the partial gains and conquests which do not modify the essence of the bourgeois structure.

Consequently it is only by organizing itself into a political party that the proletariat constitutes itself into a class struggling for its emancipation.



7. The objective of the action of the Communist Party is the violent overthrow of bourgeois rule, the conquest of political power by the proletariat, and the organization of the latter into a ruling class.

8. Parliamentary democracy in which citizens of every class are represented is the form assumed by the organization of the bourgeoisie into a ruling class. The organization of the proletariat into a ruling class will instead be achieved through the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is, through a type of state in which representation (the system of workers' councils) will be decided only by members of the working class (the industrial proletariat and the poor peasants), with the bourgeois being denied the right to vote.

9. After the old bureaucratic, police and military machine has been destroyed, the proletarian state will unify the armed forces of the laboring class into an organization which will have as its task the repression of all counter-revolutionary attempts by the dispossessed class and the execution of measures of intervention into bourgeois relations of production and property.

10. The process of transition from the capitalist economy to a communist one will be extremely complex and its phases will differ according to differing degrees of economic development. The end-point of this process will be the total achievement of the ownership and management of the means of production by the whole unified collectivity, together with the central and rational distribution of productive forces among the different branches of production, and finally the central administration of the allocation of products by the collectivity.

11. When capitalist economic relationships have been entirely eliminated, the abolition of classes will be an accomplished fact and the state, as a political apparatus of power, will be progressively replaced by the rational, collective administration of economic and social activity.

12. The process of transforming the relations of production will be accompanied by a wide range of social measures stemming from the principle that the collectivity takes charge of the physical and intellectual existence of all its members. In this way, all the birth marks which the proletariat has inherited from the capitalist world will be progressively eliminated and, in the words of the *Manifesto*, in place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

13. The pre-conditions for the victory of proletarian power in the struggle for the realization of communism are to be found not so much in the rational use of skills in technical tasks, as in the fact that political responsibilities and the control of the state apparatus are confided to those people who will put the general interest and the final triumph of communism before the particular and limited interests of groups.

Precisely because the Communist Party is the organization of proletarians who have achieved this class consciousness, the aim of the party will be, by its propaganda, to win elective posts for its members within the social organization. The dictatorship of the proletariat will therefore be the dictatorship of the Communist Party and the latter will be a party of government in a sense totally opposed to that of the old oligarchies, for communists will assume responsibilities which will demand the maximum of sacrifice and renunciation and they will take upon their shoulders the heaviest burden of the revolutionary task which falls on the proletariat in the difficult labour through which a new world will come to birth.

## II

1. The critique which communists continuously make on the basis of the fundamental methods of Marxism, and the propagation of the conclusions to which

it leads, have as their objective the extirpation of those influences which the ideological systems of other classes and other parties have over the proletariat.

2. First of all, communism sweeps away idealist conceptions which consider the material of the world of thought as the base, and not the result, of the real relations of human life and of their development. All religious and philosophical formulations of this type must be considered as the ideological baggage of classes whose supremacy — which preceded the bourgeois epoch — rested on an ecclesiastical, aristocratic or dynastic organization receiving its authority only from a pretended super-human investiture.

One symptom of the decadence of the modern bourgeoisie is the fact that those old ideologies which it had itself destroyed reappear in its midst under new forms.

A communism founded on idealist bases would be an unacceptable absurdity.

3. In still more characteristic fashion, communism is the demolition of the conceptions of liberalism and bourgeois democracy by the Marxist critique. The juridical assertion of freedom of thought and political equality of citizens, and the idea that institutions founded on the rights of the majority and on the mechanism of universal electoral representation are a sufficient base for a gradual and indefinite progress of human society, are ideologies which correspond to the regime of private economy and free competition, and to the interests of the capitalist class.

4. One of the illusions of bourgeois democracy is the belief that the living conditions of the masses can be improved through increasing the education and training provided by the ruling classes and their institutions. In fact it is the opposite: raising the intellectual level of the great masses demands, as a pre-condition, a better standard of material life, something which is incompatible with

the bourgeois regime. Moreover through its schools, the bourgeoisie tries to broadcast precisely the ideologies which inhibit the masses from perceiving the present institutions as the very obstacle to their emancipation.

5. Another fundamental tenet of bourgeois democracy lies in the principle of nationality. The formation of states on a national basis corresponds to the class necessities of the bourgeoisie at the moment when it establishes its own power, in that it can thus avail itself of national and patriotic ideologies (which correspond to certain interests common in the initial period of capitalism to people of the same race, language and customs) and use them to delay and mitigate the conflict between the capitalist state and the proletarian masses.

National irredentisms are thus born of essentially bourgeois interests.

The bourgeoisie itself does not hesitate to trample on the principle of nationality as soon as the development of capitalism drives it to the often violent conquest of foreign markets and to the resulting conflict among the great states over the latter. Communism transcends the principle of nationality in that it demonstrates the identical predicament in which the mass of disinherited workers find themselves with respect to employers, whatever may be the nationality of either the former or the latter; it proclaims the international association to be the type of political organization which the proletariat will create when it, in turn, comes to power.

In the perspective of the communist critique, therefore, the recent world war [WWI] was brought about by capitalist imperialism. This critique demolishes those various interpretations which take up the viewpoint of one or another bourgeois state and try to present the war as a vindication of the national rights of certain peoples or as a struggle of democratically more advanced states against those organized on pre-bourgeois forms, or finally, as a supposed necessity of self-defence against enemy aggression.

6. Communism is likewise opposed to the conceptions of bourgeois pacifism and to Wilsonian illusions on the possibility of a world association of states, based on disarmament and arbitration and having as its pre-condition the Utopia of a sub-division of state units by nationality. For communists, war will become impossible and national questions will be solved only when the capitalist regime has been replaced by the International Communist Republic.

7. In a third area, communism presents itself as the transcendence of the systems of utopian socialism which seek to eliminate the faults of social organization by instituting complete plans for a new organization of society whose possibility of realization was not put in relationship to the real development of history.

8. The proletariat's elaboration of its own interpretation of society and history to guide its action against the social relations of the capitalist world, continuously gives rise to a multitude of schools or currents, influenced to a greater or lesser degree by the very immaturity of the conditions of struggle and by all the various bourgeois prejudices. From all this arise the errors and setbacks in proletarian action. But it is due to this material of experience that the communist movement succeeds in defining with ever greater clarity the central features of its doctrine and its tactics, differentiating itself clearly from all the other currents active within the proletariat itself and openly combating them.

9. The formation of producers' cooperatives, in which the capital belongs to the workers who work in them, cannot be a path towards the suppression of the capitalist system. This is because the acquisition of raw materials and the distribution of products are effected according to the laws of private economy and consequently, credit, and therefore private capital ultimately exercises control over the collective capital of the cooperative itself.

10. Communists cannot consider economic trade or craft organizations to be sufficient for the struggle for the proletarian revolution or as the basic organs of the communist economy.

The organization of the class through trade unions serves to neutralize competition between workers of the same trade and prevents wages falling to the lowest level. However, it cannot lead to the elimination of capitalist profit, still less to the unification of the workers of all trades against the privilege of bourgeois power. Further, the simple transfer of the ownership of the enterprises from the private employer to the workers' union could not achieve the basic economic features of communism, for the latter necessitates the transfer of ownership to the whole proletarian collectivity since this is the only way to eliminate the characteristics of the private economy in the appropriation and distribution of products.

Communists consider the union as the site of an initial proletarian experience which permits the workers to go further towards the concept and the practice of political struggle, which has as its organ the class party.

11. In general, it is an error to believe that the revolution is a question of forms of organizations which proletarians group into according to their position and interests within the framework of the capitalist system of production.

It is not a modification of the structure of economic organizations, then, which can provide the proletariat with an effective instrument for its emancipation.

Factory unions and factory councils emerge as organs for the defense of the interests of the proletarians of different enterprises at the point when it begins to appear possible that capitalist despotism in the management of the enterprises could be limited. But obtaining the right of these organizations to supervise (to monitor) production to a more or less large degree is not incompatible with the capitalist system and could even be used by it as a means to preserve its domination.

Even the transfer of factory management to factory councils would not mean (any more than in the case of the unions) the advent of the communist system. According to the true communist conception, workers' supervision of production will not be achieved until after the overthrow of bourgeois power, and it will be a supervision over the running of every enterprise exercised by the whole proletariat unified in the state of workers' councils. Communist management of production will be the direction of every branch and every productive unit by rational collective organs which will represent the interests of all workers united in the work of building communism.

12. Capitalist relations of production cannot be modified by the intervention of the organs of bourgeois power.

This is why the transfer of private enterprises to the state or to the local government does not correspond in the slightest to the communist conception. Such a transfer is invariably accompanied by the payment of the capital value of the enterprise to the former owners who thus fully retain their right to exploit. The enterprises themselves continue to function as private enterprises within the framework of the capitalist economy, and they often become convenient instruments in the work of class preservation and defense undertaken by the bourgeois state.

13. The idea that capitalist exploitation of the proletariat can be gradually diminished and then eliminated by the legislative and reformist action of present political institutions, be it elicited by representatives of the proletarian party inside those institutions or even by mass agitation, leads only to complicity in the defense of the privileges of the bourgeoisie. The latter will on occasion pretend to give up a minimum of its privileges in order to try to appease the anger of the masses and to divert their revolutionary attempts against the bases of the capitalist regime.

14. The conquest of political power by

the proletariat, even if such an objective is considered as the final, total aim of its action, cannot be achieved by winning a majority within bourgeois elective organs.

Thanks to the executive organs of the state, which are the direct agents of the bourgeoisie, the latter very easily ensures a majority within the elective organs for its delegates or for those elements which fall under its influence or into its game because they want to individually or collectively win elective posts. Moreover, participation in such institutions requires the agreement to respect the juridical and political bases of the bourgeois constitution. This agreement is merely formal but nevertheless it is sufficient to free the bourgeoisie from even the slightest embarrassment of an accusation of formal illegality at the point when it will logically resort to its real means of armed defence rather than abandon power and permit the proletariat to smash its bureaucratic and military machine of domination.

15. To recognize the necessity of insurrectionary struggle for the seizure of power, while at the same time proposing that the proletariat exercise its power by conceding representation to the bourgeoisie in new political organizations (constituent assemblies or combinations of these with the system of workers' councils) is an unacceptable program and is opposed to the central communist demand, the dictatorship of the proletariat. The process of expropriating the bourgeoisie would be immediately compromised if this class retained a means to influence somehow the formation of the representative organs of the expropriating proletarian state. This would permit the bourgeoisie to use the influence which it will inevitably retain because of its experience and its intellectual and technical training, in order to deploy its political activity towards the reestablishment of its power in a counter-revolution. The same consequences would result if the slightest democratic prejudice was allowed to survive in regard to an equality

of treatment which is supposedly to be granted to the bourgeois by the proletarian power in such matters as freedom of association, propaganda and the press.

16. The program which proposes an organ of political representation based on delegates from the various trades and professions of all the social classes is not even in form a road leading to the system of workers' councils, since the latter is characterized by the exclusion of the bourgeois from electoral rights and its central organization is not chosen on the basis of trade but by territorial constituency. The form of representation in question is rather an inferior stage even in comparison with present parliamentary democracy.

17. Anarchism is profoundly opposed to the ideas of communism. It aims at the immediate establishment of a society without a state and political system and advocates, for the economy of the future, the autonomous functioning of units of production, rejecting any concept of a central organization and regulation of human activities in production and distribution. Such a conception is close to that of the bourgeois private economy and remains alien to the fundamental essence of communism. Moreover, the immediate elimination of the state as a machinery of political power would be equivalent to a failure to offer resistance to the counter-revolution, unless one presupposes that classes have been immediately abolished, that is to say that there has been the so-called revolutionary expropriation simultaneous with the insurrection against bourgeois power.

Not the slightest possibility of this exists, given the complexity of the proletarian tasks in the substitution of the communist economy for the present one, and given the necessity that such a process be directed by a central organization representing the general interest of the proletariat and subordinating to this interest all the local and particular interests which act as the principal conservative force within capitalism.

### III

1. The communist doctrine and economic determinism do not see communists as passive spectators of historical destiny but on the contrary as indefatigable fighters. Struggle and action, however, would be ineffective if divorced from the lessons of doctrine and of experience seen in the light of the communist critique.

2. The revolutionary work of communists is based on the organization into a party of those proletarians who unite a consciousness of communist principles with the decision to devote all their energy to the cause of the revolution. The party, organized internationally, functions on the basis of discipline towards the decisions of the majority and towards the decisions of the central organs chosen by that majority to lead the movement.

3. Propaganda and proselytism — in which the party accepts new members only on the basis of the most sure guarantees — are fundamental activities of the party. Although it bases the success of its action on the propagation of its principles and final objectives and although it struggles in the interest of the immense majority of society, the communist movement does not make the approval of the majority a pre-condition for its action. The criterion which determines the occasion to launch a revolutionary action is the objective evaluation of our own forces and those of our enemies, taking into consideration all the complex factors of which the numerical element is not the sole or even the most important determinant.

4. The communist party, internally, develops an intense work of study and political critique intimately linked to the exigencies of action and to historical experience, and it strives to organize this work on an international basis. Externally, in all circumstances and with the means at its disposal, it works to diffuse the lessons of its own critical experience and to refute enemy schools and parties. Above all,

the party conducts its activity and propaganda among the proletarian masses and works to polarize them around it, particularly at those times when they are set in motion in reaction against the conditions capitalism imposes upon them and especially within the organizations formed by proletarians to defend their immediate interests.

5. Communists therefore penetrate proletarian co-operatives, unions, factory councils, and form groups of communist workers within them. They strive to win a majority and posts of leadership so that the mass of proletarians mobilized by these associations subordinate their action to the highest political and revolutionary ends of the struggle for communism.

6. The communist party, on the other hand, remains outside all institutions and associations in which bourgeois and workers participate in common, or worse still, which are led and sponsored by members of the bourgeoisie (societies of mutual assistance, charities, cultural schools, popular universities, Freemasons' Lodges, etc.). It combats the action and influence of these institutions and associations and tries to divert proletarians from them.

7. Participation in elections to the representative organs of bourgeois democracy and participation in parliamentary activity, while always presenting a continuous danger of deviation, may be utilized for propaganda and for schooling the movement during the period in which there does not yet exist the possibility of overthrowing bourgeois rule and in which, as a consequence, the party's task is restricted to criticism and opposition. In the present period, which began with the end of the world war, with the first communist revolutions and the creation of the Third International, communists pose, as the direct objective of the political action of the proletariat in every country, the revolutionary conquest of power, to which end all the energy and all the

preparatory work of the party must be devoted.

In this period, it is inadmissible to participate in these organs which function as a powerful defensive instrument of the bourgeoisie and which are designed to operate even within the ranks of the proletariat. It is precisely in opposition to these organs, to their structure as to their function, that communists call for the system of workers' councils and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Because of the great importance which electoral activity assumes in practice, it is not possible to reconcile this activity with the assertion that it is not the means of achieving the principal objective of the party's action, which is the conquest of power. It also is not possible to prevent it from absorbing all the activity of the movement and from diverting it from revolutionary preparation.

8. The electoral conquest of local governmental bodies entails the same inconveniences as parliamentarism but to an even greater degree. It cannot be accepted as a means of action against bourgeois power for two reasons: 1) these local bodies have no real power but are subjected to the state machine, and 2) although the assertion of the principle of local autonomy can today cause some embarrassment for the ruling bourgeoisie, such a method would have the result of providing it with a base of operations in its struggle against the establishment of proletarian power and is contrary to the communist principle of centralized action.

9. In the revolutionary period, all the efforts of the communists concentrate on enabling the action of the masses to attain a maximum of intensity and efficiency. Communists combine propaganda and revolutionary preparation with the organization of large and frequent proletarian demonstrations above all in the major centers and strive to use economic movements in order to organize demonstrations of a political character in which the proletariat reaffirms and strengthens

its will to overthrow the bourgeois power.

10. The Communist Party carries its propaganda into the ranks of the bourgeois army. Communist anti-militarism is not based on a sterile humanitarianism. Its aim instead is to convince proletarians that the bourgeoisie arms them to defend its own interests and to use their force against the cause of the proletariat.

11. The Communist Party trains itself to act as the general staff of the proletariat in the revolutionary war. For this reason it prepares and organizes its own network of intelligence and communication. Above all, it supports and organizes the arming of the proletariat.

12. The Communist Party concludes no agreements or alliances with other political movements which share with it a specific immediate objective, but diverge from it in their program of further action. It must equally refuse the alliance — otherwise known as the “united front” — with all working class tendencies which accept insurrectionary action against the bourgeoisie but diverge from the communist program in the development of subsequent action.

Communists have no reason to consider the growth of forces tending to overthrow bourgeois power as a favorable condition when the forces working for the constitution of proletarian power on communist directives remain insufficient, since only a communist leadership can assure its success.

13. The soviets or councils of workers, peasants and soldiers, constitute the organs of proletarian power and can exercise their true function only after the overthrow of bourgeois rule.

Soviets are not in themselves organs of revolutionary struggle. They become revolutionary when the Communist Party wins a majority within them.

Workers' councils can also arise before the revolution, in a period of acute crisis in which the state power is seriously threatened.

In a revolutionary situation, it may be necessary for the party to take the initiative in forming soviets, but this cannot be a means of precipitating such a situation. If the power of the bourgeoisie is strengthened, the survival of councils can present a serious danger to the revolutionary struggle — the danger of a conciliation and a combination of proletarian organs with the organs of bourgeois democracy.

14. What distinguishes communists is not that, in every situation and in every episode of the class struggle, they call for the immediate mobilization of all proletarian forces for a general insurrection. What distinguishes them is that they clearly say that the phase of insurrection is an inevitable outcome of the struggle, and that they prepare the proletariat to face it in conditions favorable to the success and the further development of the revolution.

Depending on the situation — which the party can better assess than the rest of the proletariat — the party can therefore find itself confronted with the necessity to act in order to hasten or to delay the moment of the decisive battle. In any event, the specific task of the party is to fight both against those who, desiring to hasten revolutionary action at any price, could drive the proletariat into disaster, and against the opportunists who exploit every occasion in which decisive action is undesirable in order to block the revolutionary movement by diverting the action of the masses towards other objectives. The Communist Party, on the contrary, must lead the action of the masses always further in an effective preparation for the final and inevitable armed struggle against the defensive forces of bourgeois rule.

# 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 from 1848 (*The Communist Manifesto*), through the creation of the First and Second International, and the Paris Commune of 1871, to the October Revolution of 1917. 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 workingclass 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*, 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 Faction 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 initially 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 PSFs 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 historiography, 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 intimidation, 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 Kwomingtang 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  
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# suplemento en español

El capitalismo esta a la continua busca de oxígeno • Trás los “Eventos de Génova”, la única perspectiva real es la del marxismo revolucionario

- Tesis de la Fracción Comunista Abstencionista del PSI (1920)

## **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 electoral.*

# EL CAPITALISMO ESTA A LA CONTINUA BUSCA DE OXIGENO

Estamos entre aquellos, pocos y a contracorriente, que no piensan en efecto que el 11 de septiembre, con el ataque terrorista en suelo americano, se haya abierto una nueva era. El contexto en el cual se realiza el ataque a los USA y aquél en el que madura la respuesta americana, son efectivamente ulteriores demostraciones y confirmaciones de la teoría marxista sobre la dinámica de desarrollo del capitalismo y sobre las crisis y las guerras como momentos esenciales del ciclo de acumulación del sistema del capital. No nos detenemos a analizar la naturaleza de la acción padecida por los USA sobre su propio territorio. Muchas son todavía las dudas sobre la forma en que esa acción ha sido preparada y llevada a cabo, golpeando objetivos a repetición, en las barbas de todos los detectores de sofisticada tecnología de que disponen los americanos; muchas veces en la historia antigua y reciente, “estragos” pilotados han servido para hacer de fulminante de un conflicto o para amplificarlo, sin contar que muchas noticias de primera hora (incluido el número de muertos) y de primera pagina han sido abundantemente redimensionadas con el paso de los días después de haber surtido los previstos efectos propagandísticos. Queda el hecho de que la primera potencia económica y militar mundial ha sido golpeada en su propio territorio y esto, como sucedió con Inglaterra, aunque se tratase entonces efectivamente de un acto de guerra verdadera, representa un duro golpe para su imagen de cara a sus competidores e, históricamente, una ulterior ratificación de su fase de declive, a despecho de todas las pregonadas elucubraciones sobre el Imperio y sobre el post-imperialismo. Pero queda también el ridículo de las ostentaciones de un antiimperialismo al uso que - a la desesperada búsqueda de una bandera nacional con la cual ondear al viento su propio chovinismo - acaba atribuyéndole al islamismo más retrógrado (y por consiguiente a la ideología mas reaccionaria y corruptora del proletariado: la religión) una pretensión cualquiera de representación - ya fuera indirecta o por Némesis histórica - de los intereses materiales de las masas árabes desheredadas. Otras confirmaciones del marxismo... ¡si es que hacían falta!

Lenin repetía que “no existen guerras abstractas o guerras en general, sino solamente guerras determinadas, ligadas a la situación concreta del periodo histórico en el cual éstas se desarrollan y a las relaciones de fuerza entre las clases y los Estados del mundo”. ¿Cuál es hoy esta situación concreta? Responder a esta pregunta es esencial para comprender qué esta sucediendo, cuáles son las causas y cuáles serán los efectos para los equilibrios en las relaciones entre Estados y entre clases, y cuál debe ser la actitud del movimiento proletario. El capitalismo, por más que se extienda internacionalmente y profundice en medida cada vez mayor el sometimiento a sus leyes de naciones y continentes, no puede suprimir espontáneamente su base nacional ni puede evitar sucumbir a la dinámica de su desarrollo y de sus contradicciones o cancelar su estructura anárquica. La misma acumulación capitalista produce una creciente sobreproducción y un progresivo restreñimiento de los mercados de salida, y su trayectoria está destinada a transformarse, antes o después, en catástrofe económica y social, aun tanto más virulenta cuanto mayor ha sido el recurso a medios, como el crédito y el endeudamiento, utilizados como apoyo de la producción y de los consumos. En la época imperialista se

acentúa la desigualdad del desarrollo y se modifican continuamente las relaciones de fuerza entre Estados sobre la base de la respectiva fuerza del capital, así que cada Estado está obligado a conducir una áspera lucha en cualquier terreno para disputar una mejor posición en el mercado mundial y un reparto más favorable de las zonas de influencia y del producto mundial. En el fondo, la teoría del “espacio vital” americano, elaborada por los USA en 1983 con la doctrina *Airland Battle*, no era más que la sanción, en el terreno de las relaciones políticas (y no se olvide que la política es el concentrado de la economía), del arranque de la preparación de guerras que no podían ya ceñirse a un terreno limitado, sino que tenían un carácter “global”, porque tal era la extensión del espacio vital y de los intereses americanos; los imperialismos competidores, desde entonces, no han hecho más que chupar rueda en la búsqueda de un instrumento militar y de la correspondiente organización funcional a éste.

La crisis económica mundial que se abrió a mitad de los años setenta, ha determinado una aceleración en el proceso de reducción de distancias entre el imperialismo americano, cuya formidable posición hegemónica heredada de la posguerra garantizaba al sistema capitalista un centro reconocido para su necesaria estabilidad, y los imperialismos competidores (Japón y Alemania los primeros), que sin embargo no están preparados todavía para sustituir a aquel en su función guía. Este proceso ha acentuado las características de conflictividad e inestabilidad de todo el capitalismo mundial explicitándolas sobre todo a partir del derrumbamiento de la ex URSS y del orden mundial seguido a la segunda carnicería imperialista. En este marco, la necesidad del control sobre los flujos de mercancías y capitales, sobre las fuentes de materias primas (petróleo y gas natural sobre todas, en una proporción que hoy llega a representar cerca del 50% de los intercambios físicos), del control de las vías de transporte de tales materias primas y de las vías de tráfico comercial, se acentúa con la profundización de la crisis y con el agotamiento progresivo de los medios a disposición del capital para prevenirla o para regular sus efectos. Es en este contexto que la región del Asia Central hasta Afganistán, asume una importancia relevante para la política de potencia del capital americano. En Asia Central, Afganistán juega decididamente un papel estratégico en los equilibrios económicos y militares, tanto en el eje Norte-Sur (Rusia / Océano Índico) como en el eje Este-Oeste (China / Golfo Pérsico), y está en el centro de los intereses estratégicos, ligados al transporte de petróleo y gas natural, de Estados Unidos y Arabia Saudita (que junto a Pakistán fueron los organizadores, financiadores y suministradores del ejército talibán, con la intención de que éste estabilizara la región en detrimento del monopolio ruso sobre el tránsito de oleoductos y gaseoductos), de Rusia e Irán, China y Turquía, sin contar todas las potencias imperialistas europeas y asiáticas importadoras de materias primas energéticas. A través del apoyo a la avanzada de los talibán, los USA apuntaban a la instauración de un nuevo status-quo bajo su control indirecto, tratando de garantizarse de esta forma una vía alternativa al petróleo del Golfo, explotando la situación que se creó después de la disolución de la Unión Soviética y las consiguientes dificultades financieras que impedían a Rusia ligar establemente a ella a las nuevas repúblicas caucásicas y centro asiáticas, sustrayendo a la competencia una carta alternativa en la búsqueda de fuentes de aprovisionamiento fuera del control americano. No nos habíamos equivocado hace años al juzgar demasiado optimistas las ilusiones americanas de controlar fácilmente el empleo del monstruo de Frankenstein que habían creado y de disponer de él a su propio placer y hasta que hubiera servido.

A despecho del estrépito de la prensa burguesa y de las clases medias aterrorizadas, sostenemos y demostramos que no hay ninguna “guerra” en acción, sino sólo una vasta obra de nuevo diseño de las alianzas interimperialistas en una fase que puede representar el arranque de una crisis o fase de interguerra cuyos tiempos serán dictados por la



evolución de la crisis económica mundial, de sus tiempos y de su intensidad, como por la reacción proletaria a la inevitable exacerbación de sus propias condiciones materiales. De hecho, el verdadero gran “enemigo” del imperialismo es otro u otros imperialismos, sus competidores directos en los mercados de las mercancías y de los capitales. En su desarrollo contradictorio, el capital ha cancelado todas las civilizaciones para asimilarlas y unificarlas bajo la única “civilización” del capital: la ley del valor y de la producción. En el interior de esta dinámica de desarrollo hay espacio para el conflicto cerrado entre capitales y para toda suerte de trabajo “sucio” de debilitamiento del adversario, incluida la guerra a escala limitada; pero la guerra imperialista se impone - a los mismos agentes del capital - como necesidad externa dictada por las exigencias de valorización del capital, cuando no puede existir otra solución que la masiva destrucción de recursos y hombres para conseguir iniciar de nuevo el ciclo de la acumulación y restaurar la estabilidad interimperialista a escala mundial. La guerra imperialista no puede nacer de un acto de voluntad con miras a imponer la propia ideología o un propio presunto conjunto de valores: ningún Estado o coalición de Estados ha combatido jamás por estos motivos. Al contrario, la guerra imperialista es el máximo momento de solidaridad del cual es capaz el capitalismo, porque está dirigida ante todo a conservar las leyes de funcionamiento del capitalismo mismo; en efecto, por un lado, la acumulación para repartir a escala adecuada tiene necesidad de ingentes y veloces destrucciones para frenar la caída de la tasa de ganancia, por otro, la guerra está dirigida sobre todo contra el proletariado.

Ningún “reto” de civilización, pues, entre el mundo de la democracia y el de la teocracia: por otra parte, benditas por curas de “diferente” túnica, la finanza “occidental” y la “islámica” se han revelado ambas como medio impersonal a través del cual la burguesía mundial de cualquier latitud chupa plusvalía y centraliza y dirige la producción y su reparto. La religión islámica en sus distintas formas, exactamente como la cristiana, se ha hecho funcional - en el campo de su competencia, o sea al servicio de la estabilidad social del Medio Oriente y de los intereses de las clases dominantes meridionales y asiáticas - para el dominio del imperialismo mundial confederado y de su lucha por su conservación y reproducción contra la clase proletaria mundial. La clase proletaria y las masas desheredadas de los países árabes y asiáticos a las que hoy se les dirige invitaciones para la “guerra” de los pobres contra los ricos del mundo y para la “guerra” de religión, no pueden encontrar en estos viejos arneses del nacionalismo más retorcido su propia salvación, como en su tiempo demostró la Internacional Comunista promoviendo el Congreso de los Pueblos de Oriente en Bakú e invitando a las plebes de los continentes de color a unirse a la lucha internacional de la clase proletaria mundial para abatir al capitalismo. El Partido Comunista Internacional está sideralmente distante de la justificación, de la excitación y de la retórica patriótica, como de la simpatía por la pretendida venganza nacionalista y religiosa, hija de la ineptitud, del primitivismo y del atraso político; de la misma forma que combate también el pacifismo cobarde, típica expresión de la ideología de las clases medias, incapaz de comprender la verdadera naturaleza de la guerra y por ello destinado a ser un instrumento auxiliar al servicio del imperialismo a través de la obra de desorientación y desorganización llevada a cabo entre las filas proletarias. El capitalismo mundial se encuentra inmerso en una crisis profundísima, que el estallido de la bola especulativa de los años 1998 - 2000 ha evidenciado, pero al mismo tiempo ha tomado las medidas para suavizarla. Los USA, en particular, se encuentran en una situación que los mismos comentaristas burgueses definen como debilidad estructural, con “el endeudamiento neto de dos mil millones de dólares con el resto del mundo... con reservas que apenas garantizan el 4% de dicha cifra, el creciente déficit comercial que en el 2000 ha alcanzado la cifra récord de 400 mil millones de dólares, y los errores de súper inversiones en la nueva-economía”. (“SAR)... l’ Europa a

salvare gli USA”, *Il Sole 24 ore* del 22/09/2001). La constatación de este estado de cronicidad en la crisis económica mundial era bien evidente antes del ataque a las Torres de Nueva York, y este último únicamente ha hecho posible y acelerado, sin combatir, algunas intervenciones como el “juego de equipo” entre los bancos centrales para salvaguardar el sistema internacional de pagos, con una introducción de liquidez definida sin precedentes en la historia de las finanzas internacionales, y le ha permitido al capital financiero americano asestar algún golpe directo a sus competidores imperialistas de Asia y Europa haciendo “caja” a través de fuertes ventas sobre todo en las Bolsas europeas, impidiendo la caída de los títulos americanos y permitiendo una recuperación del cambio del dólar. (“Gli Usa fanno cassa in Europa”, *IL Sole 24 Ore* del 22/09/2001). Estas medidas han acentuado las causas de fondo de la conflictividad interimperialista, si bien han permitido a los USA marcarle cómodamente un tanto a sus adversarios. El retorno a las políticas keynesianas de “déficit spending”, relanzadas por los acontecimientos, gracias a una maniobra inmediata valorada ya en unos 300 mil millones de dólares (saneamiento de compañías aéreas, reconstrucción de infraestructuras, sin contar las financiaciones que serán concedidas a la investigación científica y a la industria militar y que pronto engordarán “por voluntad popular” un presupuesto de defensa que puede disponer según cifras oficiales de 310 mil millones de dólares de asignación estable cada año). A esta “recuperación” del keynesismo en América, tarde o temprano deber seguirle la europea, por ahora encerrada en las jaulas del “Pacto de estabilidad” que todos quisieran hacer saltar pronto, pues de otra forma los USA podrán marcar un segundo tanto a su favor, descargando buena parte de los costes de la crisis sobre Europa y Asia. Pero, atención, esta recuperación del intervencionismo estatal no es todavía indicador de ese “rearme keynesista” que nuestra corriente ha definido siempre como la señal explícita de la preparación de un conflicto interimperialista. Ese debería coincidir con una reanudación “contra natura” de la actividad productiva y comportaría extensos y repentinos (y continuos, al menos por un par de años) incrementos del gasto público, además del presupuesto de defensa de todos los países. Nos encontramos seguramente, y no de hoy, en una fase que prevé, como desembocadura histórica, la preparación de la futura guerra imperialista o de la revolución, pero todavía - y por fortuna, visto el estado en el que discurre el movimiento proletario, aún sometido al encuadramiento oportunista - le harán falta años al capitalismo mundial para “preparar” el arranque de la economía de guerra, la militarización de la economía, y sobre todo las condiciones sociales de conducción de la guerra. En este espacio de tiempo se convierte en fundamental la actividad de preparación y encuadramiento proletario por obra del Partido Comunista a fin de que pueda responderse a la guerra imperialista con la guerra al imperialismo, a partir de la lucha intransigente contra la propia burguesía.

Por paradójico que pueda parecerle a cualquier alma cándida, la burguesía tendría necesidad de la guerra, pero no consigue hacerla. El mismo tejido de intereses ligado al transporte de las principales fuentes energéticas, sobre las cuales prácticamente se asienta Afganistán, ofrece al mismo tiempo la explicación de cómo la política americana tiene que moverse con extrema cautela: los USA están buscando situarse a lo largo del eje Balcanes - Oriente Medio - Asia Central; han introducido seguramente en su dispositivo de alianzas a Rusia y China; pero deben contar con las exigencias contrastantes del capitalismo alemán y japonés, que por ahora se ven obligados a moverse con mucha discreción. No pueden repetir - en lo que respecta a la técnica militar - expediciones como la del Golfo: la configuración del terreno, la importancia de altas cadenas montañosas fuertemente pronunciadas que dan la posibilidad tanto de dominar como de envolver a aquellos que ocupan la cresta montañosa y la parte de la vertiente que da al lado adversario, y no permiten una resolución limitada a las incursiones aéreas; de ello se deduce que la única posibilidad de éxito para los USA consiste en el intento de divi-

dir el frente taliban (y están probando a hacerlo, en el momento en que escribimos, con la mediación de Paquistán y Arabia Saudita y la promesa de ayudas financieras), o bien en el empleo del Frente de los muyahidines anti-talibanes que, abastecido con armas y equipamientos, ha comenzado ya a avanzar y a conquistar pasos militares de importancia relevante, después de haber estado obligado durante años a agazaparse en un 4 - 6 % de territorio del norte de Afganistán. Pero en ambos casos, sobre los que alegremente está trabajando la diplomacia secreta de medio mundo amparada por la consigna de la “lucha contra el terrorismo internacional”, la partida no podría considerarse cerrada, estando tales alianzas fuertemente condicionadas por un orden regional que resultaría todavía muy precario respecto a los equilibrios interimperialistas, y para confirmarlo basta pensar en el contraste entre India y Paquistán o entre Turquía e Irán, donde dichos equilibrios son, por consiguiente, fácilmente susceptibles de romperse.

En un tiempo inmediato, el verdadero resultado de estos acontecimientos será la posibilidad para todos los Estados burgueses de reforzar las medidas de control en el frente interno, en función de una ulterior contención de las reivindicaciones proletarias que podrían seguir al mayor agravamiento de sus condiciones materiales bajo la presión de la crisis. Rechazar la “sirena” del pacifismo y de la solidaridad nacional e interclasista se hace por ello muy importante para el movimiento proletario de cada país, para evitar un ulterior retroceso de las posibilidades de una futura recuperación autónoma y clasista. Pero el cadáver más importante que queda en el terreno, y registramos esto con mucha satisfacción, aunque durante algún tiempo pueda todavía circular como un “zombi”, es el de los movimientos “no-global” que han pasado apresuradamente y con furia a refugiarse bajo las túnicas papalinas en nombre - como tradicionalmente han venido haciendo, y como era de prever - de la no violencia, de la justicia, de la paz y de la democracia. Este movimiento, ya muerto, es la demostración de que la pequeña burguesía mundial fuera de control se ha vuelto a alinear rápidamente en la política de sagrada unión nacional, y tal comportamiento se convertirá en auténtico apoyo a la “verdadera” guerra de la propia burguesía cuando se presenten las condiciones para iniciarla; también esto debe servir como enseñanza para el proletariado de cualquier raza y latitud.

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# Tras los “eventos de Génova”, la única perspectiva real es la del marxismo revolucionario

Los “hechos de Génova” son ya demasiado conocidos para que se deban resumir y recordar aquí. En las calles de la ciudad y en los cuerpos de las decenas de miles de concentrados, “para manifestarse contra los poderosos de la tierra”, se representó un trágico recital, un lívido juego de las partes cuyo balance fué el de un joven asesinado, centenares de heridos y arrestados y, sobre todo, el usual bailecito de lamentaciones y mutuas acusaciones, indignación y cinismo.

Todo ello, desde las manifestaciones anti-globalización a su brutal represión policial con sus resultados, acarrea el riesgo de ahogar un problema real y de siempre (cómo luchar contra el capitalismo) en una enésima ciénaga democratoide y reformista, recriminatoria y moralista que no hace que se dé ni siquiera un paso adelante hacia una perspectiva aunque sea lejanamente clasista, sino que se den en cambio bastantes pasos hacia atrás.

Quien desee, pues, extraer de verdad, con seriedad y lucidez, algunas lecciones no episódicas de los “hechos de Génova”, deber hacerlo partiendo necesariamente de algunas consideraciones generales. Veámoslas, emplazando al lector, para ulteriores ampliaciones e integraciones, al amplio artículo sobre el “movimiento no-global” que también publicamos en este y en el próximo número, el 42.

1) El Estado no es un organismo que esté por encima de las partes; un padre severo pero justo que se preocupa del bien de todos imparcialmente. Por el contrario - y el marxismo lo ha proclamado siempre en teoría y demostrado en los hechos -, el Estado es un producto de la división en clases de las sociedades, y no puede ser más que el instrumento

del dominio (y del mantenimiento de este dominio) de la clase que está en el poder. En el caso de la burguesía, la expresión social del capital, en cuanto potencia económica mundial. Y precisamente el Estado burgués está al servicio de los intereses generales del capital en el plano tanto nacional como internacional, con todas las contradicciones que esto implica, independientemente de los títeres que estén en el gobierno de éste o aquél país, en éste o en aquél momento.

Crear o (peor aún!) hacer creer que el Estado burgués pueda y deba representar a la “colectividad”, a los “ciudadanos” (y que si no lo hace es sólo porque un puñado de bribones lo ha ocupado sometiéndolo a su propio arbitrio) significa nutrir y alimentar una ilusión desastrosa. Proclamar que el Estado tiene que ser “arrancado del control de las multinacionales” o de “los intereses corporativos” y “restituido a su papel de tutela de la colectividad” significa sólo desempeñar un trabajo mixtificante, de desarme teórico-político, de engaño y de abierta traición.

2) Con sus “destacamentos especiales de hombres armados, cárceles, etc.” (Lenin, Estado y revolución), este Estado es pues el órgano de dominio de la clase dominante burguesa. Como tal, éste ha sido, es y será siempre enemigo declarado de la revolución y del comunismo, como también de cualquier lucha parcial para la defensa de las condiciones de vida y de trabajo de las masas explotadas (el ejemplo de los trabajadores del metal vapuleados en Génova bastante antes del G8 ha sido rápidamente olvidado por todos: y en cambio debería hacernos reflexionar). Lamentarse porque el Estado ha desempeñado su propio papel represivo significa no

comprender lo mas mínimo qué es el Estado y qué es el régimen parlamentario que salio victorioso de la segunda carnicería mundial. Significa, pues, poner y ponerse en la imposibilidad teórica y practica de ofrecerle resistencia y de combatirlo. Con el G8 de Génova, la burguesía italiana ha aprovechado inmediatamente la ocasión para llevar a cabo algunas grandes maniobras militares, para poner a prueba hombres y medios, estrategia y logística, demostrando una vez mas: a) que tiene la percepción (madurada a través de una experiencia plurisecular) de que la profundización y la extensión de la crisis económica anuncian tiempos críticos, de crecientes tensiones sociales y que, por tanto, es necesario prepararse declarando abiertamente en qué forma se piensa responder - con la violencia y la represión-; de hecho, el destinatario último de este mensaje es el proletariado que mañana luchara, contra el cual la declarada violencia burguesa se alterna con la cautivación democratica para defender la supervivencia y el dominio impersonal del capital, y sólo en segundo orden las clases medias, que hoy se quejan de su acentuada precariedad y que deben ser reconducidas a pretensiones mas suaves; b) que sabe aprovecharse de la incipiente irresponsabilidad de los llamados "movimientos antagonistas" (que equivale a decir de un espontaneismo que, armado o pacifista, tiene una larga y nefasta tradición conduciendo a la derrota, y a la dispersión a fuerzas organizativa y políticamente inermes) para dividir, quebrantar, intimidar, reprimir y paralizar.

3) "Estado policial"? "Situación chilena?". El Estado burgués constituye sus aparatos de control y represión para mantener siempre con respecto a la clase proletaria un nivel de violencia potencial, con el objetivo de desplegarla abiertamente cuando convenga a sus fines. Quien habla hoy de "policía democratica" es un cretino o un siervo fiel de la burguesía. Desde hace mas de medio siglo, nosotros, comunistas internacionalistas, sostenemos que los regimenes salidos victoriosos de la segunda masacre mundial, detras de la fachada democratica, han heredado del nazifascismo la sustancia profunda, económica, social y política: concentración

de los poderes estatales, centralización de la vida económica con intervención directa del estado como salvaguardia de los intereses capitalistas, creciente militarización de la vida social, integración de los sindicatos en el estado, constitución de un gran clientelismo, creación mediatica del consenso, etc. Y hemos definido este régimen como "democracia blindada". Demócratas, estalinistas, reformistas, espontaneistas de todas las variedades, mientras que se daban un gran trabajo en dismantelar pieza a pieza incluso sólo el recuerdo de lo que es marxismo, lucha de clase, política revolucionaria y comunismo, no han encontrado nada mejor que hacer que reirse de nuestro analisis "viejo y superado": salvo luego, cuando se escapan los palos, los carruseles de jeep y el muerto, derramar lágrimas de cocodrilo por la "democracia violada". Ellos, ya se llamen hoy PRC o "monos blancos", GSF o Black Bloc, o se reconozcan en el arco iris folclorista de nombres y siglas coloridas (o descoloridas?), ya estén a sueldo de las instituciones burguesas, a las que fingen combatir, o movidos por una contestación existencial y estéril, -ellos, son corresponsables en primera persona del desastre de experiencias colectivas como la "manifestación anti-G8 de Génova" - un desastre que sólo puede nutrir frustración y sentido de impotencia o alimentar una reacción en cadena de tentaciones aventureras: todo ello, de cualquier modo, bajo el signo del rechazo de la perspectiva (y por tanto de la preparación) revolucionaria.

4) Es evidente que un movimiento como el "no-global" o de cualquier otra forma que quiera llamarse (esta carrera, cuyo fin es ella misma, por darle nombre a algo que no tiene sustancia), además de no ofrecer ninguna respuesta real al canibalismo y a la putrefacción capitalistas, le presta óptimamente el flanco a cualquier tipo de provocación, agresión e infiltración, precisamente por su caracter indefinido, fluido y "ecuménico", por sus inexistentes contornos político-programaticos y por su naturaleza ecléctica, espontanea e improvisada. Pero el problema no es sólo el de los provocadores o de los infiltrados: el problema es que el "movimiento no-global" está completamente exento de

cualquier discurso teórico-político y por tanto se confía en ese género de "participacionismo ético de masa" que únicamente puede conducir a desastrosas derrotas. Frente a las contorsiones verbales de los revolucionarios de opereta que primero se dan aires de "duros" dirigentes del movimiento para después hacer de papanatas diciendo que "la policía no ha respetado los pactos", valgan los "hechos de Génova" al menos para recordar que la política revolucionaria, en ninguna de sus formas, desde el anónimo trabajo de preparación teórica hasta la propaganda y el proselitismo, desde la huelga hasta el piquete, desde la paralización de la producción hasta la manifestación callejera - sin incomodar por el momento la toma del poder y la instauración de la dictadura proletaria -, todo ello no es una excursión o un paseo por la playa en los que se participa con guitarras y botellas de cerveza, no es un "street rave" en el que se vuelven a encontrar los amigos para después contar que "también estaba yo", ni tampoco la enésima ocasión para dar rienda suelta a la propia rabia nihilista e individual. Ahora bien, para luchar consecuentemente contra el régimen del capital en todas sus formas, es necesario algo más que cualquier cita de guerrilla urbana aquí y allá en el mundo, o la petición gimoteante de "espacios alternativos", o la vaga y equívoca "globalización desde abajo", que no es más que un perverso reformismo barnizado de cristianuchos llamamientos al buen corazón. Por esto son necesarias hoy la preparación revolucionaria; la destrucción de todo mito burgués y pequeño-burgués (desde el pacifismo hasta la democracia, desde el ecologismo al "estado social", etc.); la reafirmación de la teoría marxista integral contra todos los ataques llevados a cabo por la ideología del capital y por la contrarrevolución estaliniana que ha destruido toda tradición de lucha del movimiento proletario internacional; la difusión a nivel mundial del Partido comunista internacional. Y mañana serán necesarias la revolución mundial y la dictadura del proletariado dirigido por su partido.

5) La "globalización" no es un proceso perverso puesto en marcha en los últimos años por un puñado de egoístas (individuos, em-

presas, estados) que pisotean cotidianamente los "derechos colectivos", al que pueda oponerse una confusa procesión una vez cada cierto tiempo, o destrozando un Mc-Donalds, devastando un campo de la Monsanto o rompiendo los cristales de un banco (preferiblemente estadounidense). Lo que impropia-mente es llamado "globalización" es el proceso a través del cual, desde siempre y con velocidad e intensidad diferentes según las fases, el capitalismo tiende a penetrar en cada ángulo del mundo - proceso analizado y descrito por el marxismo desde la época del Manifiesto del Partido Comunista, un libro "viejo", de 150 años, que alguno haría bien en leerse de nuevo.

A lo que se está asistiendo, desde hace un cuarto de siglo, es a la intensificación de este proceso bajo el impulso de una crisis económica estructural que ha estallado como consecuencia del fin del ciclo expansivo de la economía capitalista, que a su vez fué posibilitado por las gigantescas destrucciones de mercancías (objetos, infraestructuras y seres humanos) causadas por la segunda carnicería imperialista. Para superar a una crisis de tal alcance, el capital conoce sólo algunos medios, cada uno de los cuales está destinado a su vez a profundizarla: intensificación de la competencia comercial y del control de los mercados, de las fuentes de materias primas y de las rutas comerciales (que equivale a la agudización de los contrastes interimperialistas); introducción de tecnologías cada vez más sofisticadas (igual a expulsión de mano de obra con crecimiento de la desocupación, contracción del trabajo vivo que produce plusvalía y por lo tanto ganancias); proletarianización de sectores cada vez más amplios de la población mundial para asegurarse mano de obra más chantajeable y barata (igual a grandes flujos migratorios, crecientes tensiones sociales, destrucción de equilibrios naturales seculares en amplias áreas del planeta, aumento de la inseguridad de las condiciones materiales de vida). Al final de todo esto, cuando ya todo ello no sea válido, la solución última: una nueva masacre mundial que destruya todo lo que se ha producido en exceso (mercancías y seres humanos), como sucedió ya con la Primera y con la Segunda guerra mundial. Se

trata de una necesidad de vida o muerte para el capital, y no de egoismos individuales o sanguinarias maldades: y por lo tanto sólo rompiendo una vez por todas este ciclo infernal, podrá evitarse que el capital destruya a la especie humana.

6) Desde este punto de vista, es evidente que ni el pacifismo ético y plañidero de las manos alzadas (ejemplar signo de rendición) ni el rebelismo anarcoide de los "ocupas" (con su absoluta y reivindicada falta de estructura y programa político) son una respuesta. La única respuesta es el retorno a escena, después de decenios de devastadora contrarrevolución (entre estalinismo, fascismo y democracia), de la clase obrera internacional: no porque ella sea "genéticamente revolucionaria" como quisiera cualquier ingenuo, sino porque tiene el poder potencial de bloquear los nudos vitales del capitalismo, de golpearlo allí donde se produce la plusvalía, y de amenazar seriamente por tanto al poder burgués. Y este retorno debe ser preparado y posibilitado, día a día, con un trabajo constante de clarificación, de organización y de dirección, luchando contra todas las posiciones reformistas, legalitarias y democráticas que desvían a la clase obrera de su camino, que la enredan en perspectivas que no son suyas, que la atan al cadáver putrefacto (pero que desgraciadamente todavía camina) de la economía capitalista, de su estado, y de su nación. Mientras la crisis económica pone las premisas, erosionando

reservas y garantías, ilusiones y convicciones, este retorno debe ser preparado con paciencia y seriedad, lucidez y conocimiento, y al mismo tiempo con la pasión y con el ardor que han caracterizado a generación tras generación de comunistas revolucionarios: sin correr tras los fantasmas del espontaneismo, del subjetivismo o de la contestación, del "todo y hoy" o del "concreto aquí y ahora", sino trabajando por un mañana que sólo puede tener sus raíces en el hoy; por un hoy que sólo tiene sentido si viene proyectado hacia un mañana, no importa cuan lejano sea.

Esto se puede y se debe hacer. Pero sólo puede hacerse volviendo al marxismo revolucionario: con el duro pero entusiasmante trabajo de la preparación revolucionaria; de la propaganda y del proselitismo; de la difusión de la teoría y del programa comunistas; de la lucha continua y puntual contra todas las ideologías declaradamente enemigas o, peor aún, fingidamente amigas; de la formación de nuevas generaciones revolucionarias destinadas a días mas luminosos que los de hoy; de la guía y de la dirección de las luchas proletarias en el mundo en el sentido abiertamente anticapitalista; del arraigo internacional del partido de clase, sólido en su organización y en su doctrina.

Puede parecer una perspectiva lejana, pero en realidad es la única posible Y realista si se quieren evitar otros desastres bastante mas graves.

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# TESIS DE LA FRACCIÓN COMUNISTA ABSTENCIONISTA DEL PSI (1920)

## PREMISA

La tesis de la Fracción Comunista Abstencionista del Partido Socialista Italiano, que volvemos a publicar aquí, tomadas de los numeros 16 y 17 del 6 y 27 de Junio de 1920 de "Il Soviet", fueron redactadas en la primavera del mismo año y aprobadas por la conferencia nacional mantenida por la Fracción en los días 8 y 9 de mayo en Florencia.

Como es conocido, nuestra corriente, se organizó ya a finales de 1918 en torno al semanario "Il Soviet" sobre el hilo de la larga batalla mantenida durante la guerra sobre las mismas posiciones de Lenin y de la Izquierda de Zimmerwald; se constituyó en Fracción Comunista Abstencionista a primeros de Julio de 1919. El adjetivo **abstencionista** fue conservado esencialmente para distinguirla de la fracción serratiana, que también se proclamaba **comunista**; pero como salta a la vista desde estas Tesis, lo que la calificaba y definía no era la cuestión particular del abstencionismo, sino la adhesión *total* a la doctrina revolucionaria comunista restablecida en su integridad por los bolcheviques, de los que nuestros nacionalistas tenían una idea extremadamente confusa, en la mejor de las hipótesis, y completamente distorsionada en la peor.

Las **tesis** preceden en unos meses al que fue llamado, justamente, verdadero congreso constitutivo de la Internacional Comunista, el II Congreso (19 de JulioB7 de Agosto de 1920) y representan por un lado la *única* aportación internacional que se adaptó plenamente a los principios directores del cuerpo de tesis programáticas y tácticas que salió después en aquella sesión mundial del movimiento proletario, y por otra parte un claro ejemplo de lo que la Izquierda esperaba By lo que dijo su representante sobre el curso del debate sobre las **condiciones de admisión a la Internacional Comunista**, como también, y más explícitamente, en artículos aparecidos antes y después de la constitución oficial del PC de Italia [Véase en el "Il Soviet" n° 24 del 3 de octubre de 1920, *En torno al congreso Internacional Comunista*, y en *Rassegna Comunista* n° 4, del 31 de Mayo de 1921, en *Partido y Acción de Clase*: *Quizás habría sido mejor si el congreso, en lugar de seguir la disposición de argumentos que siguió en las diversas tesis, todas teórico-tácticas, hubiese fijado las bases fundamentales de la concepción teórico-programática comunista sobre cuya aceptación se debería fundar primeramente la organización de todos los partidos adherentes; y, por consiguiente, se hubiesen formulado las normas fundamentales de acción frente al problema sindical, agrario, colonial, etc., en cuya observación disciplinada están comprometidos todos los adherentes...* - de la misma asamblea plenaria: un texto que, partiendo de la definición general de los principios y de las finalidades del movimiento comunista, recogiese y expresase al mismo tiempo la crítica a las variopintas **escuelas** adversarias y las insuperables normas de acción (la **táctica**) del partido a escala no local, ni contingente, sino mundial e histórica, y opusiese como tal una barrera insuperable a los muchos **reconvertidos** a un comunismo que se había puesto **de moda** (la frase no es nuestra, sino de la premisa a los *Estatutos* del Comintern).

Las **tesis**, en efecto, no son concebidas como plataforma de doctrina y acción de *un* partido *nacional*, sino como un esquema de las bases programáticas y tácticas que necesariamente distinguen al partido de la revolución comunista, respecto a las cuales



hemos defendido siempre y defendemos que no debe ser concebible, ni por tanto, admisible, una **consulta** preventiva de corrientes o de individuos ni, cuando esta tuviese lugar, una aceptación **por disciplina** de deliberaciones mayoritarias, tratándose de adherirse o no a un patrimonio colectivo, impersonal e invariante sin el que sería vano definirse o pretenderse comunistas: *En las confrontaciones o cuestionamientos del programa - dirá Bordiga en nombre de la Izquierda en el congreso de Moscú - no existe disciplina. O se acepta o no se acepta; y en este último caso se deja el partido. El programa es algo común para todos, no es una propuesta de la mayoría de los compañeros.*

La exigencia de un programa *único* para todas las secciones de la Internacional Comunista - devenida así finalmente **partido comunista mundial** - estaba tan viva en la Izquierda, que en el II Congreso, su portavoz, cuya participación para darle forma definitiva a las condiciones de admisión fue determinante, pidió que allí donde (en el proyecto originario de los bolcheviques) se invitaba **a los partidos que han conservado hasta hoy sus viejos programas socialdemócratas a modificarlos en el tiempo más breve posible, y elaborar, correspondientemente con las condiciones particulares de su país, un nuevo programa comunista en el sentido de las deliberaciones de la Internacional Comunista**, se escribiese en su lugar **elaborar un nuevo programa comunista en el cual los principios de la Internacional Comunista estén fijados de modo inequívoco y plenamente concordante con las resoluciones de los congresos internacionales: la minoría que se declare contra este programa, por tal motivo debe ser excluida de la organización del partido**. Así se habrían puesto fuera de la circulación, a priori, **las excepciones nacionales** que ofrecían a los grupos oportunistas un arma preciosa para eludir las cuestiones de fondo, y luego tendrán como bautismo la desgraciada fórmula de las **vías nacionales al socialismo**, manifestación extrema de la traición.

Que por lo demás se trate de la *única* aportación internacional a la solución de los problemas del movimiento comunista plenamente concordante con las posiciones ásperamente defendidas por los bolcheviques está demostrado por el hecho de que, a pesar de lo tenue de las relaciones internacionales, aquí están afrontados uno por uno los mismos temas del siguiente congreso (II) mundial, sin que *nunca* aflore ni una sola de las desviaciones teóricas, desde entonces perfiladas particularmente en Alemania, en referencia a las cuestiones centrales del partido como *órgano* de la revolución proletaria y de su dictadura, de las relaciones entre el partido y las organizaciones económicas de la clase obrera, de las condiciones necesarias para la constitución de los Soviets, y de la naturaleza específica de estos; como también en relación al debatido problema del **parlamentarismo revolucionario**, acerca del cual no se remachará nunca suficientemente que la posición asumida por la Izquierda no tenía ni tuvo nunca nada en común con las de origen anarcosindicalista de los abstencionistas alemanes y holandeses [Véase nuestro texto **O Preparación Revolucionaria o Preparación Electoral** y el volumen I de la *Storia della Sinistra*]. El esquema no tiene, por otra parte, nada de académico; su formulación es un arma cortante de delimitación del partido de clase de cualquier otra formación política sedicentemente afín, sobre el doble plano de la teoría y de la praxis - dos términos que el marxismo considera por definición inseparables: la teoría no siendo tal se aísla de la praxis (o sea, de la lucha real de emancipación del proletariado) y la segunda no alcanzando su objetivo, e incluso convirtiéndose en su contrario, se separa de la primera, y confiada en su desenvolvimiento al juego imprevisto e imprevisible de los flujos y reflujos de las situaciones contingentes [Hemos hablado de **esquema** a ojos vista, porque desde entonces la Izquierda reivindicó la necesidad de dotarse de una formulación *estable* para toda una serie de puntos programáticos y tácticos *incluso a costa* de una cierta *simplificación*, por lo demás inevitable y, con fines de la acción práctica; todo lo contrario de contra-

productente, (porque tales puntos son y es necesario que sean, al mismo tiempo *con-signas!*).

La misma definición de la doctrina y del programa - es decir, de las finalidades últimas, y de la vía obligada para conseguirlas - en la primera parte de las Tesis es, como siempre para nosotros, la premisa de una *selección orgánica* de los militantes sin la cual no sería tampoco posible la acción eficiente, segura y disciplinada de lo que ellos, anticipando las clásicas fórmulas del II Congreso, llaman el **órgano** de la lucha revolucionaria; o sea, el partido. Y, mientras excluye aunque sólo fuese como objeto de debate cualquier **versión** del marxismo fundada sobre presupuestos idealistas, excluye también toda concepción de la histórica lucha de emancipación proletaria que no desconozca o ignore los inevitables desarrollos, o que los considere pasivos ante desembocaduras alternativas, entre las cuales, sólo la **experiencia** permitiría decidir con **conocimiento de causa**.

Así también, la presentación de los pilares ideológicos (el materialismo dialéctico) y programáticos (realización del comunismo a través de la vía *única* de la conquista revolucionaria del poder y del ejercicio de la dictadura proletaria, con todas las medidas de orden político y económico que conllevan, bajo la dirección hegemónica del partido), en una presentación que volverá a aparecer en forma más sintética, pero también más esculpida en los 8 puntos del programa de Livorno (enero de 1921), se dedica orgánicamente a la denuncia y demolición crítica de las doctrinas adversas: y diciendo **adversas** entiéndanse no sólo las emanantes de la clase burguesa (liberalismo, democratismo) o de sus lameculos reformistas (gradualismo, reformismo, parlamentarismo, ministerialismo), pero también las que revisten con un lenguaje aparentemente revolucionario la propia naturaleza oportunista y la propia derivación pequeño-burguesa: maximalismo, sindicalismo, anarquismo, ordinovismo y, en general, inmediateísmo.

Y vale la pena subrayar, cómo también esta segunda parte demuestra una convergencia completa con las que serán las tesis fundamentales del II Congreso del Comintern, con la sola pero relevante diferencia de que *un único texto básico*, que compromete y vincula a todos, condensa el histórico veredicto comunista de condena de cualquier visión del proceso revolucionario (y por eso también de sus finalidades y de sus medios de lucha) que nieguen o aunque sólo eludan *uno cualquiera* de los postulados programáticos del partido según Marx, Engels y Lenin.

Una vez más no es un **lujo** teórico lo que guía la mano de los recopiladores-redactores, sino una conciencia precisa de las necesidades permanentes de la titánica lucha revolucionaria del proletariado, remachadas por balances sangrientos de sus victorias momentáneas y aún más de sus derrotas admonitorias en los países de capitalismo avanzado, desde hace más de un siglo, marchitos de democracia y empaados en herencias ideológicas burguesas. La conciencia precisa, que el renacimiento del movimiento revolucionario marxista sobre las ruinas de II Internacional y de sus partidos, casi todos manchados y deshonorados por la adhesión abierta o enmascarada a la guerra y de capitulación frente a los ídolos del democratismo interclasista, no había sido (como no fue) plena y duradera, si sobre uno cualquiera de tales puntos claves hubiese subsistido el equívoco, o si la aceptación genérica de los principios de la destrucción violenta del estado burgués, como objetivo al que todas las fuerzas de los nacientes partidos comunistas debían tender, hubiesen encubierto divergencias de fondo sobre el partido (la **constitución del proletariado en clase** de Marx), sobre la dictadura (la **constitución del proletariado en clase dominante** de Marx), sobre las relaciones entre partido y clase, entre lucha política y lucha económica, entre objetivos finales y metas contingentes, o sobre los respectivos órganos de batalla. El balance de los 40 años sucesivos demuestra sin posibilidad de apelación como, sobre todos estos problemas y sobre las graves desviaciones que se han generado en torno a los mis-

mos, en el curso secular del movimiento proletario, debe realizarse la máxima claridad para evitar las demasiado frecuentes **reincidencias** y las fatales derrotas. Sin embargo, la tercera parte es para nosotros quizás la más vital, en cuanto que la re-proposición del programa y de los principios generales del comunismo revolucionario encuentra su complemento en una primera **codificación** de las normas tácticas necesarias, según aquella que será una constante reivindicación de la Izquierda, desgraciadamente no escuchada o no comprendida suficientemente en su valor por la Internacional. Se hará mucho ruido desde entonces contra el **esquematismo** en el que habríamos caído, insistiendo en que las grandes líneas de la acción táctica del partido en los desarrollos sucesivos de la lucha fuesen establecidos con el máximo rigor posible, y convertidos en no menos vinculantes que las grandes líneas del programa. Y, sin embargo, las 21 Condiciones de admisión, planteadas por la Internacional unos meses después a todos los partidos aspirantes a entrar (qué son sino la formulación *última* de normas tácticas, siendo suficiente la inobservancia de una sola de ellas para excluir como no-comunista a un partido que pretendía serlo? **No hay acción revolucionaria sin teoría revolucionaria**, había proclamado Lenin) qué significa esto, sino que la doctrina marxista o es la *guía* para la acción emancipadora del proletariado o *no es nada*, y que el confiar la solución de las cuestiones prácticas planteadas por la lucha de clase a las solicitudes de las contingencias inmediatas y locales significa traicionar a la una y a los otros, y colocarse en el plano inclinado de aquel oportunismo que Lenin definió, con fórmula válida para todas la épocas, **ausencia de principios**? Es verdad, que, por ejemplo, la táctica del partido en las fases de la doble revolución, previstas por Marx para la Alemania de 1848B50 y por Lenin para la Rusia de 1917 (o para el Oriente en los años sucesivos), no puede ser idéntica a la requerida por los países y por las fases históricas de revolución **única**; pero se trata de una diversidad *prevista* por el marxismo como está previsto el *fatal* alineamiento de los partidos burgueses y de las corrientes oportunistas en las fases alternas de la lucha. Tomando un segundo ejemplo, está muy claro que las tesis de Lenin sobre el parlamentarismo revolucionario dejan *abierta* la eventualidad, tanto de la participación en las campañas electorales y en el parlamento (pero siempre con fines subversivos), como del boicot de las unas y del otro; pero se trata precisamente de alternativas *previstas* y *codificadas* en relación a situaciones marxistamente previsibles y codificables, y que no toleran **soluciones de recambio**. La **elasticidad táctica**, sobre la que se insistirá tanto *desde entonces* hasta identificarla desdichadamente con el eclecticismo primero, y con el agnosticismo después, siempre había sido rigurosamente mantenida por los bolcheviques dentro de límites coincidentes con los confines invariables del *programa*; nunca había significado abandono al capricho de las situaciones, o al caso de eventos oscuros e impenetrables; o, peor aún, a la glorificación de individuos o de un partido sedicentemente inmunizado de una vez para siempre de infecciones oportunistas.

Del mismo modo, si es verdad que determinadas tácticas hoy manifiestamente insostenibles, como la del parlamentarismo revolucionario, tuvieron una justificación histórica y una función positiva en un cierto período del movimiento obrero (y, como dirá la Izquierda en el II Congreso, la conservación en dadas áreas geográficas), el punto era y es el de si la fase abierta al capitalismo y, por tanto, al proletariado con la primera guerra mundial en los países de capitalismo no sólo maduro sino podrido (fase no medible con el metro de un año o de un mes, sino de todo un ciclo) le permita su adopción con el fin de la batalla resolutiva por el poder, o si por el contrario nuestra *previsión* de esta desembocadura le impone por necesidad el abandono *preciso* y *sólo* en interés de la preparación del partido y de las masas proletarias en el mismo. Finalmente, es verdad que muy otra es la acción del partido en las fases de preparación para este choque, con todas las maniobras tácticas que comportan; distinta

es su acción en las fases de ataque directo al poder; pero la táctica a seguir en el primer caso es válida, o sea, prácticamente eficaz, en tanto en cuanto *no rompa sino que refuerce* la continuidad de programa, de agitación y de lucha; por consiguiente, también de organización, que es el verdadero coeficiente de éxito, o de alta combatividad en el segundo; y es en esta claridad donde se ha *previsto, se ha hecho explícita a los militantes, se ha ilustrado a las masas y se ha aplicado constantemente en la batalla cotidiana*, porque precisamente en esta estricta convergencia del programa, de la propaganda y de la acción en lo vivo de la lucha está la premisa para la consecución de una influencia no efímera y ficticia sino *real* sobre los estratos obreros que la dinámica histórica (en el choque teorizado por nosotros, como inevitable no sólo con los partidos burgueses y con su Estado, sino con el oportunismo) abre al conocimiento, a la conciencia - poco importa si es confusa - de que la vía trazada por el partido es la única; y única e *insustituible* su guía.

En el oportunismo se cae, en origen, no por elección **deliberada**, sino por la ilusión de que al éxito se llega más rápidamente por la vía menos ardua, la más inmediatamente accesible a las reacciones *instintivas* de las masas, la *aparentemente* menos llena de obstáculos. El gran **arte** de la táctica revolucionaria reside en la capacidad de *tener siempre* una ruta *prevista y proclamada como única también* en los momentos más difíciles, en la certeza de que (en un proceso cuya mayor o menor rapidez depende, por cierto, en primer lugar de factores objetivos; pero el partido, en cuanto actúa, él mismo es un factor objetivo de la historia), la soldadura o unión entre la acción consciente del órgano político y la acción física y elemental de las masas se creará precisamente gracias a la tenacidad con la que se haya resistido frente a las fáciles sugerencias del camino más corto, del camino con menos obstáculos, del camino **nuevo**; siguiendo por el contrario el camino escarpado pero seguro, sobre el cual, no nosotros sino los *hechos*, empujarán a los proletarios, a cualquier partido que se adhieran, pertenezcan a la categoría que pertenezcan, sea del color que sea su piel.

Sólida en esta convicción, la Izquierda aprobó en mayo de 1920 las directrices tácticas que el II Congreso del Comintern remachaba con fuerza y validez estatutaria (en relación, por ejemplo, con los sindicatos, con los consejos de fábrica, con los soviets, con la propaganda en el ejército, con los métodos de organización, etc.) pero las completó con la condena anticipada de los frentes únicos políticos incluso con las fuerzas que aunque comparten el principio de la revolución violenta, sin embargo, por divergencias insuperables en la teoría y *por tanto*, en la acción, rechazan nuestro modo de concebir y valorar los desarrollos ulteriores de la lucha revolucionaria en el campo mucho más difícil y vital del después del triunfo de la revolución violenta [esto valía y vale en particular para los anarquistas, los sindicalistas revolucionarios, etc.]. Tal condena valía - y vale - según nosotros a mayor razón para las propuestas de frente único con partidos que consideramos y denunciarnos públicamente como contrarrevolucionarios: la socialdemocracia, el centrismo y sus innumerables variantes; fuerzas a las cuales en un 1920 de hierro y de fuego ni siquiera se pensaba que un día se les pudiese ofrecer (como desgraciadamente sucedió) el ramo de olivo de un acuerdo aunque sólo fuese momentáneo, con el engañoso argumento de que la prevista repulsa de nuestra invitación pública le habría abierto los ojos a los proletarios aún militantes en sus filas, casi como si esta remota eventualidad pudiese compensar la *segura* eventualidad de que un mayor número de proletarios (aguerridos de un modo muy distinto) el mismo hecho de la oferta de un bloque único o de un apoyo parlamentario **a partidos obreros** purulentos y putrefactos habría nublado los ojos, confundido las ideas y obstaculizado el normal proceso de orientación política y práctica. Las mismas tesis (siendo verdad que las manifestaciones, aunque sólo sean embrionales, de un abandono de la recta vía tienen una constante propia en la historia, y esta constancia debe permitirnos preverlas en lugar de *sufrirlas*), anticipan las discusiones de 1921-1922 sobre la cuestión de la **conquista de la mayoría**, no por cierto

rechazando el principio, tan obvio como para no tener necesidad de ser reafirmado, de que el partido no es tal si no se adapta para ganarse entre los proletarios la máxima influencia compatible con la situación objetiva, si no es rechazando el asumir como medida de la propia eficacia el número *bruto* de los inscritos, o aquel aún más vago e impalpable de los simpatizantes, y de sacrificar al mismo el conjunto de los otros factores, mucho más determinantes, a cuya segura posesión el partido se habilita en la sola medida en que sabe estar con la cara descubierta - no en las proclamaciones retóricas, sino en la acción práctica - *solamente él mismo*.

Comentando los textos sucesivos, veremos como el problema de la táctica se fue configurando en los años venideros, precisamente sobre dichas cuestiones de fondo, desde la Internacional por un lado y desde la Izquierda por otro. Aquí queda por reclamar la atención sobre el hecho de que el punto *menor* de divergencia entre nosotros y Moscú, el del abstencionismo contrapuesto al **parlamentarismo revolucionario**, en primer lugar no atacaba mínimamente el juicio (*concordante*) sobre las instituciones de la democracia y sobre la suerte que el proletariado les deberá reservar, y secundariamente no tocaba ninguna *cuestión de principio*, estando nuestro abstencionismo no en chifladuras idealistas **a la anarquista** sino en consideraciones *prácticas* que lo convierten en imperio en las áreas geográficas y en las épocas historias de capitalismo avanzado; en otras palabras, siendo la reivindicación de un *método* por otra parte muy idóneo para favorecer el alineamiento de las masas proletarias en el frente de la negación total y definitiva del Estado burgués y para concretar las fuerzas del partido en la batalla por la conquista *violenta* del poder y por su ejercicio *dictatorial*. Estas dos manifestaciones supremas de nuestra *antidemocracia*.

El balance de los últimos cincuenta años prueba de modo aplastante que el del **parlamentarismo revolucionario** fue uno de los coladeros a través de los cuales - contra toda expectativa de los partidarios de **tácticas audaces** - se introdujeron en la Internacional de Lenin partidos y grupos *solamente y corruptamente parlamentarios*; pero, mucho más que en este aspecto relativamente secundario de la praxis revolucionaria, saca a la luz la necesidad de que el *conjunto* de los postulados de acción del partido de clase, como sobre sus bases de principio, toda transigencia esté definitivamente vedada. Nosotros no pretendíamos ni que el programa de la I. C. debiese ser necesariamente el formulado por la Izquierda en 1920, ni que bastasen unas tesis de doctrina, de programa y de táctica para salvaguardar el partido de la revolución comunista de los contragolpes ruinosos de relaciones de fuerza adversos, o para garantizarle la victoria en la oleada de situaciones objetivas ascendentes; sin embargo, es *cierto* que el proceso de degeneración de la Internacional no habría sido tan rápido y debilmente contrastado, y la reanudación proletaria después de la ventisca estalinista aún hoy tan tormentosa y difícil, si la barrera de una análoga plataforma política hubiese sido elevada a *condición* de la pertenencia al **partido mundial único**, a costa de perder algo en términos de resultados numéricos y de prestigio, dolorosamente pagados con la ausencia de claridad teórica, de eficiencia práctica y de solidez organizativa.

En el II Congreso de Moscú, la Izquierda lanzó un grito de alarma sobre el peligro de que, una vez arrojado por la puerta, el oportunismo se reintrodujese por la ventana en la medida que la prueba general de la I guerra imperialista se alejaba en el pasado y el primer acto de la revolución se arredraba en un futuro quizás no cercano [Contra toda **reconstrucción** póstuma de los hechos históricos, es el caso de remachar que el juicio de la Izquierda sobre las potencialidades revolucionarias de 1920-1921, como resulta del ya citado discurso en el Congreso de Moscú, era mucho menos optimista que el de los bolcheviques y, para ellos, del Comintern; y lo decimos no por escrúpulo... profesoral de **verdad** sino porque responde a la objeción frita y refrita de que la vía trazada por nosotros (**quizás**) iba bien para una situación revolucionaria, pero no ofrecía **alternativa** para situaciones de reflujo. La realidad es que nosotros nos preo-

cupábamos, como nos preocupamos hoy, no tanto de la hora número uno de la revolución - cuando las mejores fuerzas proletarias hallan de un modo natural y casi mecánico su camino, a condición de que esté el partido, y *le mantienen* hasta el final -, cuanto de la dura vigilia en la que es tan fácil perder la noción, en el ardor del entusiasmo, de que **quien no está con nosotros, está contra nosotros** (la frase es de Marx y de Rosa Luxemburgo, no de Mussolini), y aún más del durísimo día siguiente de posibles golpes y retrocesos o, peor aún, de derrotas, cuando es *casi* fatal la tentación de *propter vitam vivendi perdere causas* o, en otras palabras, de sacrificar a una perspectiva ilusoria de supervivencia inmediata las *razones* de nuestra *perenne* batalla. En lo que radica quizás la base de aquello que era y es, este sí, nuestro **optimismo** - el mismo de Marx, Engels y Lenin en los períodos más negros, como en los períodos más fulgurantes del asalto proletario **al cielo** de la revolución comunista]. Aquello que entonces pudo parecer exceso de rigidez, y a lo mejor abstractismo, aparece hoy como la dura pero la realista premisa de cualquier reanudación del movimiento proletario marxista, sobre el hilo ininterrumpido de aquella visión integral del curso de las luchas de clase, de sus articulaciones y de su desembocadura final, de la que no se puede romper *un* eslabón sin destruir, quíerese o no, toda la cadena.

### TESIS DE LA FRACCIÓN COMUNISTA ABSTENCIONISTA DEL PSI (De *Il Soviet*, n° 6, del 27-6-1920)

#### I

1. El comunismo es la doctrina de las condiciones sociales e históricas de la emancipación del proletariado.  
La elaboración de esta doctrina se inició en el período de los primeros movimientos proletarios contra las consecuencias del sistema de producción burgués, tomando forma en la crítica marxista de la economía capitalista, en el método del materialismo histórico, en la teoría de la lucha de clases, en la concepción de los desarrollos que presentará el proceso histórico de la caída del régimen capitalista y de la revolución proletaria.
2. En esta doctrina, cuya primera y fundamental expresión sistemática es el *Manifiesto de los Comunistas* de 1847, se basa la constitución del Partido Comunista.
3. En el presente período histórico se vuelve cada vez más intolerable para el proletariado la situación que le crean las relaciones de producción burguesas, basadas en la posesión privada de los medios de producción y de cambio, en la apropiación privada de los productos del trabajo colectivo y en la libre competencia del comercio de esos mismos productos.
4. A estas relaciones económicas corresponden las instituciones políticas propias del capitalismo: el Estado de representación democrático-parlamentaria. El Estado, en una sociedad dividida en clases, es la organización del poder de la clase económicamente privilegiada. A pesar de que la *burguesía* represente la minoría de la sociedad, el Estado *democrático* constituye el sistema de la fuerza armada organizada para la conservación de las relaciones de producción capitalistas.
5. La lucha del proletariado contra la explotación capitalista asume formas sucesivas, desde la violenta destrucción de la maquinaria, a la organización por profesiones para el mejoramiento de las condiciones de trabajo, a los consejos de fábrica, y a las tentativas de toma de posesión de las empresas.  
A través de todas estas acciones particulares, el proletariado se dirige hacia la lucha revolucionaria decisiva contra el poder del Estado burgués, que impide que las actuales relaciones de producción puedan ser destruidas.

6. Esta lucha revolucionaria es el conflicto de toda la clase proletaria contra toda la clase burguesa. Su instrumento es el partido político de clase, el partido comunista, que realiza la organización consciente de aquella vanguardia del proletariado que ha comprendido la necesidad de unificar su propia acción, en el espacio, por encima de los intereses de diversos grupos, categorías o nacionalidades; y en el tiempo, subordinando, al resultado final de la lucha, las ventajas y las conquistas parciales, que no modifican la esencia de la estructura burguesa.

Es, pues, sólo la organización en partido político, la que realiza la constitución del proletariado en clase que lucha por su emancipación.

7. El objetivo de la acción del partido comunista es la destrucción violenta de la dominación burguesa, la conquista del poder político por parte del proletariado, la organización del mismo en clase dominante.

8. Mientras la democracia parlamentaria, con la representación de los ciudadanos de todas las clases, es la forma que asume la organización de la burguesía en clase dominante, la organización del proletariado en clase dominante se realizará en la dictadura proletaria, es decir, en un tipo de Estado cuyas representaciones (sistema de Consejos obreros) serán designadas únicamente por los miembros de la clase trabajadora (proletariado industrial y campesinos pobres), excluyendo a los burgueses del derecho electoral.

9. El estado proletario (rota la vieja máquina burocrática, policíaca y militar) unificará las fuerzas armadas de la clase trabajadora en una organización destinada a reprimir todos los intentos contrarrevolucionarios de la clase depuesta, y a ejecutar las medidas de intervención en las relaciones burguesas de producción y de propiedad.

10. El proceso a través del cual se pasará de la economía capitalista a la economía comunista será muy complejo, y sus fases serán diversas según los diversos grados de desarrollo económico. El término de tal proceso es la realización completa: de la posesión y de la gestión de los medios de producción por parte de toda la colectividad unificada; de la distribución central y racional de las fuerzas productivas en las diversas ramas de la producción; de la administración central, por parte de la colectividad, en la repartición de los productos.

11. Cuando las relaciones de la economía capitalista hayan sido totalmente suprimidas, la abolición de las clases será un hecho consumado, y el Estado como instrumento político de poder habrá sido sustituido progresivamente por la racional administración colectiva de la actividad económica y social.

12. El proceso de transformación de las relaciones de producción irá acompañado de una serie vastísima de medidas sociales, fundadas en el principio de que la colectividad tome a su cargo la existencia material e intelectual de todos sus miembros. Así irán eliminándose sucesivamente todas las taras degenerativas que el proletariado hereda del mundo capitalista y, según las palabras del Manifiesto, a la vieja sociedad dividida en clases que chocan entre sí le sucederá una asociación en la cual el libre desarrollo de cada uno será la condición del libre desarrollo de todos.

13. Las condiciones de la victoria del poder proletario en la lucha por la realización del comunismo consisten, más que en la racional utilización de los individuos competentes para las tareas técnicas, en confiar los cargos políticos y de control del aparato estatal a hombres que anteponen el interés general y el triunfo final del comunismo a las sugerencias de limitados y particulares intereses de grupos.

Ya que precisamente el partido comunista es la organización de aquellos proletarios que tienen esa conciencia de clase, objetivo del partido será conquistar, con la propaganda, los cargos electivos del organismo social para sus miembros. La dictadura del proletariado será, pues, la dictadura del partido comunista, y éste será un partido de gobierno en un sentido totalmente opuesto a aquél en el que lo fueron las viejas oligarquías; dado que los comunistas asumirán los cargos que exi-

girán el máximo de renunciamiento y de sacrificio y tomarán sobre sí la parte más gravosa de la tarea revolucionaria que incumbe al proletariado en las duras convulsiones que generarán un mundo nuevo.

## II

1. La crítica comunista, que se elabora sin cesar sobre la base de sus métodos fundamentales, y la propaganda de las conclusiones a las que la misma llega, apuntan a extirpar la influencia que ejercen sobre el proletariado los sistemas ideológicos propios de otras clases y de otros partidos.
2. El comunismo despeja en primer lugar el terreno de las concepciones idealistas, según las cuales los hechos del mundo del pensamiento son la base, y no el resultado, de las relaciones reales de vida de la humanidad y de su desarrollo. Todas las formulaciones religiosas y filosóficas de tal género deben ser consideradas como el bagaje ideológico de clases cuya dominación precedió a la época burguesa, y que estaba basada en una organización eclesiástica, aristocrática o dinástica, justificable sólo con pretendidas investiduras sobrenaturales.  
Un síntoma de decadencia de la moderna burguesía es la reaparición en su seno, bajo nuevas formas, de estas viejas ideologías que ella misma destruyó.  
Luego un comunismo fundado sobre bases idealistas constituye un absurdo inaceptable.
3. De manera aún más característica, el comunismo representa la demolición crítica de las concepciones del liberalismo y de la democracia burguesa. La afirmación jurídica de la libertad de pensamiento y de la igualdad política de los ciudadanos; y la concepción según la cual las instituciones basadas en el derecho de la mayoría, y en el mecanismo de la representación electoral universal son la base suficiente para un progreso ilimitado y gradual de la sociedad humana, constituyen las ideologías correspondientes al régimen de la economía privada y de la libre competencia, y a los intereses de clase de los capitalistas.
4. Forma parte de las ilusiones de la democracia burguesa la concepción según la cual puede conseguirse el mejoramiento de las condiciones de vida de las masas mediante el incremento de la educación y de la instrucción por obra de las clases dirigentes y de sus instituciones. La elevación intelectual de las grandes masas tiene en cambio como condición, un mejor tenor de vida material, incompatible con el régimen burgués; por otra parte, la burguesía a través de sus escuelas intenta difundir precisamente aquellas ideologías que tienden a impedir a las masas reconocer en las actuales instituciones el obstáculo para su emancipación.
5. Otra de las afirmaciones fundamentales de la democracia burguesa es el principio de nacionalidad. Corresponde a las necesidades de clase de la burguesía B cuando la constitución de su propio poder B la formación de Estados sobre la base nacional, con el fin de valerse de las ideologías nacionales y patrióticas, correspondientes a ciertos intereses comunes que en el período inicial del capitalismo tienen los hombres de la misma raza, de la misma lengua y de las mismas costumbres, para retrasar y atenuar el conflicto entre el Estado capitalista y las masas proletarias.  
Los irredentismos nacionales nacen, pues, de intereses esencialmente burgueses. La burguesía misma no duda en pisotear el principio de nacionalidad cuando el desarrollo del capitalismo le impone la conquista aún violenta de los mercados exteriores; y determina por consiguiente la contienda entre las grandes unidades estatales por los mismos. El comunismo supera el principio de nacionalidad, por cuanto pone en evidencia la analogía de las condiciones en las que el trabajador sin reserva se encuentra ante el patrono, cualquiera que sea la nacionalidad de uno u otro; y pone la unión internacional como tipo de la organización política que el



proletariado formará cuando a su vez llegue al poder.

A la luz, pues, de la crítica comunista, la reciente guerra mundial ha sido originada por el imperialismo capitalista, y se desmoronan las diversas interpretaciones tendentes a presentarla, desde el punto de vista de uno u otro Estado burgués, como una reivindicación del derecho de nacionalidad de algunos pueblos; como un conflicto de los Estados más avanzados democráticamente contra otros Estados organizados en formas preburguesas o, en fin, como pretendida necesidad defensiva contra la agresión enemiga.

6. El comunismo también está en oposición a la visión del pacifismo burgués, y a las ilusiones wilsonianas sobre la posibilidad de una asociación mundial de los Estados basada en el desarme y en el arbitraje, condicionada por la utopía de una subdivisión de las unidades estatales según las nacionalidades. Para los comunistas las guerras se harán imposibles y las cuestiones nacionales serán resueltas, sólo cuando el régimen capitalista haya sido sustituido por la República Internacional Comunista.
7. Bajo un tercer aspecto, el comunismo se presenta como la superación de los sistemas de socialismo utópico, que proponían eliminar los defectos de la organización social mediante planes completos de nuevas constituciones de la sociedad, cuya posibilidad de realización no estaba de modo alguno en relación con el desarrollo real de la historia, y era confiada a las iniciativas de potentados o al apostolado de filántropos.
8. La elaboración, por parte del proletariado, de una interpretación teórica propia sobre la sociedad y la historia, que sea la guía de su acción contra las relaciones de vida del mundo capitalista, da lugar continuamente al surgimiento de escuelas o tendencias más o menos influenciadas por la inmadurez misma de las condiciones de la lucha y por los más diversos prejuicios burgueses. De ello resultan errores y fracasos de la acción proletaria; pero es con este material de experiencia, con el que el movimiento comunista llega a precisar la doctrina y la táctica en lineamientos siempre más claros, diferenciando netamente y combatiendo abiertamente a todas las otras corrientes que se agitan en el seno mismo del proletariado.
9. La constitución de empresas cooperativas de producción, en las cuales el capital pertenece a los obreros que trabajan en éstas, no puede constituir una vía para la supresión del sistema capitalista; en cuanto que la adquisición de las materias primas y la colocación de los productos se desenvuelven, en esas empresas, según las leyes de la economía privada, y sobre su mismo capital colectivo termina por obrar el crédito, y por lo tanto el control del capital privado.
10. Las organizaciones económicas profesionales no pueden ser consideradas por los comunistas, ni como órganos suficientes para la lucha por la revolución proletaria, ni como órganos fundamentales de la economía comunista. La organización en sindicatos profesionales sirve para neutralizar la competencia entre los obreros del mismo oficio e impide la caída de los salarios a un nivel bajísimo; pero así como no puede llegar a la eliminación de la ganancia capitalista, tampoco puede realizar ni siquiera la unión de los trabajadores de todas las profesiones contra el privilegio del poder burgués. Por otra parte, el simple pasaje de la propiedad de las empresas del patrono privado al sindicato obrero, no realizará los postulados económicos del comunismo; según los cuales la propiedad debe ser transferida a toda la colectividad proletaria, siendo ésta la única vía para eliminar los caracteres de la economía privada en la apropiación y distribución de los productos. Los comunistas consideran el sindicato como el campo de una primera experiencia proletaria, que permite a los trabajadores proseguir más adelante, hacia el concepto y la práctica de la lucha política, cuyo órgano es el partido de clase.
11. Es, en general, un error creer que la revolución sea un problema de forma de or-

ganización de los proletarios según las agrupaciones que ellos forman por su posición y sus intereses en los marcos del sistema capitalista de producción.

No es, pues, una modificación de la estructura de organización económica, lo que puede dar al proletariado el medio eficaz para su emancipación.

Los sindicatos de empresa, o consejos de fábrica, surgen como órganos para la defensa de los intereses de los proletarios de las diversas empresas, cuando comienza a aparecer la posibilidad de limitar el arbitrio capitalista en la gestión de las mismas. La adquisición por parte de estos organismos de un derecho de control más o menos amplio sobre la producción, no es sin embargo incompatible con el sistema capitalista, y podría ser por esto un recurso conservador.

El mismo pasaje de la gestión de las empresas a estos organismos no constituirá (análogamente a cuanto se ha dicho de los sindicatos) el advenimiento del sistema comunista. Según la sana concepción comunista, el control obrero de la producción, se realizará sólo después del abatimiento del poder burgués, como control de todo el proletariado unificado en el Estado de los consejos, sobre la marcha de cada empresa; y la gestión comunista de la producción será la dirección de ésta en todos sus ramos y sus unidades, por parte de racionales órganos colectivos, que representarán los intereses de todos los trabajadores asociados en la obra de construcción del Comunismo.

12. Las relaciones capitalistas de producción no pueden ser alteradas por la intervención de los órganos del poder burgués.

Por eso, el pasaje de empresas privadas al Estado o a las administraciones locales no corresponde en lo más mínimo al concepto comunista. Dicho pasaje va siempre acompañado del pago del valor capital de las empresas al antiguo dueño, que de esta forma conserva íntegro su derecho de explotación; las mismas empresas continúan funcionando como empresas privadas en los marcos de la economía capitalista; éstas se vuelven, a menudo, medios oportunos para la obra de conservación y de defensa de clase, que desarrolla el Estado burgués.

13. El concepto de que la explotación capitalista del proletariado puede ser gradualmente atenuada, y por ende eliminada, con la obra legislativa y reformadora de las instituciones políticas actuales, solicitada por los representantes del partido proletario en dichas instituciones, o incluso por la agitación de las masas, conduce sólo a volverse cómplices de la defensa que la burguesía hace de sus privilegios, cediendo alguna vez aparentemente una mínima parte de éstos, para intentar aplacar la impaciencia de las masas, y desviar sus esfuerzos revolucionarios contra los fundamentos del régimen capitalista.

14. La conquista del poder político por parte del proletariado, aún considerado como el fin integral de la acción, no puede ser alcanzada a través de la mayoría en los organismos electivos burgueses.

La burguesía, por medio de los órganos ejecutivos del Estado, sus agentes inmediatos, asegura muy fácilmente la mayoría en los organismos electivos a sus mandatarios o a los elementos que, para entrar en ellos individual o colectivamente, han caído en su juego y bajo su influencia. Además, la participación en dichas instituciones comporta el compromiso de respetar las bases jurídicas y políticas de la constitución burguesa. El valor puramente formal de tal compromiso es sin embargo suficiente para liberar a la burguesía hasta del leve embarazo de la acusación de ilegalidad formal, cuando ella recurra lógicamente a servirse de sus medios reales de defensa armada, antes que entregar su poder y dejar romper su máquina burocrática y militar de dominio.

15. Reconocer la necesidad de la lucha insurreccional para la toma del poder, pero proponer que el proletariado ejerza su poder concediendo a la burguesía una representación en los nuevos organismos políticos (asambleas constituyentes o combinaciones de éstas con el sistema de los consejos obreros), es también un

programa inaceptable y opuesto al concepto central comunista de la dictadura proletaria. El proceso de expropiación de la burguesía sería inmediatamente comprometido allí donde le quedasen a ésta puntos de apoyo para influir de alguna manera en la constitución de las representaciones del Estado proletario expropiador. Esto permitiría a la burguesía utilizar las influencias que inevitablemente le quedarán, debido a su experiencia y preparación técnica e intelectual, para injertar su actividad política encaminada a restablecer su poder con una contrarrevolución. Las mismas consecuencias tendría todo prejuicio democrático acerca de la paridad de trato que el poder proletario debería aplicar a los burgueses, en lo que se refiere a la libertad de asociación, de propaganda y de prensa.

16. El programa de una organización de representaciones políticas, basada sobre los delegados de las distintas categorías profesionales de todas las clases sociales, no es, ni siquiera formalmente, una vía encaminada hacia el sistema de los consejos obreros; porque éste está caracterizado por la exclusión de los burgueses del derecho electoral, y su organismo central no está designado por profesión, sino por circunscripciones territoriales. La forma de representación en cuestión representa más bien un estadio inferior a la democracia parlamentaria actual.
17. Profundamente opuesto a las concepciones comunistas es el anarquismo, que tiende a la instauración inmediata de una sociedad sin Estado y sin organización política, y que en la economía futura reconoce el funcionamiento autónomo de unidades productivas; negando todo centro organizador y regulador de las actividades humanas en la producción y en la distribución. Tal concepción se aproxima a la concepción burguesa de la economía privada, y permanece extraña al contenido esencial del comunismo. Además, la eliminación inmediata del Estado como instrumento de poder político equivale a la no resistencia a la contrarrevolución; o bien presupone la inmediata abolición de las clases, la así llamada expropiación revolucionaria, contemporánea a la insurrección contra el poder burgués. Una posibilidad tal no existe ni siquiera remotamente, por la complejidad de la tarea proletaria en la sustitución de la economía actual por la comunista, y por la necesidad de que dicho proceso sea dirigido por un organismo central que coordine en sí mismo el interés general del proletariado; subordinando al mismo todos los intereses locales y particulares, cuyo juego es la mayor fuerza de conservación del capitalismo.

### III

1. La concepción comunista y el determinismo económico no hacen, en absoluto, de los comunistas, los espectadores pasivos del devenir histórico; sino que, por el contrario, hacen de ellos infatigables luchadores; la lucha y la acción se tornarían sin embargo ineficaces, si se apartasen de los resultados de la doctrina y de la experiencia crítica comunista.
2. La obra revolucionaria de los comunistas se funda sobre la organización en partido, de los proletarios que unen a la conciencia de los principios comunistas, la decisión de consagrar todos sus esfuerzos a la causa de la revolución. El partido, organizado internacionalmente, funciona sobre la base de la disciplina a las decisiones de las mayorías y de los órganos centrales designados por éstas para dirigir el movimiento.
3. Actividades fundamentales del partido son la propaganda y el proselitismo, que deben basarse, para la admisión de nuevos adherentes, en las mayores garantías. Aun basando el éxito de su acción en la difusión de sus principios y de sus finalidades, y aun luchando en el interés de la inmensa mayoría de la sociedad, el movimiento comunista no hace del consenso de la mayoría una condición prejudicial para la propia acción. El criterio sobre la oportunidad de realizar acciones revo-

lucionarias es la valoración objetiva de las propias fuerzas y de las del adversario, en sus complejos coeficientes de los que el número no es el único ni el más importante.

4. El partido comunista desarrolla un intenso trabajo interno de estudio y de crítica, íntimamente ligado a la exigencia de la acción y a la experiencia histórica; ocupándose activamente de organizar dicho trabajo sobre bases internacionales. Hacia afuera de él desarrolla, en cada circunstancia y con todos los medios posibles, la labor de propaganda de las conclusiones de la propia experiencia crítica y de oposición a las escuelas y partidos adversarios. Sobre todo, el partido desarrolla su actividad de propaganda y de atracción entre las masas proletarias, especialmente en las circunstancias en las que éstas se ponen en movimiento para reaccionar contra las condiciones que el capitalismo les ha creado, y en el seno de los organismos que los proletarios forman para proteger sus intereses inmediatos.
5. Los comunistas penetran, pues, en las cooperativas proletarias, en los sindicatos, en los consejos de empresa, constituyendo en ellos grupos de obreros comunistas; procurando conquistar allí la mayoría y los cargos directivos, para obtener que la masa de proletarios encuadrada en tales asociaciones subordine su propia acción a las más altas finalidades políticas y revolucionarias de la lucha por el comunismo.
6. El partido comunista, por el contrario, se mantiene fuera de todas las instituciones y asociaciones en las cuales proletarios y burgueses participan con el mismo título o, peor aún, cuya dirección y patrocinio pertenece a los burgueses (sociedades de socorros mutuos, de beneficencia, escuelas de cultura, universidades populares, asociaciones masónicas, etc.) y procura apartar a los proletarios de las mismas, combatiendo su acción y su influencia.
7. La participación en las elecciones para los organismos representativos de la democracia burguesa y la actividad parlamentaria, aun presentando en cada época continuos peligros de desviación, podían ser utilizadas para la propaganda y la formación del movimiento en el período en que, no delineándose todavía la posibilidad de abatir el dominio burgués, la tarea del partido se limitaba a la crítica y a la oposición. En el período actual, abierto con el fin al de la guerra mundial, de las primeras revoluciones comunistas y del surgimiento de la Tercera Internacional, los comunistas proponen, como objetivo directo de la acción política del proletariado de todos los países, la conquista revolucionaria del poder; a la cual deben ser dedicadas todas las fuerzas y todo el trabajo de preparación. En este período es inadmisibile toda participación en esos organismos, que aparecen como un potente medio defensivo burgués destinado a actuar en las mismas filas del proletariado; y en antítesis a la estructura y a la función de los mismos, los comunistas sostienen el sistema de consejos obreros y la dictadura proletaria. Por la gran importancia que en la práctica asume la acción electoral, no es posible conciliarla con la afirmación de que ésa no sea el medio para alcanzar el objetivo principal de la acción del partido: la conquista del poder; ni es posible evitar que ésa absorba toda la actividad del movimiento apartándolo de la preparación revolucionaria.
8. La conquista electoral de los ayuntamientos y de las administraciones locales, mientras presenta en mayor medida los mismos inconvenientes que el parlamentarismo, no puede ser aceptada como un medio de acción contra el poder burgués; sea porque dichos organismos no están investidos de poder real, sino que están sometidos al poder de la máquina estatal; sea porque un tal método Baun pudiendo causar hoy alguna molestia a la burguesía dominanteB, afirmando el principio de la autonomía local, antitético con el principio comunista de la centralización de la acción, prepararía un punto de apoyo para la burguesía en la lucha contra el establecimiento del poder proletario.

9. En el período revolucionario, todos los esfuerzos de los comunistas están dirigidos a volver intensa y eficaz la acción de las masas. Los comunistas integran la propaganda y la preparación con grandes y frecuentes manifestaciones proletarias, especialmente en los grandes centros, y procuran utilizar los movimientos económicos para demostraciones de carácter político, en las cuales el proletariado reafirma y consolida su propósito de derrocar el poder de la burguesía.
10. El partido comunista lleva su propaganda a las filas del ejército burgués. El antimilitarismo comunista no se basa en un estéril humanitarismo, sino que tiene por finalidad convencer a los proletarios de que la burguesía los arma para defender los intereses de ésta y para servirse de su fuerza contra la causa del proletariado.
11. El partido comunista se adiestra para actuar como un estado mayor del proletariado en la guerra revolucionaria; por eso prepara y organiza su propia red de informaciones y comunicaciones; sostiene y organiza sobre todo el armamento del proletariado.
12. El partido comunista no se aviene a acuerdos o alianzas con otros movimientos políticos, que tengan en común con él un determinado objetivo contingente, pero que divergen en el programa de acción posterior. Se debe rechazar igualmente el criterio de aliarse con todas aquellas tendencias proletarias que aceptan la acción insurreccional contra la burguesía (el llamado frente único), pero que disienten del programa comunista en el desarrollo de la acción ulterior.  
No debe considerarse una condición favorable el aumento de las fuerzas que apuntan a la destrucción del poder burgués, cuando sean insuficientes las fuerzas dirigidas a la constitución del poder proletario sobre las directivas comunistas, que por sí solos puedan asegurar su duración y su éxito.
13. Los soviets o consejos de obreros, campesinos y soldados, constituyen los órganos del poder proletario, y sólo pueden ejercitar su verdadera función después del derrocamiento del dominio burgués.  
Los soviets no son, por sí mismos, órganos de lucha revolucionaria; éstos se vuelven revolucionarios cuando su mayoría es conquistada por el partido comunista. Los consejos obreros pueden surgir incluso antes de la revolución, en un período de crisis aguda en el cual el poder del Estado burgués sea puesto en serio peligro. La iniciativa de la constitución de los soviets puede ser una necesidad para el partido en una situación revolucionaria, pero no es un medio para provocar dicha situación.  
Si el poder de la burguesía se consolida, la supervivencia de los consejos puede presentar un serio peligro para la lucha revolucionaria, el de la conciliación y combinación de los órganos proletarios con las instituciones de la democracia burguesa.
14. Lo que distingue a los comunistas no es proponer, en cada situación y en cada episodio de la lucha de clases, la movilización inmediata de todas las fuerzas proletarias para la sublevación general, sino sostener que la fase insurreccional es la desembocadura inevitable de la lucha, preparar al proletariado para afrontarla en condiciones favorables para el éxito y para el ulterior desarrollo de la revolución. Según las situaciones, que el partido puede juzgar mejor que el resto del proletariado, él puede, por lo tanto, encontrarse en la necesidad de actuar para precipitar o retrasar el choque definitivo. En todo caso, tarea específica del partido es combatir, tanto a los que precipitando a toda costa la acción revolucionaria podrían empujar al proletariado al desastre, como a los oportunistas que aprovechan las circunstancias que desaconsejan la acción a fondo, para crear paradas definitivas en el movimiento revolucionario, dispersando hacia otros objetivos la acción de las masas que, por el contrario, el partido comunista debe conducir cada vez más sobre el terreno de la preparación eficaz para la indefectible lucha armada final contra las defensas del principio burgués.

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What distinguishes our party is the political continuity which goes from Marx to Lenin, to the foundation of the Communist Party of Italy (Livorno, 1921); the struggle of the Communist Left against the degeneration of the International, the struggle against the theory of "socialism in one country" and the Stalinist counter-revolution; the rejection of the Popular Fronts and the Resistances Blocs; the difficult task of restoring the revolutionary doctrine and organization in close interrelationship with the working class, against personal and electoral politics.

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