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The Balkan War (1912)

Though we can't yet evaluate the historical consequences of the slaughter, as it draws to a close we can at least examine it somewhat objectively from the socialist standpoint.

It is said that the Balkan peoples are fighting for the cause of civilisation, liberty and the independence of peoples; it is accepted as indisputable dogma that the disappearance of Turkey from the map of Europe will be a sound basis for eastern economic and social development, and so must be welcomed by socialists. Before an astonished Europe, the fine gesture of the four statelets took on the historic physiognomy of a crusade and a revolution at the same time. It enraptured Christians and republicans, nationalists and socialists, who vied in applauding the war.

But the rivers of blood and fire which welled up from countries devastated by one of the most murderous wars on record, while exhilarating for the nationalists and the theoreticians of massacre only make us curse, and serves us as warning for the future.

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Here the historical problem is set before us in all its gravity: What stance must the socialists take on so-called «wars of independence», which aspire to the liberation of an oppressed nationality from the foreign yoke?

Some would say: as history teaches us that national freedom is a pre-condition for the development of the capitalist bourgeoisie, and for the consequent class struggle which leads to socialism, socialists must look favourably on wars for independence.

We will discuss this conclusion, which is almost a sophism, with the very modest aim of unsettling the foundations of a too commonly-accepted prejudice.

First of all, the premise that the bourgeoisie needs «national freedom» for its development is not exact. The bourgeoisie only needs to take the State away from the feudal oligarchies and install a democratic political regime. The collaboration of the masses being necessary for this, the bourgeoisie tries to make this struggle popular by giving it, in cases where the aristocracies belong to a non-indigenous nation or race, a patriotic content.

So for example in Italy and Germany where, as an extra-national question, the conquest of power by the bourgeoisie was resolved with the wars of '59 and '66. In France on the other hand, the struggle between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie had a revolutionary character, and a fundamental physiognomy of civil war. Be it understood that these examples have a relative value, since historical facts are not so neatly classified or catalogued.

Moreover, as the concepts of race and nationality are so elastic historically and geographically, they're always welladapted to the interests of oligarchic capitalist groups, according to the needs of their economic development. Only after the event can sycophantic history reconstruct fantastic, sentimental motives, and create the patriotic and national tradition, which serves the shrewd bourgeoisie so well as an antidote to the class struggle.

But the Party which represents the working class has to look a bit closer. We see irredentism as no more than a cunning reactionary ploy. Even from the viewpoint - we'll now re-examine it - which says the bourgeoisie needs to pursue its development, etc., irredentism is not justified. Nice and Trieste are more industrialised than much of Italy.

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We're not making a comparison here with the Balkan regions. We accept as a fact that Bulgaria, Serbia, etc. are more civilised than Turkey. On that basis, is there perhaps some kind of right to armed conquest of territory subject to the less-civilised state?

We're not raising the question of whether the war is just or unjust in such a case; history isn't justified, it's just observed. We're merely discussing the position a revolutionary class party has to take in these conflicts.

Does the party have to support the war, in order to accelerate the development of the bourgeoisie in a country that is still feudal?

Our answer is no, and we applaud the heroic attitude of those Serb and Bulgarian comrades who opposed the war.

In fact, this is the first reason: the war could possibly be favourable to the more advanced people, but the inverse is also possible, with opposite results; even according to the theory of warmongering socialists (?) of the Bissolati type. This uncertainty alone would suffice to turn every true friend of

progress against the armed conflict. Provided, that is, they don't still believe in God. But democracy, given time and... venality, even sinks that low.

On the other hand, even if the solution of the conflict were to be such as to give greater freedom to the peoples of the conquered territory, nothing proves that a better position would be obtained for the development of socialism. This is why:
1. The increased prestige of the dynastic, military and sometimes priestly oligarchies (in the nations that waged war).
2. The intensification of nationalism and patriotism, which delays the organisation of the proletariat into an internationalist class party.
3. In the defeated country, the intensification of racial hatreds, and of the desire for revenge against the race that was once dominant and is now oppressed, assuming it hasn't been totally destroyed.
4. The very grave fact of the degeneration of the races after healthy men have been decimated by war, the depopulation caused by massacres, sickness, hunger, etc., and the immense destruction of wealth, with the consequent economic crisis, and the impossibility of developing industry and agriculture through lack of capital and labour.

Therefore the idea that war accelerates the coming of socialist revolution is a vulgar prejudice. Socialism must oppose all wars, avoiding captious distinctions between wars of conquest and wars of independence.

There remains a sentimental objection to remove: But then you want to prolong the present state of affairs, and the Turkish oppression of the Christians? But that's the socialism of reactionaries!

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In general, one mustn't discuss history on the basis of sentimental prejudices. Nevertheless, we'll counter these with some considerations. Evils are remedied by removing their causes. Now, it's an exaggeration to say that the cause of the Balkan disorder is Turkish rule. There are many other causes. The ambition of the foremost of the vile old states, which have always stirred the fires of racial hatred. The intervention of civilised Europe, which has spewed friars, priests and unscrupulous profiteers down there, causing the Muslim reaction. But the cause is race hatred, which can't be eliminated by means of wars. Just as the Bulgarians and Greeks have hushed up their ferocious mutual loathing, so they were able to attempt a general Balkan agreement. Can it be asserted that the Turkish oligarchy was more opposed to this agreement than the ambitious oligarchies of the four little states?

Anyway our assertion, based on socialist principles, is this: socialists have to oppose this war. If it had been strong enough to avoid the war, the International would also have the strength to resolve the Balkan question without massacres.

In declaring ourselves against wars of independence, we don't mean to defend racial oppression.

Marx said that being opposed to the constitutional regime was not the same as supporting absolutism.

And we can accept the formula - which seems to make up half all the vast diplomatic lucubrations we've read in a month - the Balkans for the Balkan peoples. But, we ask, to which people? To those who emerge from the mutual slaughter, to the orphans, the cripples, and the victims of cholera! This time,

the statistics show clearly what effects war has! The losses are such that it isn't hyperbole to assert that the race will be drained of blood and sterilised for a long time to come!

The fields of devastation will remain to four gratified petty tyrants.

If tomorrow in Santa Sofia the czar, in eighteenth-century style, puts on the bloody crown of the Byzantine Empire, we hope there won't be any socialists among those who rummage among the historical trash of a clownish history and literature, seeking a few lines for the hymn to the victor!

In the name of a greater civilisation, we curse those who for the sake of their ambitious dreams, brought about the massacre of so many young lives!

No matter how brutal the crime, you'll always get glorification of its heroism and tradition from the eunuchs of bourgeois culture!

Is This the Time to Form “Soviets”? (1919)

Two of the articles in our last issue, one devoted to an analysis of the communist system of representation and the other to an exposition of the current tasks facing our Party, concluded by asking whether it is possible or appropriate to set up workers' and peasants' councils today, while the power of the bourgeoisie is still intact. Comrade Ettore Croce, in a discussion of our abstentionist thesis in an article in Avanti!, asks that we should have a new weapon at the ready before getting rid of the old weapon of parliamentary action and looks forward to the formation of Soviets.

In our last issue we clarified the distinction between the technical-economic and political tasks of the Soviet representative bodies, and we showed that the true organs of the proletarian dictatorship are the local and central political Soviets, in which workers are not sub-divided according to their particular trade. The supreme authority of these organs is the Central Executive Committee, which nominates the People's Commissars; parallel to them, there arises a whole network of economic organs, based on factory councils and trade unions, which culminate in the Central Council of the Economy.

In Russia, we repeat, whereas there is no trade representation in the CEC and Soviet of Soviets, but only territorial representation, this is not the case as regards the Council of the Economy, the organ which is responsible for the technical implementation of the socialization measures decreed by the political

assembly. In this Council, trade federations and local economic councils play a role. The 16 August issue of L'Ordine Nuovo contained an interesting article on the Soviet-type system of socialization. This article explained how in a first stage, dubbed anarcho-syndicalist, the factory councils would take over the management of production, but that subsequently, in later stages involving centralization, they would lose importance. In the end they would be nothing more than clubs and mutual benefit and instruction societies for the workers in a particular factory.

If we shift our attention to the German communist movement, we see in the programme of the Spartacus League that the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, the bodies which are to take the place of the bourgeois parliaments and municipal councils, arc quite different from factory councils, which (Art. 7 of Section III) regulates working conditions and control production, in agreement with the workers' councils, and eventually take over the management of the whole enterprise.

In Russian practice, factory management was made up to the extent of only one-third by representatives from the factory council, one-third by representatives from the Supreme Council of the Economy, and one-third by representatives from the Central Federation of Industry (the interests of the work-force, the general interests of society, and the interests of the particular industrial sector).

In Germany again, elections to the Workers' Councils are arranged in accordance with the formula: one council member to every 1,000 electors. Only the large factories with over 1,000 workers constitute a single electoral unit; in the case of small factories and the unemployed, voting takes place in accordance with methods established by the electoral commission in agreement with various trade organizations.

It seems to us that we have marshalled enough evidence here to be able to declare ourselves supporters of a system of representation that is clearly divided into two divisions: economic and political. As far as economic functions are concerned, each factory will have its own factory council elected by the workers; this will have a part to play in the socialization and subsequent management of the plant in accordance with suitable criteria. As far as the political function is concerned, that is to say the formation of local and central organs of authority, elections to proletarian councils will be held on the basis of electoral rolls in which (with the rigorous exclusion of all bourgeois, i.e. people who in any way whatsoever live off the work of others) all proletarians are included on an equal footing, irrespective of their trade, and even if they are (legitimately) unemployed or incapacitated. Bearing all this in mind, is it possible, or desirable, to set up Soviets now?

If we are speaking of factory councils, these are already spreading in the form of internal commissions, or the English "shop stewards" system. As these are organs which represent the interests of the work-force, they should be set up even while the factory is still in the hands of private capital. Indeed it would certainly be to our advantage to urge the setting up of these factory councils, although we should entertain no illusions as to their innate revolutionary capacity. Which brings us to the most important problem, that of political Soviets. The political Soviet represents the collective interests of the working class, in so far as this class does not share power with the bourgeoisie, but has succeeded in overthrowing it and excluding it from power. Hence the full significance and strength of the Soviet lies not in this or that structure, but in the fact that it is the organ of a class which is taking the management of society into its own hands. Every member of the Soviet is a proletarian conscious that he is exercising dictatorship in the name of his own class.

If the bourgeois class is still in power, even if it were possible to summon proletarian electors to nominate their delegates (for there is no question of using the trade unions or existing internal commissions for the purpose), one would simply be giving a formal imitation of a future activity, an imitation devoid of its fundamental revolutionary character. Those who can represent the proletariat today, before it takes power tomorrow, are workers who are conscious of this historical eventuality; in other words, the workers who are members of the Communist Party.

In its struggle against bourgeois power, the proletariat is represented by its class party, even if this consists of no more than an audacious minority. The Soviets of tomorrow must arise from the local branches or the Communist Party. It is these which will be able to call on elements who, as soon as the revolution is victorious, will be proposed as candidates before the proletarian electoral masses to set up the Councils of local worker delegates.

But if it is to fulfil these functions, the Communist Party must abandon its participation in elections to organs of bourgeois democracy. The reasons supporting this statement are obvious. The Party should have as members only those individuals who can cope with the responsibilities and dangers of the struggle during the period of insurrection and social reorganization. The conclusion that we should abandon our participation in elections only when we have Soviets available is mistaken. A more thorough examination of the question leads one instead to the following conclusion: for as long as bourgeois power exists, the organ of revolution is the class party; after the smashing of bourgeois power, it is the network of workers' councils. The class party cannot fulfil this role, nor be in a position to lead the assault against bourgeois power in order to replace parliamentary democracy by the Soviet system, unless it renounces the practice of despatching its own representatives to bourgeois organs. This renunciation, which is negative only in a formal sense, is the prime condition to be satisfied if the forces of the communist proletariat are to be mobilized. To be unwilling to make such a renunciation is tantamount to abandoning our posture of readiness to declare class war at the first available opportunity.

"Il Soviet", 21 September 1919.

The System of Communist Representation (1919)

In launching our communist programme, which contained the outlines of a response to many vital problems concerning the revolutionary movement of the proletariat, we expected to ace a broad discussion develop on all its aspects. Instead there has been and still is only furious discussion over the incompatibility of electoral participation, which is soberly affirmed in the programme. Indeed, although the electionist maximalists proclaim that for them electoral action is quite secondary, they are in fact so mesmerized by it as to launch an avalanche of articles against the few anti-electionist lines contained in our programme. On our side, apart from the ample treatment given in these columns to the reasons underlying our abstentionism, we have only now begun to use Avanti! as a platform to reply to this deluge of electoralist objections.

Hence we are delighted to note that the Turin newspaper L'Ordine Nuovo is demanding clarification of the paragraph in the communist programme which states: "Elections to local workers' councils will be

held flog in accordance with the trades go which they belong, but on an urban and provincial constituency basis:." The writer, Comrade Andrea Viglongo, asks whether this was a way of denying that the power of the Soviets should derive from the masses consulted and voting at the very place where they work: in the factories, workshops, mines and villages.

What the drafters of the programme had in mind was as follows. The Soviet system is a system of political representation of the working class; its fundamental characteristic is denial of the right to vote to anyone who is not a member of the proletariat. It has been thought that Soviets and economic unions were the same thing. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. It may well be that in various countries, in early stages of the revolution, Soviet-type bodies were set up with representation from the craft unions - but this was no more than a makeshift arrangement.

While the trade union has as its object the defence of the sectional interests of the worker in so far a: he belongs to a given trade or industry, the proletarian figures w. the Soviet as a member of a social class that has conquered political power and is running society, in so far as his interests have something in common with all workers of any trade whatsoever. What we have in the central Soviet is a political representation of the working class, with deputies representing local constituencies. National representatives of the various trades have no place in this schema at all; this should suffice to give the lie simultaneously to trade-unionist interpretations and to the reformist parody of hypothetical constituent assemblies of trades masquerading as Soviet-type institutions.

But the question remains, how should the network of representation be fashioned in the case of local urban or rural village Soviets? If we refer to the Russian system, as expounded in Articles Xl, XII, XIII and XIV of the Constitution of the Soviet Republic, we may conclude that the essential feature is that in the cities there is one delegate for every 1,000 inhabitants, and in the countryside one for every 100 inhabitants, elections being held (Art. 66) in accordance with rules established by the local Soviets. So it is not the case that the number of delegates to be elected depends on how many factories or workplaces there are; and we are not told whether the election involves assembling all the electors with the right to a representative, or what the norms should be. But if we refer to the programmes of communists in other countries, it would seem safe to conclude that the nature of the electoral units is not the basic problem of the Soviet order, even though it gives rise to some important considerations.

The network of Soviets undoubtedly has a dual nature: political and revolutionary on the one hand; economic and constructive on the other. The first aspect is dominant in the early stages, but as the expropriation of the bourgeoisie proceeds, it gradually cedes in importance to the second. Necessity will gradually refine the bodies which are technically competent to fulfil this second function: forms of representation of trade categories and production units will emerge and connect with one another, especially as regards technique and work discipline. But the fundamental political role of the network of workers' councils is based on the historical concept of dictatorship: proletarian interests must be allowed free play in so far as they concern the whole class over and above sectional interests, and the whole of the historical development of the movement for its emancipation. The conditions needed to accomplish all these are basically: 1. the exclusion of the bourgeois from any participation in political activity; 2. the convenient distribution of electors into local constituencies which send delegates to the Congress of Soviets. This body then appoints the Central Executive Committee, and has the task of promulgating the decisions regarding the gradual socialization of the various sectors of the economy.

Seen in relation to this historical definition of the communist representative system, it seems to us that L'Ordine Nuovo slightly exaggerates the formal definition of the way the representative bodies intermesh. Which groupings do the voting and where is not a substantive problem: various solutions at a national and regional level can be accommodated.

Only up to a certain point can the factory internal commissions be seen as the precursors of Soviets. We prefer to think of them as precursors of the factory councils, which will have technical and disciplinary duties both during and after the socialization of the factory itself. We should be clear that the civilian political Soviet will be elected wherever convenient, and most probably on the basis of constituencies that are not very different from present electoral seats.

The electoral rolls themselves will have to be different. Viglongo poses the question whether all the workers in the factory should have the right to vote, or just the trade-union members. We would ask him to consider whether some workers, even members of a trade union, should be struck off the electoral roil of the civilian political Soviet where it is found that, in addition to working in a factory, they live on the proceeds from a small capital sum or annuity. This is a not uncommon occurrence amongst us. Again the Russian Constitution clearly takes this into account in the first sentence of Art. 65. Finally the legitimately unemployed and incapacitated must also have a vote.

What characterizes the communist system then is the definition of the right to be an elector, a right which depends not on one's membership of a particular trade, but on the extent to which the individual, in the totality of his social relations, can be seen as a proletarian with an interest in the rapid achievement of communism, or a non-proletarian tied in some way or other to the preservation of the economic relations of private property. This extremely simple condition guarantees the political workability of the Soviet system of representation. In parallel to this system, new and technically competent techno-economic bodies will emerge. They must, however, remain subordinate to whatever the Soviets lay down in terms of broad policy guidelines; for until classes are totally abolished, only the political system of representation will embody the collective interests of the proletariat, acting as the prime accelerator of the revolutionary process. On another occasion we shall discuss the problem whether it is possible or desirable to set up political Soviets even before the revolutionary battle for the conquest of power takes place.

"Il Soviet", 13 September 1919.

Letters to the Third International (1919)

I

Abstentionist Communist Fraction of the Italian Socialist Party
Central Committee
Borgo San Antonio Abate 221
Naples

To the Moscow Committee of the IIIrd International.

Our fraction was formed after the Bologna Congress of the Italian Socialist Party (6-10 October 1919), but it bad issued its propaganda previously through the Naples newspaper Il Soviet, convening a

conference at Rome which approved the programme subsequently presented to the Congress. We enclose a collection of issues of the journal, plus several copies of the programme together with the motion with which it was put to the vote.

It should be noted at the outset that throughout the war years a powerful extremist movement operated within the Party, opposing both the openly reformist politics of the parliamentary group and the General Confederation of Labour and also those of the Party leadership, despite the fact that they followed an intransigent revolutionary line in accordance with the decisions of the pre-War congresses. The leadership has always been split into two currents vis-à-vis the problem of the War. The right-wing current identified itself with Lazzari, author of the formula "neither support nor sabotage the war"," the left-wing current with Serrati, the editor of Avanti!. However, the two currents presented a united front at all meetings held during the war, and although they had reservations concerning the attitude of the parliamentary group, they did not come out firmly against them. Left elements outside the leadership struggled against this ambiguity, being determined to split the reformists of the group away from the Party and not even the 1918 Congress of Rome, held just before the Armistice, to adopt a more revolutionary attitude, was able to break with the transigent politics of the deputies. The leadership, despite the addition of extremist elements like Gennari and Bombacci, did not effect much change in its line; indeed, this was weakened by a soft attitude towards some of the activities of a right wing hostile to the orientation of the majority of the Party.

Alter the war, apparently the whole Party adopted a "maximalist" line, affiliating to the IIIrd International. However, from a communist point of view, the Party's attitude was not satisfactory; we beg you to note the polemics published in II Soviet taking issue with the parliamentary group, the Confederation (in connection with the "constituent assembly of trades") and with the leadership itself, in particular concerning the preparations for the 20-21 July strike. Together with other comrades from all over Italy, we at once opted our electoral abstentionism, which we supported at the Bologna Congress. We wish to make it clear that at the congress we were at variance with the Party not only on the electoral question, but also on the question of splitting the Party.

The victorious "maximalist electionist" faction too had accepted the thesis that the reformists were incompatible with the Party, but failed to act on it for purely electoral calculations - notwithstanding the anti-communist speeches of Turati and Treves. This is a powerful argument in favour of abstentionism: unless electionist and parliamentary activity is abandoned, It will not be possible to form a purely Communist Party.

Parliamentary democracy in the Western countries assumes forms of such a character that it constitutes the most formidable weapon for deflecting the revolutionary movement of the proletariat. The left in our Party has been committed to polemicizing and struggling against bourgeois democracy since 1910-11, and this experience leads us to the conclusion that in the present world revolutionary situation, all contact with the democratic system needs to be severed.

The present situation in Italy is as follows: the Party is waging a campaign against the war and the interventionist parties, certain of deriving great electoral advantages from this policy. But since the present government is composed of bourgeois parties which were hostile to the war in 1915, a certain confluence results between the Party's electoral activity and the politics of the bourgeois government. As all the reformist ex-deputies have been readopted as candidates, the Nitti government, which has good relations with them as may be seen from the most recent parliamentary episodes, will trim its

behaviour to ensure that they are preferred. Then the Party, exhausted as it is by the enormous efforts it has made in the present elections, will become bogged down in polemics against the transigent attitude of the deputies. Then we will have the preparations for the administrative elections in July 1920; for many months, the Party will make no serious revolutionary propaganda or preparations. It is to be hoped that unforeseen developments do not intervene and overwhelm the Party. We attach importance to the question of electoral activity, and we feel it is contrary to communist principles to allow individual parties affiliated to the IIIrd International to decide the question for themselves. The international communist party should study the problem and resolve it for everyone.

Today we are resolved to work towards the formation of a truly communist party, and our fraction inside the Italian Socialist Party has set itself this goal. We hope that the first parliamentary skirmishes will bring many comrades towards us, so that the split with the social.-democrats may he accomplished. At the congress, we received 3,417 votes (67 sections voting for us), while the maximalist electionists won with 48,000 votes and the reformists received 14,000. We are also at variance with the maximalists on other issues of principle: in the interests of brevity we enclose a copy of the programme adopted by the congress, which is the Party's programme today (not one member left the Party as a result of the changes in the programme), together with some comments of our own.

It should be noted that we are not collaborating with movements outside the Party, such as anarchists and syndicalists, for they follow principles which are non-communist and contrary to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Indeed, they accuse us of being more authoritarian and centralist than the other maximalists in the Party. Sec the polemics in II Soviet. What is needed in Italy is a comprehensive clarification of the communist programme and tactics, and we will devote all our efforts to this end. Unless a party that concerns itself solely and systematically with propagandizing and preparing the proletariat along communist lines is successfully organized, the revolution could emerge defeated.

As far as the question of tactics is concerned, in particular the setting up of Soviets, it appears to us that errors are being committed even by our friends; what we are afraid of is that nothing more will be accomplished than to give a reformist twist to the craft unions. Efforts are in fact being made to set up workshop committees, as in Turin, and then to bring all the delegates from a given industry (engineering) together to take over the leadership of the trade union, by appointing its executive committee. In this way, the political functions of the workers' councils for which the proletariat should be prepared arc not being tackled; whereas, in our view, the most important problem is to organize a powerful class-based party (Communist Party) that will prepare the insurrectionary seizure of power from the hands of the bourgeois government.

It is our earnest desire to know your opinion concerning: (a) parliamentary and municipal electionism and the prospects for a decision on this question by the Communist International; (b) splitting the Italian party; (c) the tactical problem of setting up Soviets under a bourgeois regime, and the limits of such action.

We salute both yourselves and the great Russian proletariat, the pioneer of universal communism.

Naples, 10 November 1919.

II

Abstentionist Communist Fraction of the Italian Socialist Party
Central Committee
Borgo San Antonio Abate 221
Naples 11 January 1920

To the Central Committee of the Communist IIIrd International, Moscow.

Dearest Comrades,

We sent you a previous communication on 11 November. We are Writing in Italian in the knowledge that your office is run by Comrade Balabanov, who has an excellent knowledge of the language.

Our movement is made up of those who voted in favour of the abstentionist tendency at the Bologna congress. We are again sending you our programme and its accompanying motion. We hope you received the collection of our newspaper II Soviet, and this time we are sending you copies of Numbers 1 and 2 of the new series which began this year. The object of this letter is to let you have some comments of ours on Comrade Lenin's letter to the German communists, published by Rote Fahne on 20 December 1919 and reproduced by Avanti! on the 31st, to give you a clearer idea of our political position.

First of all, let us draw your attention once again to the fact that the Italian Socialist Party still contains opportunist socialists of the Adler and Kautsky ilk, of whom Lenin speaks in the first part of his letter. The Italian party is not a communist party; It is not even a revolutionary party. The "maximalist electionist" majority is closer in spirit to the German Independents. At the congress we differentiated ourselves from this majority not only on the issue of electoral tactics, but also on the question of excluding the reformists led by Turati from the party. Hence the division between ourselves and those maximalists who voted in favour of Serrati's motion at Bologna is not analogous to the division between the supporters of abstentionism and the supporters of electoral participation within the German Communist Party, but corresponds rather to the division between Communists and independents.

In programmatic terms our point of view has nothing In common with anarchism and syndicalism. We favour the strong and centralized Marxist political party that Lenin speaks of. Indeed we are the most fervent supporters of this idea in the maximalist camp. We are not In favour of boycotting economic trade unions but of communists taking them over, and our position corresponds to that expressed by comrade Zinoviev in his report to the Congress of the Russian Communist Party, published by Avanti! on 1 January.

As for the workers' councils, these exist in only a few places in Italy and then they are exclusively factory councils, made up of workshop delegates who are concerned with questions internal to the factory. Our proposal, on the other hand, is to take the initiative in setting up rural and municipal Soviets, elected directly by the masses assembled in the factories or villages; for we believe that in preparing for the revolution, the struggle should have a predominantly political character. We are in favour of participating in elections to any representative body of the working class when the electorate consists exclusively of workers. On the other hand, we are against the participation of communists in elections

for parliaments, or bourgeois municipal and provincial councils, or constituent assemblies, because we arc of the opinion that it is not possible to carry out revolutionary work in such bodies; we believe that electoral work is an obstacle in the path of the Working masses, forming a communist consciousness and laying the preparations for the proletarian dictatorship as the antithesis of bourgeois democracy.

To participate in such bodies and expect to emerge unscathed by social-democratic and collaborationist deviations is a vain hope in the current historical period, as is shown by the present Italian parliamentary session. These conclusions arc reinforced by the experience of the struggle waged by the left wing in our Party from 1910-11 to the present day against all the manoeuvrings of parliamentarism, in a country which has supported a bourgeois democratic regime for a long time: the campaign against ministerialism; against forming electoral political and administrative alliance with democratic parties; against freemasonry and bourgeois anticlericalism, etc. From this experience we drew the conclusion that the gravest danger for the socialist revolution lies in collaborating with bourgeois democracy on the terrain of social reformism. This experience was subsequently generalized in the course of the war and the revolutionary events in Russia, Germany, Hungary, etc.

Parliamentary intransigence was a practical proposition, despite continual clashes and difficulties, in a non-revolutionary period, when the conquest of power on the part of the working class did not seem very likely. In addition, the more the regime and the composition of parliament itself have a traditional democratic character, the greater become the difficulties of parliamentary action. It is with these points in mind that we would judge the comparisons with the Bolsheviks' participation in elections to the Duma after 1905. The tactic employed by the Russian comrades, of participating in elections to the Constituent Assembly and then dissolving it by force, despite the fact that it did not prove to be the undoing of the revolution, would be a dangerous tactic to use in countries where the parliamentary system, far from being a recent phenomenon, is an institution of long standing and one that is rooted firmly in the consciousness and customs of the proletariat itself.

The work required to gain the support of the masses for the abolition of the system of democratic representation would appear to be - and is in fact - a much greater task for us in Italy than in, say, Russia or even Germany. The need to give the greatest force to this propaganda aimed at devaluing the parliamentary institution and eliminating its sinister counter-revolutionary influence has led us to the tactic of abstentionism. To electoral activity we counterpose the violent conquest of political power on the part of the proletariat and the formation of the Council State: hence our abstentionism in no way diminishes our insistence on the need for a centralized revolutionary government. Indeed, we are against collaborating with anarchists and syndicalists within the revolutionary movement, for they do not accept such criteria of propaganda and action.

The general election of 16 November, despite the fact that it was fought by the PSI on a maximalist platform, has proved once again that electoral activity excludes and pushes into the background every other form of activity, above all illegal activity. In Italy the problem is not one of uniting legal and illegal activity, as Lenin advises the German comrades, but of beginning to reduce legal activity in order to make a start on its illegal counterpart, which does not exist at all. The new parliamentary group has devoted itself to social-democratic and minimalist work, tabling questions, drafting legislation, etc.

We conclude our exposition by letting you know that in all likelihood, although We have maintained discipline within the PSI and upheld its tactics until now, before long and perhaps prior to the municipal elections, which are due in July, our fraction will break away from the party that seems set on retaining

many anti-communists in its ranks, to form the Italian Communist Party, whose first act will be to affiliate to the Communist International.

Revolutionary greetings.

Socialism and Anarchy (1919)

In initiating our campaign against participation in the elections, we were expecting an objection which has no other function than to be obvious and give cause far some useful explanations: you are anarchists!

It has in fact come from various quarters: and even "Avanti" responding to an opportune work of comrade Boero who certainly reflects the opinion of the maximalist comrades of Turin - speaks ofanarchist abstentionism.

For its part "Libertario", while it opportunely confirms the difference between its anarchist and our socialist thought, affects to depict us as people on the path of repentance, and imagines that we re for "conceding points" to the anarchists, and that by completing other steps, we'll end up recognising that... Marx has been vanquished by Bakunin.

Now it will be good to establish in front of everybody that we are and will remain socialists and marxists.

On the relationship between socialism and anarchy much is very often misunderstood. One frequently hears it repeated that the sole difference between the two schools is in the electionist and parliamentary tactic. It's said by many, even socialists, that in them the final goal, the vision of the future society, and also the vision of the revolutionary historical process are identical.

Finally not a few socialists thoughtlessly admit that in anarchism there is a method, a conception, more perfect, more pure, higher, on which it's logical to reflect every so often in order to see – if only through the judgements expressed by the followers of anarchy – whether we socialists are less than good and true revolutionaries.

For us, whatever is said of our aversion for elections, socialism and anarchism are different methods, and this second method is in itself erroneous, is based on an incorrect interpretation of society and history, does not identify itself with the real development of the revolution; and for this very reason is not the true revolutionary method, and the less can it be called "more revolutionary" than the socialist method, as many ingenuously believe.

The conception and tactics that alone correspond to the process of the class struggle and triumph of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie, are contained in marxism, and contemporary events are confirming this against all the forecasts, against Bakunin, Kropotkin, Sorel, as against Bernstein and the reformists from all sides.

The constitution of the proletariat into a class party, the conquest of political power, the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is the formation of a government, and the expropriation of capital completed systematically by this central power, representing the necessary process of revolution.

The order of the new communist society, reached in a far from brief period, will be characterised by the disappearance of class differences, and thus by the exercise of an out and out politicalpower, with a system of production founded on the co-ordination and the disciplining of the activity of the producers and the distribution of the products by central organisms representing the collectivity.

All of these postulates, one by one, are rejected and criticised by anarchism.

This sees in the revolution not only the demolition of the bourgeois state, but of every political power; in the transformation of the economy, a spontaneous phenomenon subsequent to the suppression of the state, which will determine almost automatically the expropriation of the capitalists; in the order of the new society the autonomous movement of free groups of producers, from which would emerge a better distribution of products.

It would be interesting to discuss these substantial differences, to show, according to our point of view, the inferiority of the anarchist system compared to the socialist one.

However from now on it remains clear that the discussion which we engage in is a discussion by socialists and between socialists. The party must therefore establish whether the proletariat has to arrive at the political conquest of power by revolutionary or legalistic means; and whether intervention in the elections, even with many reservations and only with the intention of making maximalist propaganda, is not a condition for the failure of revolutionary action, an innocuous outlet of proletarian energies that the bourgeoisie wants to provoke in order to save its institutions from definitive collapse.

Socialists and Anarchists (1920)

We're resuming an – unhurried! – polemic with "Volontà" of Ancona, which from the 1st November has devoted a sesquipedal article to polemicising with us.

The anarchist columnist digresses first, then excuses himself in order to revolve a bit around his phobia for the state; and finally comes to the point that we have defined as essential.

The anarchists – we said – think that the economic expropriation of the bourgeoisie will be instantaneous, and simultaneous with the proletarian insurrection which will knock dawn the bourgeois power.

On this premise – which is simply fictitious – they construct their other illusion en the uselessness of every form of power, of state, of proletarian government.

This goes at the same time with the fallacy of the anarchist economic conception, based on the liberty of producers' and consumers' groups in the field of the production and distribution of goods – a conception that while superseding the bourgeois system of private enterprise, or that of Mazzinian

associations a, remains well below the formidable original content of the communist economic concept: suppression of the "freedom of production".

Not understanding this gigantic task of the communist revolution, all convinced that it will suffice to kill off this cursed State (metaphysically thought of as immanent, independent of capitalism, the same whatever class possesses it!) because everything goes into place by itself – the anarchists imagine possible the instantaneous substitution of the socialist economy for the bourgeois one.

That we've hit the right key, is demonstrated by the polemical enormities which ''Volontà" resorts to in the face of our approach to the question.

To hold that after the political revolution there will continue to be bourgeois who aren't yet expropriated is , according to our anarchist friends, utopian socialism!

Engels, if he were to live again, would chase us back into the prehistory of socialism! Poor us... and poor Engels!

What if precisely utopianism used to dream of the new society without being conscious of the historical process which leads to it! What if precisely Marx and Engels indicated the necessary means of this process, fixing the exact criteria of which we are modest but dogged supporters! But let the columnist of "Volontà" reread; not only the constitution of the Russian Republic and the other documents of the Third International which we've recorded at another time, but precisely the last two pages the chapter "proletarians and Communists" of the Communist Manifesto. There he will see discussed the gradual process of expropriation after the conquest of power.

The whole problem of Dictatorship, which the anarchist journal has discussed chaotically, is right here. It's in the existence or not of the period ;and some socialists die if they don't immediately add transitory) or gradual expropriation of the bourgeois by the proletariat organised as dominant class.

We've written before in polemic with the anarchists that this period (of transition, its true, since there can't be a period that isn't transitional, if it has a beginning and an end) would last at least a generation. Well then, in the work of comrade Radek published in "Comunismo" on the "Evolution of Socialism from science to action" and inspired directly by the doctrines of classical marxism, are these very clear propositions:
"Dictatorship is the form of rule, in which one class dictates its will bluntly to the other classes".
"The socialist revolution is a long process, which commences with the dethroning of the capitalist class but it ends only with the transformation of the capitalist economy into the socialist economy, in the workers' "cooperative" republic. This process will require at East a generation in every country, and this period of time Is exactly the period of the proletarian dictatorship, the period in which the proletariat with one hand must incessantly repress the capitalist class, while on the other which remains free, it can work for socialist reconstruction".

"Volontà" puts on our conscience an "opposition to the expropriating function of the revolution"!!

As if it was due to our caprice that the revolutionary process will be so complex, as Marx saw it and the above words of the... counter-revolutionary Radek described it.

The reasoning of "Volontà" is specious. Instead of dealing with the historical; social
and technical possibility of its expropiation-insurrection, it devotes itself to showing that, if the

management of socialisation is entrusted to a State the revolution will fail; even more if economic privilege is allowed to exist for a bit.

In possession of this magnificent sophism, our contradictor can become a good bourgeois again, presenting it to the capitalist world as a life insurance policy!

"Volontà" calls conservation of economic privilege the performance of that programme which according to us is the most rapid process of eradication of economic privilege.

We would wish – certainly – a more rapid one, as long as it could be developed on the surface of the planet that we inhabit, rather than among the wild fancies of anarchism.

But, to support the absurd concept of instantaneous socialisation, a marxism played by ear is invoked, and it's objected: there's economic privilege? It will determine political privilege. The statewhich you want to conserve, between the two classes of which you, socialists, want to conserve the privileged one, will choose to support the bosses' class.

But this is marxism fossilized into metaphysics! In the concept af the marxist dialectic the state doesn't have permanent characteristics and functions in history: every class state follows the evolution of that class: it's first a revolutionary motor, then an instrument of conservation. Thus the bourgeois state smashes feudal privileges in a colossal struggle, and afterwards struggles for the defence of those of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat.

But the coming to power of the proletariat (we paraphrase with our poor words the immortal thought of the Master) transcends the meaning of the accession of a new dominant class. The proletariat has – first in the lifetime of humanity – the consciousness of the laws of the economy; and of history, "in the triumph of its revolution human prehistory comes to a close".

The proletarian state breaks the bonds of the capitalist system to substitute it with a rational system of exercise of men's activity in the universal interests of humanity. The proletarian state remains standing during the period of elimination of the capitalist class, but doesn't create any other dominated class. Its historical task is the elimination of classes, with which will be eliminated the very necessity of the political power of the state.

This does not mean to say that future society will not have "representatives" and will not have central administration.

It only means that this will not have a political! function, because it will not have to act any more for one class of men against another class – it will only have economic and technical functions because it will usefully and rationally harmonise the action of all men against hostile nature.

Towards the Establishment of Workers' Councils in Italy (1920)

We have now collected quite a lot of material concerned with proposals and initiatives for establishing Soviets in Italy, and we reserve to ourselves the right to expound the elements of the argument step by

step. At this stage we wish to make a few preliminary observations of a general nature, to which we have already referred in our most recent issues.

The system of proletarian representation that has been introduced for the first time ever in Russia has a twofold character: political and economic. Its political role is to struggle against the bourgeoisie until the latter has been totally eradicated. Its economic role is to create the whole novel mechanism of communist production. As the revolution unfolds and the parasitic classes are gradually eliminated, the political functions become less and less important in comparison with their economic counterparts: but in the first instance, and above all when it is a question of struggling against bourgeois power, political activity must come first.

The authentic instrument of the proletariat's struggle for liberation, and above all of its conquest of political power, is the communist class party. Under the bourgeois regime, the communist party, the engine of the revolution, needs organs in which it can operate; these organs are the workers' councils. To declare that they are the proletariat's organs of liberation, without mentioning the role of the party, after the fashion of the programme adopted at the Congress of Bologna, seems mistaken in our view. To maintain, alter the fashion of the Turin L'Ordine Nuovo comrades, that even before the collapse of the bourgeoisie the workers' councils are organs, not only of political struggle, but of technico-economic training in the communist system, can only be seen as a return to socialist gradualism. This latter, whether it is called reformism or syndicalism, is defined by the mistaken belief that the proletariat can achieve emancipation by making advances in economic relations while capitalism still holds political power through the State.

We shall now expand on the criticism of the two concepts we have mentioned.

The system of proletarian representation must be rooted in the whole of the technical process of production. This is a perfectly valid principle, but it corresponds to the stage when the proletariat is organizing the new economy alter its seizure of power. Apply it without modification to the bourgeois regime, and you accomplish nothing in revolutionary terms. Even at the stage which Russia has reached, Soviet-type political representation — i.e. the ladder that culminates in the government of the people's commissars — does not start with work-crews or factory shops, but from the local administrative Soviet, elected directly by the workers (grouped if possible in their respective workplaces). To be specific, the Moscow Soviet is elected by the Moscow proletariat in the ratio of one delegate to every 1,000 workers. Between the delegates and the electors there is no intermediary organ. This first level then leads to higher levels, to the Congress of Soviets, the executive committee, and finally the government of commissars.

The factory council plays its part in quite a different network, that of workers' control over production. Consequently the factory council, made up of one representative for every workshop, does not nominate the factory's representative in the local political-administrative Soviet: this representative is elected directly and independently. In Russia, the factory councils arc the basic unit of another system of representation (itself subordinate of course to the political network of Soviets): the system of workers' control and the people's economy. Control within the factory has a revolutionary and expropriative

significance only after central power has passed into the hands of the proletariat. While the factory is still protected by the bourgeois State, the factory council controls nothing. The few functions it fulfils are the result of the traditional practice of: 1. parliamentary reformism; 2. trade-union resistance, which does not cease to be a reformist way of advancing.

To conclude: we do not oppose the setting up of internal factory councils if the workers themselves or their organizations demand them. But we insist that the communist party's activity must be based on another terrain, namely the struggle for the conquest of political power. This struggle may well be advanced fruitfully by the setting up of workers' representative bodies — but these must be urban or rural workers' councils elected directly by the 'names, waiting to take the place of municipal councils and local organs of State power at the moment the bourgeois forces collapse. Having thus advanced our thesis, we promise to give it ample documentation and factual support, and to present our work in a report to the next meeting of the communist fraction.

II

Prior to getting down to discussing the practical problems of setting up workers', peasants' and soldiers' councils in Italy, and bearing in mind the general considerations contained in the article we published in our last issue, we wish to examine the programmatic guidelines or the Soviet system as they are developed in the documents of the Russian revolution and in the declarations of principle issued by some or the Italian maximalist currents, such as the programme adopted by the Bologna Congress, the motion proposed by Leone and other comrades to the same congress; and the writings of L'Ordine Nuovo on the Turin factory council movement.

The Councils and the Bolshevik Programme

In the documents of the IIIrd International and the Russian Communist Party, in the masterly reports of those formidable exponents of doctrine, the leaders of the Russian revolutionary movement — Lenin, Zinoviev, Radek, Bukharin — there recurs at frequent intervals the idea that the Russian revolution did not invent new and unforeseen structures, but merely confirmed the predictions of Marxist theory concerning the revolutionary process.

The core of the imposing phenomenon of the Russian revolution is the conquest of political power on the part of the working masses, and the establishment of their dictatorship, as the result of an authentic class war.

The Soviets — and it is well to recall that the word soviet simply means council, and can be employed to describe any sort of representative body — the Soviets, as far as history is concerned, are the system of representation employed by the proletarian class once it has taken power. The Soviets are the organs that take the place of parliament and the bourgeois administrative assemblies and gradually replace all the other ramifications of the State. To put it in the words of the most recent congress of the Russian communists, as quoted by Comrade Zinoviev, "the Soviets are the State organizations of the workers and poor peasants; they exercise the dictatorship of the proletariat during the stage when all previous forms of the State are being extinguished.

In the final analysis, this system of State organizations gives representation to all producers in their capacity as members of the working class, and not as members of a particular trade or industrial sector. According to the latest manifesto of the Third International, the Soviets represent "a new type of mass

organization, one which embraces the working class in its entirety, irrespective of individual trades or levels of political maturity". The basic units of the Soviet administrative network are the urban and rural councils; the network culminates in the government of commissars.

And yet it is true that during the phase of economic transformation, other organs are emerging parallel to this system, such as the system of workers' control and the people's economy. It is also true, as we have stressed many times, that this economic system will gradually absorb the political system, once the expropriation of the bourgeoisie is completed and there is no further need for a central authority. But the essential problem during the revolutionary period, as emerges clearly from all the Russian documents, is that of keeping the various local and sectional demands and interests subordinate to the general interest (in space and time) of the revolutionary movement.

Not until the two sets of organs are merged will the network of production be thoroughly communist, and only then will that principle (which in our view is being given exaggerated importance) of a perfect match between the system of representation and the mechanisms of the productive system be successfully realized. Prior to that stage, while the bourgeoisie is still resisting and above all while it still holds power, the problem is to achieve a representative system m which the general interest prevails. Today, while the economy is still based on individualism and competition, the only form in which this higher collective interest can be manifested is a system of political representation in which the communist political party is active.

We shall come back to this question, and demonstrate how the desire to over-concretize and technically determine the Soviet system, especially when the bourgeoisie is still in power, puts the cart before the horse and lapses into the old errors of syndicalism and reformism. For the moment we quote these non-ambiguous words of Zinoviev: "The communist party unifies that vanguard of the proletariat which is struggling, in conscious fashion, to put the communist programme into effect. [n particular it is striving to introduce its programme into the State organizations, the Soviets, and to achieve complete dominance within them.

To conclude, the Russian Soviet Republic is led by the Soviets, which represent ten million workers out of a total population of about eighty million. But essentially, appointments to the executive committees of the local and central Soviets are settled in the sections and congresses of the great Communist Party which has mastery over the Soviets. This corresponds to the stirring defence by Radek of the revolutionary role of minorities. It would be as well not to create a majoritarian-workerist fetishism which could only be to the advantage of reformism and the bourgeoisie. The party is in the front line of the revolution in so far as it is potentially composed of men who think and act like members of the future working humanity in which all will be producers harmoniously inserted into a marvellous mechanism of functions and representation.

The Bologna Programme and the Councils

It is to be deplored that in the Party's current programme there is no trace of the Marxist proposition that the class party is the instrument of proletarian emancipation; there is just the anodyne codicil: "decides (Who decides? Even grammar was sacrificed in the haste to decide — in favour of elections.) to base the organization of the Italian Socialist Party on the above-mentioned principles".

As regards the paragraph which denies the transformation of any State organ into an organ of struggle for the liberation of the proletariat, there are certain points to be made — but it will have to be done on another occasion, after an indispensable previous clarification of terms. But we dissent still more strongly from the programme where it states that the new proletarian organs will function initially, under the bourgeois regime, as instruments of the violent struggle for liberation, and will subsequently become organs of social and economic transformation; for among the organs mentioned are not only workers', peasants' and soldiers' councils, but also councils of the public economy, which are inconceivable under a bourgeois regime. Even the workers' political councils should be seen primarily as vehicles for the communists' activity of liberating the proletariat.

Even quite recently Comrade Serrati, in flagrant opposition to Marx and Lenin, has undervalued the role of the class party in the revolution. As Lenin says: "Together with the working masses, the Marxist, centralized political party, the vanguard of the proletariat, will lead the people along the right road, towards the victorious dictatorship of the proletariat, towards proletarian not bourgeois democracy, towards Soviet power and the socialist order." The Party's current programme smacks of libertarian scruples and a lack of theoretical preparation.

The Councils and the Leone Motion

This motion was summarized in four points expounded in the author's evocative style.

The first of these points finds miraculous inspiration in the statement that the class struggle is the real engine of history and that it has smashed social-national unions. But then the motion proceeds to exalt the Soviets as the organs of revolutionary synthesis, which they are supposed to bring about virtually through the very mechanism of their being created; it states that only Soviets, rather than schools, parties or corporations, can bring the great historical initiatives to a triumphant conclusion.

This idea of Leone's, and of the many comrades who signed his motion, is quite different from our own, which we have deduced from Marxism and from the lessons of the Russian revolution. What they are doing is over-emphasizing a form in place of a force, just as the syndicalists did in the case of the trade unions, attributing to their minimalist practice the magical virtue of being able to transform itself into the social revolution- Just as syndicalism was demolished in the first place by the criticism of true Marxists, and subsequently by the experience of the syndicalist movements which all over the world have collaborated with the bourgeois regime, providing it with elements for its preservation, so Leone's idea collapses before the experience of the counter-revolutionary, social-democratic workers' councils, which are precisely those which have not been penetrated successfully by the communist political programme.

Only the party can embody the dynamic revolutionary energies of the class. It would be trivial to object that socialist parties too have compromised, since we are not exalting the virtues of the party form, but those of the dynamic content which is to be found only in the communist party. Every party defines itself on the basis of its own programme, and its functions cannot be compared with those of other parties, whereas of necessity all the trade unions and even, in a technical sense, all the workers' councils have functions in common with one another. The shortcoming of the social-reformist parties was not that they were parties, but that they were not communist and revolutionary parties. These parties led the counter-revolution, whereas the communist parties, in opposition to them, led and nourished revolutionary action. Thus there are no organs which are revolutionary by virtue of their form; there are

only social forces that are revolutionary on account of their orientation. These forces transform themselves into a party that goes into battle with a programme.

The Councils and the initiative of L'Ordine Nuovo in Turin

In our view, the comrades around the newspaper L'Ordine Nuovo go even further than this. They are not even happy with the wording of the Party's programme, because they claim that the Soviets, including those of a technical-economic character (the factory councils), not only are already in existence and functioning as organs of the proletarian liberation struggle under the bourgeois regime, but have already become organs for the reconstruction of the communist economy.

In fact they publish in their newspaper the section of the Party's programme that we quoted above, leaving out a few words so as to transform its meaning in accordance with their own point of view:

"They will have to be opposed by new proletarian organs (workers', peasants' and soldiers' councils, councils of the public economy, etc.) — ... organs of social and economic transformation and for the reconstruction of the new communist order." But this article is already a long one, so we postpone to our next issue the exposition of our profound dissension from this principle; in our view, it runs the risk of ending up as a purely reformist experiment involving modification of certain functions of the trade unions and perhaps the promulgation of a bourgeois law on workers' councils."

III

At the end of our second article on the establishment of Soviets in Italy, we referred to the Turin movement to establish factory councils. We do not share the point of view which inspires the efforts of the L'Ordine Nuovo comrades, and while appreciating their tenacity in making the fundamentals of communism better known, we believe that they have committed major errors of principle and tactics.

According to them, the essence of the communist revolution lies in the setting up of new organs of proletarian representation, whose fundamental character is their strict alignment with the process of production; eventually these organs are to control production directly. We have already made the point that we see this as over-emphasis on the idea of a formal coincidence between the representative organs of the working class and the various aggregates of the technico-economic system of production. This coincidence will in fact be achieved at a much more advanced stage of the communist revolution, when production is socialized and all its various constituent activities are subordinated in harmonious fashion to the general and collective interests.

Prior to this stage, and during the period of transition from a capitalist to a communist economy, the groupings of producers are in a constant state of flux and their individual interests may at times clash with the general and collective interests of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat. This movement will find its real instrument in a working-class representative institution in which each individual participates in his capacity as a member of the working class, and as such interested in a radical change in social relations, rather than as a component of a particular trade, factory or local group.

So long as political power remains in the hands of the capitalist class, a representative organ embodying the general revolutionary interests of the proletariat can only be found in the politicalarena. It can only be a class party that has the personal adherence of the sort of people who, in order to dedicate

themselves to the cause of the revolution, have managed to overcome their narrow selfish, sectional and even sometimes class interests (the latter case obtaining when the party admits deserters from the bourgeois class into its ranks, provided they are supporters of the communist programme).

It is a serious error to believe that by importing the formal structures which one expects to be formed to manage communist production into the present proletarian environment, among the wage-earners of capitalism, one will bring into being forces which are in themselves and through inner necessity revolutionary. This was the error of the syndicalists, and this too is the error of the over-zealous supporters of the factory councils.

The article published by comrade C. Niccolini in Communismo comes at an opportune moment. He notes that in Russia, even after the proletarian seizure of power, the factory councils frequently placed obstacles in the path of revolutionary measures; to an even greater extent than the trade unions, they counterposed the pressures of narrow interests to the unfolding of the revolutionary process. Even within the network of the communist economy, the factory councils are not the principal determinants of the production process. In the organs which fulfil this function (Councils of the People's Economy), the factory councils have fewer representatives than the trade unions or the proletarian State authorities; it is this centralized political network that is the instrument and the dominant factor in the revolution — understood not only as a struggle against the political resistance of the bourgeois class, but also as a process of socializing wealth.

At the juncture we have reached in Italy, viz. the juncture where the proletarian State is still a programmatic aspiration, the fundamental problem is the conquest of power on the part of the proletariat, or better the communist proletariat — i.e. the workers who are organized into a class-based political party, who are determined to make the historical form of revolutionary power, the dictatorship of the proletariat, into a concrete reality.

Comrade A. Tasca himself, in L'Ordine Nuovo No.22, clearly expounds his disagreement with the programme of the maximalist majority adopted at the Bologna Congress, and his even greater disagreement with us abstentionists, in the following passage that deserves to be reproduced.

"Another point in the Party's new programme deserves to be considered: the new proletarian organs (workers', peasants' and soldiers' councils, councils of the public economy, etc.)
functioning Initially (under the bourgeois regime) as instruments of the violent struggle for liberation, are subsequently transformed into organs of social and economic transformation, for reconstruction of the new communist order. At an earlier session of the Commission, we had stressed the shortcomings of such a formulation, which entrusted different functions to the new organs initially and subsequently, separated by the seizure of power on the part of the proletariat. Gennari had promised to make an alteration, along the lines of '... initially predominantly as instruments...', but it is evident that he eventually abandoned this idea, and as I was unable to attend the last session of the Commission, I could not make him adopt it again. There is in this formulation, however, a veritable point of disagreement which, while bringing Gennari, Bombacci and others closer to the abstentionists, puts a greater distance between them and those who believe that the new workers' organs cannot function as

'instruments of the violent struggle for liberation' except and to the degree that they become 'organs of social and economic transformation' at once (rather than subsequently). The proletariat's liberation is achieved through the manifestation of its ability to control in an autonomous and original fashion the social processes it created by and for itself: liberation consists in the creation of the sort of organs which, if they arc active and alert, by virtue of this fact alone provoke the social and economic transformation which is their goal. This is not a question of form, but of substance. In the present formulation, we repeat, the compilers of the programme have ended up adhering to Bordiga's conception, which attaches more importance to the conquest of power than to the formation of Soviets; for the present period, Bordiga sees the Soviets as having more of a 'political' function, in the strict sense of the word, than an organic role of 'economic and social transformation'. Just as Bordiga maintains that the complete Soviet will come into being only during the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, so Gennari, Bombacci, etc., argue that only the conquest of power (which thereby acquires a political character, and so brings us back full circle to the 'public powers' that had already been superseded) can provide the Soviets with their true, full functions. It is this which is in our opinion the nub of the argument, and it must lead us' sooner or later, to a further revision of the newly adopted programme."

According to Tasca, then, the working class can project the stages of its liberation, even before it has wrested power from the bourgeoisie. Moreover Tasca lets it be understood that this conquest could occur even without violence, once the proletariat had completed its work of technical preparation and social education: here we have the concrete revolutionary method of theL'Ordine Nuovo comrades. We will not proceed at length to demonstrate bow this idea eventually coincides with that of reformism and becomes foreign to the fundamentals of revolutionary Marxism; according to Marxist doctrine, the revolution does not occur as a result of the education, culture or technical capacity of the proletariat, but as a result of the inner crises of the system of capitalist production.

Like Enrico Leone, Tasca and his friends attach too much importance to the appearance in the Russian revolution of a new social representative organ, the Soviet, and endow it with an inner force such that its mere establishment constitutes a wholly novel historical solution to the proletariat's struggle against capitalism But the Soviets — most successfully defined by comrade Zinoviev as the State organizations of the working class — are nothing other than organs of proletarian power, exercising the revolutionary dictatorship of the working class; it is this latter which is the lynchpin of the Marxist system, and whose first positive experiment was the Paris Commune of 1871. The Soviets are the form, not the cause, of the revolution.

In addition to this disagreement, there is another point which separates us from the Turin comrades. The Soviets, State organizations of the victorious proletariat, are not at all the same as the factory councils, nor do these latter constitute the first step or rung of the Soviet political system. This confusion is also present in the declaration of principles adopted by the first assembly of workshop delegates from the factories of Turin, which begins as follows:

"The factory delegates are the sole and authentic social (economic and political) representatives of the proletarian class, by virtue of their being elected by all workers at their work-place on the basis of

universal suffrage. At the various levels of their constitution, the delegates embody the union of all workers as realized in organs of production (work-crew, workshop, factory, union of the factories in a given industry, union of the productive enterprises in a city, union of the organs of production in the mechanical and agricultural industry of a district, a province, a region, the nation, the world) whose authority and social leadership are invested in the councils and council system."

This declaration is unacceptable, since proletarian power is formed directly within the municipal Soviets of town and country, without passing via factory councils and committees, as we have repeated many times; this fact also emerges from the lucid expositions of the Russian Soviet system published by L'Ordine Nuovo itself. The factory councils are organs whose task will be to represent the interests of groups of workers during the period of revolutionary transformation of production. They represent not only a particular group's determination to achieve liberation through socialization of the private capitalist's firm, but also the group's concern for the manner in which its interests will be taken into account during the process of socialization itself, a process disciplined by the organized will of the whole of the working collectivity.

The workers' interests have until now been represented by the trade unions, throughout the period when the capitalist system appeared stable and there was scope only for putting upward pressure on wages. The unions will continue to exist during the revolutionary period, and naturally enough there will be a demarcation dispute with the factory councils, which only emerge when the abolition of private capitalism is seen to be imminent, as has happened in Turin. However, it is not a matter of great revolutionary moment to decide whether non-union members should participate or no in the elections for delegates. If it is logical that they should in fact participate, given the very nature of the factory council, it certainly does not appear logical to us that there should be a mingling of organs and functions between councils and unions, along the lines of the Turin proposals — compelling, for example, the Turin section of the Metalworkers' Federation to elect its own executive council from the workshop delegates' assembly.

At any rate, the relations between councils and unions as representatives of the special interests of particular groups of workers will continue to be very complex; they will be settled and harmonized only in a very advanced stage of the communist economy, when the possibility of the interests of a group of producers being at variance with the general interest in the progress of production will be reduced to a minimum.

What is important to establish is that the communist revolution will be led and conducted by an organ representing the working class politically; prior to the smashing of bourgeois power, this is a political party. Subsequently, it is the system of political Soviets elected directly by the masses, with the aim of choosing representatives who have a general political programme and are not merely the exponents of the narrow interests of a trade or firm.

The Russian system is so contrived that a town's municipal Soviet is composed of one delegate for every group of proletarians, who vote for a single name only. The delegates, however, are proposed to the electors by the political party; the same process is repeated for the second and third degrees of

delegation, to the higher organs of the State system. Thus it is always a single political party — the Communist Party — which seeks and obtains from the electors a mandate to administer power. We are certainly not saying that the Russian system should be adopted in an uncritical fashion elsewhere, but we do feel that the principle underlying the revolutionary system of representation — viz. the subjection of selfish and sectional interests to the collective interest -should be adhered to even more closely than in Russia.

Would it usefully serve the communists' revolutionary struggle if the network of a political system of representation of the working class were instituted now? This is the problem we shall examine in the next article, when we discuss the relevant proposals elaborated by the Party leadership. We shall remain unshaken in our conviction that such a representative system would be quite different from the system of factory councils and committees that has begun to form in Turin (and indeed this is partially recognized in the Party's proposals).

IV

We believe we have already said enough concerning the difference between factory councils and politico-administrative councils of workers and peasants. The factory council represents workers' interests which extend no farther than the narrow circle of an industrial firm. Under a communist regime, it is the basic unit of the system of "workers' control" which has a certain part to play in the system of "Councils of the Economy", a system which will eventually take over the technical and economic management of production. But the factory council has nothing to do with the system of political Soviets, the depositories of proletarian power.

Under the bourgeois regime, therefore, the factory council, or for that matter the trade union, cannot be viewed as an organ for the conquest of political power. If, on the other hand, one were to view them as organs for the emancipation of the proletariat via a route that does not involve the revolutionary conquest of power, one would be lapsing into the syndicalist error: the comrades around L'Ordine Nuovo are hardly correct when they maintain, as they have done in polemic with Guerra di Classe, that the factory council movement, as they theorize it, is not in some sense a syndicalist movement.

Marxism is characterized by its prediction that the proletariat's Struggle for emancipation will be divided into a number of great historical phases, in which political activity and economic activity vary enormously in importance: the struggle for power; the exercise of power (dictatorship of the proletariat) in the transformation of the economy; the society without classes and without a political State. To identify, in the role of the liberation organs of the proletariat, the stages of the political process with their economic counterparts is to lapse into the petty- bourgeois caricature of Marxism called economism (which in turn can be classified into reformism and syndicalism). Over-emphasis on the factory council is just a resurrection of this hoary old error, which unites the petty-bourgeois Proudhon with all those revisionists who believe they have transcended Marx.

Under a bourgeois regime, then, the factory council represents the interests of the workers in a particular enterprise, just as it will do under a communist regime. It arises when circumstances demand it, through changes in the methods of proletarian economic organization. But perhaps to an even greater extent than the trade union, the council opens its flank to the deviations of reformism.

The old minimalist tendency that argues in favour of compulsory arbitration and profit-sharing by workers (i.e. their participation in the management and administration of the factory) could well find in the factory council the basis for the drafting of an anti-revolutionary piece of social legislation. This is happening in Germany at the moment, where the Independents are opposing not the principle, but the manner of the draft legislation, in stark contrast to the Communists who maintain that the democratic regime cannot grant the proletariat any form of control whatsoever over capitalist functions. It should thus be clear that it makes no sense to speak of workers' control until political power rests in the hands of the proletarian State. Such control can only be exercised, as a prelude to the socialization of firms and their administration by appropriate organs of the collectivity, in the name of the proletarian State and on the basis of its power.

Councils of workers — industrial workers, peasants and, on occasion, soldiers — are, as is clear, the political organs of the proletariat, the foundations of the proletarian State. The urban and rural local councils take the place of the municipal councils under the bourgeois regime. The provincial and regional Soviets take the place of the present provincial councils, with this difference, that the provincial Soviets are not elected directly, but indirectly from the local Soviets. The State Congress of Soviets, together with the Central Executive Committee, take the place of the bourgeois parliament, with the difference again that they arc not elected directly, but by third or even fourth degree suffrage.

There is no need here to emphasize the other differences, of which the most important is the electors' right of recall of any delegate at any time. If the mechanism to cope with these recalls is to be flexible, then the elections in the first place should not be based on lists of candidates, but should involve giving a single delegate to a grouping of electors who, if possible, should live and work together. But the fundamental characteristic of this whole system does not reside in these technicalities, which have nothing magical about them, but rather in the principle which lays down that the right to vote, both actively and passively, is reserved to the workers alone and denied to the bourgeois.

As far as the formation of municipal Soviets is concerned, two errors are commonly encountered. One is the idea that delegates to the Soviets are elected by factory councils and committees (executive commissions of the councils of workshop delegates), whereas in fact, as we make no apology for repeating, the delegates are elected directly by the mass of electors. This error is reproduced in the Bombacci proposal for establishing Soviets in Italy (Para. 6).

The other error consists in thinking that the Soviet is a body composed of representatives simply nominated by the Socialist Party, the trade unions and the factory councils. Comrade Ambrosini, for example, makes this error in his proposals. Such a system might perhaps be useful in order to form Soviets quickly and on a provisional basis, but it does not correspond to their definitive structure. It is true that in Russia a small percentage of delegates to the Soviet are added to those elected directly by the proletarian electors. But in reality the Communist Party, or any other party, obtains its representation by standing tried and proven members of its organization as candidates, and by campaigning around its programme before the electorate. In our view, a Soviet can only be called revolutionary when a majority of its delegates are members of the Communist Party.

All of this, it should be understood, refers to the period of the proletarian dictatorship. Now we come to the vexed question: what should be the role and characteristics of the workers' councils while the power of the bourgeoisie is still intact?

In central Europe at the moment, workers' councils co-exist with the bourgeois-democratic State, which is all the more anti-revolutionary in that it is republican and social-democratic. What is the significance of this proletarian representative system, if it is not the depository and foundation of State power? At the very least, does it act as an effective organ of struggle for the realization of the proletarian dictatorship?

These questions are answered by the Austrian comrade Otto Maschl in an article we came across in the Geneva journal, Nouvelle Internationale. He states that in Austria the councils have brought about their own paralysis and have handed over their power to the national bourgeois assembly. In Germany on the other hand, according to Maschl, once the Majoritarians and Independents had left the councils, these latter became true foci of the struggle for proletarian emancipation, and Noske had to smash them in order to allow social-democracy to govern. In Austria, however, Maschl concludes, the existence of councils within the democratic system, or rather the existence of democracy In spite of the councils, proves that these workers' councils are far from playing the role of what are called Soviets in Russia. And he expresses the doubt that perhaps at the moment of the revolution, alternative, truly revolutionary Soviets may emerge and become the depositories of proletarian power in place of these domesticated versions.

The Party programme adopted at Bologna declares that Soviets should be set up in Italy as organs of revolutionary struggle. The object of the Bombacci proposal is to concretize this aim.

Before getting down to details, let us discuss the general ideas which have inspired Comrade Bombacci. First of all, and let no one accuse us of being pedantic, let us request a formal clarification. In the phrase: "only a national institution that is broader than the Soviets can usher the present period towards the final revolutionary struggle against the bourgeois regime and its democratic mask: parliamentarism", does it mean that parliamentarism is the aforementioned broader institution, or is it the democratic mask? We fear that the first interpretation must be the right one, a feeling which is confirmed by the paragraph on the Soviets' programme of action, which is a strange mixture of the functions of the latter with the Party's parliamentary activity. If the councils to be set up are to carry out their activities on this ambiguous terrain, then it would certainly be better not to set them up at all.

The idea that the Soviets should have the role of working out proposals for socialist and revolutionary legislation which socialist deputies will place before the bourgeois State — here we have a proposal that makes a fine pair with the one on communal-electionist Sovietism which was so well demolished by our own D.L. For the moment we shall go no further than remind the comrades who put forward such proposals of one of Lenin's conclusions in the declaration adopted by the Moscow Congress: "Put a

distance between yourselves and those who delude the proletariat by proclaiming the possibility of their victories within the bourgeois framework, and propose that the new proletarian organs should combine with or collaborate with the instruments of bourgeois domination." If the former are the social-democrats (who are still members of our Party), should we not recognize the latter in the electionist maximalists, concerned as they are with justifying their parliamentary and communal activity by monstrous pseudo-Soviet projects?

Are the comrades in the faction which was victorious at Bologna blind to the fact that these people are not even in line with that form of communist electionism which may legitimately be opposed — on the basis of the arguments of Lenin and certain German communists — to our own irreducible, principled abstentionism?

V

With this article we propose to conclude our exposition, though we may resume the discussion in polemic with comrades who have commented on our point of view in other newspapers. The discussion has now been taken up by the whole of the socialist press. The best articles we have come across are those by C. Niccolini in Avanti! These articles were written with great clarity and in line with genuine Marxist principles; we fully concur with them.

The Soviets, the councils of workers, peasants (and soldiers), are the form adopted by the representative system of the proletariat, in Its exercise of power after the smashing of the capitalist State. Prior to the conquest of power, when the bourgeoisie is still politically dominant, it can happen that special historical conditions, probably corresponding to serious convulsions in the institutional arrangements of the State and society, bring Soviets into existence — and it can be very appropriate for communists to facilitate and stimulate the birth of these new organs of the proletariat. We must, however, be quite clear that their formation in this manner cannot be an artificial procedure, the mere application of a recipe — and that in any case the simple establishment of workers' councils, as the form of the proletarian revolution, does not imply that the problem of the revolution is resolved, nor that infallible conditions have been laid for its success. The revolution may not occur even when councils exist (we shall cite examples), if these are not infused with the political and historical consciousness of the proletariat — a consciousness which is condensed, one might almost say, in the communist political party.

The fundamental problem of the revolution thus lies in gauging the proletariat's determination to smash the bourgeois State and take power into its own hands. Such a determination on the part of the broad masses of the working class exists as a direct result of the economic relations of exploitation by capital; it is these which place the proletariat in an intolerable situation and drive it to smash the existing social forms. The task of the communists, then, is to direct this violent reaction on the part of the masses and give it greater efficiency. The communists — as the Manifesto said long ago — have a superior knowledge of the conditions of the class struggle and the proletariat's emancipation than the proletariat itself. The critique they make of history and of the constitution of society places them in a position to make fairly accurate predictions concerning the developments of the revolutionary process. It is for this reason that communists form the class's political party, which sets itself the task of unifying the proletarian forces and organizing the proletariat into the dominant class through the revolutionary conquest of power. When the revolution is imminent and its pre-conditions have matured in the real

world, a powerful communist party must exist and its consciousness of the events which lie ahead must be particularly acute.

As regards the revolutionary organs which will exercise proletarian power and represent the foundations of the revolutionary State on the morrow of the collapse of the bourgeoisie, their consciousness of their role will depend on the extent to which they are led by workers who are conscious of the need for a dictatorship of their own class — i.e. communist workers. Wherever this is not the case, these organs will concede the power they have won and the counter-revolution will triumph. Thus if at any given moment these organs are required and communists need to concern themselves with setting them up, it should not therefore be thought that in them we have a means of readily outflanking the bourgeoisie and almost automatically overcoming its resistance to the ceding of power.

Can the Soviets, the State organs of the victorious proletariat, play a role as organs of revolutionary struggle for the proletariat while capitalism still controls the State? The answer is yes — in the sense, however, that at any given stage they may constitute the right terrain for the revolutionary struggle that the Party is waging. And at that particular stage, the Party has to fashion such a terrain, such a grouping of forces, for itself.

Today, in Italy, have we reached this stage of struggle? We feel that we are very close to it, but that there is one more stage to go through. The communist party, which has to work within the Soviets, does not yet exist. We are not saying that the Soviets will wait for it before they emerge. It could happen that events occur differently. But then we will run this grave risk, that the immaturity of the party will allow these organs to fall into the hands of the reformists, the accomplices of the bourgeoisie, the saboteurs and falsifiers of the revolution. And so we feel that the problem of forging a genuine communist party in Italy is much more urgent than the problem of creating Soviets. To study both problems, and establish the optimal conditions in which to tackle both without delay — this too is acceptable, but without setting fixed and schematic dates for an almost official inauguration of Soviets in Italy.

To accomplish the formation of the genuine communist party means sorting out the communists from the reformists and social-democrats. Some comrades believe that the very proposal to set up Soviets would also facilitate this sorting out process. We do not agree — for the very reason that the Soviet, in our view, is not in its essence a revolutionary organ. In any case, if the rise of Soviets is to be the source of political clarification, we fail to see how this may he accomplished on the basis of an understanding — as in the Bombacci proposal — between reformists, maximalists, syndicalists and anarchists! On the contrary, the forging of a sound and healthy revolutionary movement in Italy will never he accomplished by advancing new organs modelled on future forms, like factory councils or soviets -just as it was an illusion to believe that the revolutionary spirit could be salvaged from reformism by importing it into the unions, seen as the nucleus of the future society.

We will not effect the sorting-out process through a new recipe, which will frighten no one, but by abandoning once and for all the old "recipes", the pernicious and fatal methods of the past. For well-known reasons, we feel that if a method has to be abandoned, and expelled along with non-communists from our ranks, then it should be the electoral method — and we see no other route to the setting up of a communist party that is worthy to affiliate to Moscow.

Let us work towards this goal — beginning, as Niccolini puts it so well, with the elaboration of a consciousness, a political culture, in the leaders, through a more serious study of the problems of the revolution, with fewer distractions from spurious electoral, parliamentary and minimalist activities.

Let us work towards this goal. let us issue more propaganda concerning the conquest of power, to build awareness of what the revolution will be, what its organs will be, how the Soviets will really function. Then we can say we have done truly valuable work towards establishing the councils of the proletariat and winning within them the revolutionary dictatorship that will open up the radiant road to communism.

Appendix
The Leone statement.

“The Bologna Congress of the Socialist Party proclaims and recognizes that the Russian revolution, which it salutes as the most magnificent event in the history of the world proletariat, has sparked the necessity to facilitate its expansion into all the countries of capitalist civilization; it believes that the methods and forms of this revolutionary expansion, destined to transform the Russian upheaval into a total social revolution, are to be sought in the models of a revolution which, although it is called Russian in reference to geography, is universal in character — a revolution founded on the principle of uniting the proletarians of the world. The lessons we may learn from this revolution of the Soviets, a revolution which has realized in practice all the expectations of the authentic champions of the cause of socialism, may be summarized in the following points.

“1. The class struggle has been revealed as the true engine of the present history of mankind, demonstrating its capacity to smash the social-national union, to which bourgeois governments with their mystifications intended to entrust the task of eliminating or delaying it.

“2. The socialist revolution has manifested a twofold movement in practice: (a) a movement of erosion and emptying of State powers and negation of the fundamental institutions which democratic forms utilize to deflect the historical mission of the proletariat; i.e. constituent assemblies, which place oppressed and oppressors on a sham footing of legal equality, and the parliaments which emerge from them - complementary organs of State sovereignty and not expressions of the popular will; (b) a movement of construction, thanks to a class organ of new creativity — the Soviet of workers peasants and soldiers — which, as an organ linking all the oppressed desirous of attaining the giddy heights already reached by the Russian pioneers, should henceforth be established throughout Italy and western Europe, and whose social composition should consist of the masses of workers and peasants and also (without abandoning their individual specificity) the parties which conduct a revolutionary campaign for the abolition of private ownership and the powers of the bourgeois State; the trade unions, which will operate on a more elevated and revolutionary socio-political level within the Soviet than they have hitherto achieved on account of their corporative structure; the members of the co-operative movement, who in the Soviet will be able to struggle against the capitalist regime as allies of the wage-earners, making up for the revolutionary inactivity of their organization; and the working-class Leagues of war veterans.

“3. The political struggle against the State, a military organ of war, in every political form open to it, must as in Russia have passion and rebellious elan, because socialism has been transformed from a pure problem in social logic into a furnace of ardour and enthusiasm, by implanting in the civil and military proletariat the confidence that they can effect the transfer of power to the Soviets and subsequently defend them against any revolutionary attack. This and nothing else is the summons to violence that the Russian pioneers challenge us with. It is a debt of honour and a necessity for us to take it up, rather than the conflict and chaos against which socialism in Russia has become the guarantee, as the bearer of a new order.

“4. The Russian Bolshevik Party, and equally the Italian Socialist Party, will not give up its existence until the Soviet experiment has reached full maturity — an experiment which must at once be initiated - though it must subordinate all its activities to the principles suggested by the Russian revolutionary experience, which teaches that only the proletariat grouped in Soviets, which are superior to parties, schools, corporations, may take great historical initiatives and brig them to a triumphant conclusion.”

Theses of the Abstentionist Communist Fraction of the Italian Socialist Party (1920)

I

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 exchange, 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 organised 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 organisation 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 organisation 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 organising 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 organisation of the latter into a ruling class.

8. Parliamentary democracy in which citizens of every class are represented is the form assumed by the organisation of the bourgeoisie into a ruling class. The organisation 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 labouring class into an organisation 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 endpoint 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 theManifesto, 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 organisation 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 organisation. 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 organisation 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 irredentism's 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 organisation which the proletariat will create when it, in turn, comes to power.
In the perspective of the communist critique, therefore, the recent world war 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 organised 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 organisation by instituting complete plans for a new organisation of society whose possibility of realisation 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' co-operatives, 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 co-operative itself.

10. Communists cannot consider economic trade or craft organisations to be sufficient for the struggle for the proletarian revolution or as the basic organs of the communist economy.
The organisation of the class through trade unions serves to neutralise 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 collectively 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 organisations 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 organisations, then, which can provide the proletariat with an effective instrument for its emancipation.
Factory unions and factory councils emerge as organs for the defence 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 organisations 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 defence 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 defence 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 recognise 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 organisations (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 characterised by the exclusion of the bourgeois from electoral rights and its central organisation 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 installation 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 organisation 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. organisation 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 organisation 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, organised 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 organise this work on an international basis. Externally, in all circumstances and with the means at it 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 polarise them around it, particularly at those times when they are set m motion in reaction against the conditions capitalism imposes upon them and especially within the organisations 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 mobilised 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 utilised 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 centralised 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 organisation of large and frequent proletarian demonstrations above all in the major centres and strive to use economic movements in order to organise 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 organises its own network of intelligence and communication. Above all, it supports and organises 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 fronts - 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 favourable 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 mobilisation 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 favourable 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.

Bolshevism Defamed by the Anarchists (1920)

The readers will recall how a sharp polemic has begun between us and the "'Avvenire Anarchico" of Pisa, a journal which seems totally dedicated to the denigration of communism and of the Russian communist comrades.

The assertions of the little paper in question – as far as one can be reconstructed from its epileptic prose, crammed with a simulacrum of documentation – consist in the stupid insinuation that the Russian Bolsheviks were, up to the revolution of October 1917 and even afterwards, stubborn social-democrats and that only the force of events and revolutionary pressure of the masses has induced them to transform themselves into upholders of soviet power, channelling into an authoritarian path for their own purposes the spontaneous formation of the Soviets, libertarian organs of the masses.

The absurdity of such a thesis is so obvious that it isn't even necessary to hesitate to refute it.

The masses were supposed to have drawn the Bolsheviks from the terrain of social-democracy to that of soviet power – "while the Bolsheviks were still for the Constituent Assembly, the workers demonstrated united by the cry: power to the Soviets!" – and thus the Bolsheviks were supposed to be transformed dextrously into communists; but then the same masses: anarchist by definition, weren't able to prevent the Bolsheviks from imposing their devilishly "statist" programme on them.

But leaving aside the very obvious contradiction existing in the plot of this novelette, we claim for the Russian communist party the entire merit of having responded marvellously to its task of vanguard of the revolutionary proletariat, foreseeing and tracing the paths af the revolution, and bringing the propaganda of the postulates that this had to realise among the masses which weren't yet aware af them.

It's asserted that the Bolsheviks, that same Lenin, in their programme of 1905 and 1915 were for the democratic constituent assembly, this is in part true. But while waiting to be able to devote greater study, and above all greater space, to the argument, there is a position to make clear in a general way.

The Russian Bolsheviks, in the front line among the marxist and radical left of the international socialist movement before the war, have always thought and argued that the revolution of the proletariat against capitalism could have no other aspect than that of the armed struggle for the conquest of power, by denying that parliamentarism could serve as a road to proletarian power and by supporting Marx's statement that in the period of passage from capitalism to communism political power could have no other form than that of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

This thesis being quite clear, another and quite different question was presented to the Russian comrades.

How could the passage from the feudal regime, still in force in Russia: to communism appear? Would a period of capitalist democracy have to come between the fall of Czarism and the victory of the proletariat?

Without going into details, until the European war the Bolsheviks held such a period to be inevitable, while arguing that during it their movement would've continued an intransigent work of propaganda for the conquest of power by the proletariat, for the second revolution.

But already during the first years of the war the conviction grew in the Bolsheviks that the Russian revolutionary process could speed up, if the armies of the Czar were defeated, and they maintained it was necessary to provoke such a denouement, thus putting themselves in disagreement with the majority at Kienthal.

As soon as the first revolution broke out in February 1917 the Bolshevik leaders returned to Russia, the forces of their party increased, and the struggle began. We'll show that right from the first moment the programme of this struggle – omitted any distinction between maximum and minimum programme – was the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The different phases of the struggle and the different situations which presented themselves required different tactical measures, and its known that we in a certain sense disagree with certain tactical solutions, like that of participation in the elections for the Constituent Assembly.

We don't hope that the anarchists can understand the relationship between programme and tactics. The programme represents the objective to realise, the opposing position to assail - tactics deduces, in a certain moment, from the proportion of one's own forces to those of the adversary, the possibility of launching the attack, of waiting, or of making simple shows of force. If tactical considerations should lead to changing the final objective, to amending the programme, then certainly it would fall into error, and into reformist betrayal.

But if it affirms at every moment that this is without doubt the moment of onslaught it's mistaken and betrays even the identical result; of leaving to the adversary the position that it holds.

What Lenin's programme was from his arrival in Russia we documented precisely with the publication in no, 6 of "I1 Soviet", of the Theses presented by him at the conclusion of a speech given by him at on the 16th April 1917 in Petrograd. The 5th thesis is explicit:
"Not a parliamentary republic – a return to this from the Workers' would be a step backwards – but a republic of workers' and peasants' councils in the whole country and from top to bottom".

On the 23-4-1917 Lenin repeats his exposition to the Bolshevik Congress. In point 11 of his programmatic discourse he affirms that the Soviets of Workers, Peasants and Soldiers are the new type of State, but that they don't yet have the consciousness of it.

The conclusions of Lenin – says a note to the Russian edition of the speech, which could have been printed only weeks afterward - were approved by the majority of the congress, with the exception of the one point relating to the separation from Zimmerwald (see the 10th of the aforesaid theses).

A speech given by Zinoviev after the attempt on Lenin's life, and published in instalments by "La Vie Ouvriere" affirms that from the first moment of the revolution Lenin had the unshakeable persuasion that its outlet would be the coming to power of the Russian proletariat. He immediately saw in the Soviets the organs of the new power, on condition that the communists would succeed in conquering the majority of them. But when in a certain epoch it seemed that even in the Soviets social-democratic opportunism had taken a definitive position, Lenin didn't hesitate to give the watchword: to power even without the Soviets. Anything but libertarian legends.

In July 1917 the onrush of the masses led Lenin and the Bolshevik Central Committee to anticipate the eventuality of unleashing the final attack.

But the conditions were not yet mature, and it was decided to wait.

All of the later tactical and polemical play against the policy of Kerensky's government and in regard to the convocation of the Constituent Assembly didn't impair the guiding programmatic line tending towards the final struggle for the proletarian dictatorship.

In an article by Lenin of September 1917, dedicated to supporting the thesis "all power to the Soviets" he wrote: "Two paths can be foreseen for the Soviets – either let them die by ignominious death, or give all power to the Soviets – this I proclaimed before the Pan-Russian Congress of Soviets in June 1917".

Further on Lenin makes it clear that the formula: power to the Soviets, doesn't mean the formation of a Ministry among the parties of the majority of the Soviets, rather it implies the destruction of the old bureaucratic, military and parliamentary apparatus of the State, the carrying out of the communists' political programme.

The stupid thesis of "Avvenire Anarchico" rests – very weakly – only on the text of a Bolshevik programme whose source is Guilbeaux's review "Demain". We'll speak of the authenticity of this text another time.

No more acceptable is the speculation of some letters written by Sadoul in the moments of the November struggle, whose very manner shows how the author hadn't then digested the Bolshevik

programme or understood the situation. He declares that he'd only made the acquaintance of Lenin and Trotsky to whom he attributes obviously fantastic opinions and declarations, speaking of the formation of a Ministry in eventual collaboration with the Mensheviks! While precisely the 26th October-7th November the Council of Commissars of the People was nominated by the Soviet Congress. Trotsky in his noted pamphlet (no. 2 of the documents of "Avanti!", p. 56) says: "The C.C. of our party made the attempt to come to an agreement with the Left Social-Revolutionaries.., while the Mensheviks and Right S.R.s had broken any connection with the Congress of Soviets, because they thought a coalition of anti-soviet parties was necessary".

The lies of A.A. therefore don't ring any truer even with the aid of... the clangers of Sadoul.

In any case from the elements expounded, and from many others previously devoted to the question, it becomes clear what is the significance of the historical development of the Russian revolution and of the task, in it, of the Bolsheviks, who were precisely the opposite of what the anarchists say, and even of what is said by some others, who believe more in the revolutionary efficiency of the soviet form than in that of the work of propaganda and struggle carried out by the communist party.

To put matters in a prosaic form, it's certain that the Bolsheviks wanted all power to go to the Soviets, when the Soviets themselves, being in the majority Menshevik and counter-revolutionary, wanted nothing to do with taking it.

Not even the tall story of the local and libertarian action of the Soviets against the central state power can hold water. The Soviets, in the first period, made an article of faith of the democratic regime and of the parliamentary state, exactly because they were dominated by the Mensheviks and S.R.s.

The work of the anarchists can be seen even more in certain forms of local expropriation brought about in revolutionary moments, and which, as we've said many times, not only don't open the true process of realisation of communism, but were a source of initial obstacles to it.

In an article in "Comunismo" the statistics of the increase of Bolshevik mandates in the Soviet central organs have appeared. These statistics are the true diagram of the revolution, as the communist political party is the true historical precursor of the revolution.

It doesn't have the anarchists on the extreme left, as "Avvenire" yells. It only, sometimes, finds them under its feet - see, among other things, the true story of the famous Makhno, in no. 43 of "Ordine Nuovo".

What remains of all the anecdotes of the anarchist sheet? The stupid pretence of showing that authoritarian and statist communism is not in direct line of descent from classical marxism, but has been improvised by the Bolsheviks to exploit the Soviet revolution.

We libertarians - they cry - are the true communists!

Old Engels remarked justly; if you discuss with the anarchists, first agree on the meaning of words. As it's changed several times, and as today a return is made to the words and polemical positions of the classical debate between marxists and anarchists, a passage of their own Bakunin can demonstrate it to those of A.A. (see "Cronaca Sovversiva", 20th March).
"Here they separate principally into revolutionary socialists (sic) and authoritarian communists..."
"...the communists imagine they'll reach it with the development and with the organisation of the

political power of the working classes, while the revolutionaries think to the contrary that such an end can only arrive at with the development not of he political but of the social, and in consequence (the consequence lies wholly in the consciousness of papa Bakunin) antipolitical power of the masses".

So isn't it obvious that the columnist specialising in anti-Bolshevism spreads them on too thick?

And now for a personal coda. The bilious writer of A.A. boasts of having contradicted in 1915 in the Vicaria circle in Naples the undersigned who was supporting parliamentarism. Go on! The undersigned then fought the nascent anarcho-syndicalism middle, by defending proletarian political action and explaining to the contradictors how political doesn't only mean electoral action but signifies for marxists revolutionary conflict between the classes for the coming to power of the proletariat, driven on and led by a class party. It would be silly to close here by showing with citations that the undersigned has always negated the parliamentary conquest of power.

The marxist left has never believed in this. It has allowed for the tactical utilisation of parliamentary activity, which some of ours support even in this historical period. But the fulcrum of the marxist programme has always been the "proletarian dictatorship" – the historical key to the revolutionary problem, which burns the fingers of the semi-bourgeois followers of legalitarian reformism or of anarchist hysteria, closer in kin than they think and wish or than they – sometimes – have reason to hide.

I think that A.A. has served its purpose.

Seize Power or Seize the Factory? (1920)

The working-class disturbances of the past few days in Liguria have seen yet another example of a phenomenon that for some time now has been being repeated with some frequency, and that deserves to be examined as a symptom of a new level of consciousness among the working masses.

Instead of abandoning their jobs, the workers have so to speak taken over their plants and sought to operate them for their own benefit, or more precisely without the top managers being present in the plant. Above all, this indicates that the workers are fully aware that the strike is not always the best weapon to use, especially under certain circumstances.

The economic strike, through the immediate harm it inflicts on the worker himself, derives its utility as a defensive weapon for the worker from the harm the work-stoppage inflicts on the industrialist by cutting back the output which belongs to him.

This is the state of affairs under normal conditions in the capitalist economy, when competition and price-cutting force a continual increase in production itself. Today the profiteers of industry, in particular the engineering industry, are emerging from an exceptional period in which they were able to amass enormous profits for a minimum of effort. During the war the State supplied them with raw materials and coal and, at the same time, acted as sole and reliable purchaser. Furthermore, through its militarization of factories, the State itself undertook to impose a rigorous discipline on the working masses. What more favourable conditions could there be for a fat profit? But now these people are no

longer disposed to deal with all the difficulties arising from shortages of coal and raw materials, from the instability of the market and the fractiousness of the working masses. In particular, they are not disposed to put up with modest profits which are roughly the same or perhaps a bit below their pre-War level.

This is why they are not worried by strikes. Indeed they positively welcome them, while mouthing a few protests about the absurd claims and insatiability of the workers. The workers have understood this, and through their action of taking over the factory and carrying on working instead of striking, they are making it clear that it is not that they have no wish to work, but that they have no wish to work the way the bosses tell them to. They no longer want to be exploited and work for the benefit of the bosses; they want to work for their own benefit, i.e. in the interests of the work-force alone.

This new consciousness that is emerging more clearly every day should be held in the highest regard; however, we would not want it to be led astray by vain illusions.

It is rumoured that factory councils, where they were in existence, functioned by taking over the management of the workshops and carrying on the work. We would not like the working masses to get hold of the idea that all they need do to take over the factories and get rid or the capitalists is set up councils. This would indeed be a dangerous illusion. The factory will be conquered by the working class - and not only by the workforce employed in it, which would be too weak and non-communist - only after the working class as a whole has seized political power. Unless it has done so, the Royal Guards, military police, etc. - in other words, the mechanism of force and oppression that the bourgeoisie has at its disposal, its political power apparatus -will see to it that all illusions are dispelled.

It would be better if these endless and useless adventures that are daily exhausting the working masses were all channelled, merged and organized into one great, comprehensive upsurge aimed directly at the heart of the enemy bourgeoisie.

Only a communist party should and would be able to carry out such an undertaking. At this time, such a party should and would have no other task than that of directing all its activity towards making the working masses increasingly conscious of the need for this grand political attack - the only more or less direct route to the take-over or the factory, which if any other route is taken may never fall into their hands at all.

Party and Class (1921)

The Theses on the Role of the Communist Party in the Proletarian Revolution approved by the Second Congress of the Communist International are genuinely and deeply rooted in the Marxist doctrine. These theses take the definition of the relations between party and class as a starting point and establish that the class party can include in its ranks only a part of the class itself, never the whole nor even perhaps the majority of it.

This obvious truth would have been better emphasised if it had been pointed out that one cannot even speak of a class unless a minority of this class tending to organise itself into a political party has come into existence.

What in fact is a social class according to our critical method ? Can we possibly recognise it by the means of a purely objective external acknowledgement of the common economic and social conditions of a great number of individuals, and of their analogous positions in relationship to the productive process ? That would not be enough. Our method does not amount to a mere description of the social structure as it exists at a given moment, nor does it merely draw an abstract line dividing all the individuals composing society into two groups, as is done in the scholastic classifications of the naturalists. The Marxist critique sees human society in its movement, in its development in time; it utilises a fundamentally historical and dialectical criterion, that is to say, it studies the connection of events in their reciprocal interaction.

Instead of taking a snapshot of society at a given moment (like the old metaphysical method) and then studying it in order to distinguish the different categories into which the individuals composing it must be classified, the dialectical method sees history as a film unrolling its successive scenes; the class must be looked for and distinguished in the striking features of this movement.

In using the first method we would be the target of a thousand objections from pure statisticians and demographers (short-sighted people if there ever were) who would re-examine our divisions and remark that there are not two classes, nor even three or four, but that there can be ten, a hundred or even a thousand classes separated by successive gradations and indefinable transition zones. With the second method, though, we make use of quite different criteria in order to distinguish that protagonist of historical tragedy, the class, and in order to define its characteristics, its actions and its objectives, which become concretised into obviously uniform features among a multitude of changing facts; meanwhile the poor photographer of statistics only records these as a cold series of lifeless data.

Therefore, in order to state that a class exists and acts at a given moment in history, it will not be enough to know, for instance, how many merchants there were in Paris under Louis XIV, or the number of English landlords in the Eighteenth Century, or the number of workers in the Belgian manufacturing industry at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century. Instead, we will have to submit an entire historical period to our logical investigations; we will have to make out a social, and therefore political, movement which searches for its way through the ups and downs, the errors and successes, all the while obviously adhering to the set of interests of a strata of people who have been placed in a particular situation by the mode of production and by its developments.

It is this method of analysis that Frederick Engels used in one of his first classical essays, where he drew the explanation of a series of political movements from the history of the English working class, and thus demonstrated the existence of a class struggle.

This dialectical concept of the class allows us to overcome the statistician's pale objections. He does not have the right any longer to view the opposed classes as being clearly divided on the scene of history as are the different choral groups on a theatre scene. He cannot refute our conclusions by arguing that in the contact zone there are undefinable strata through which an osmosis of individuals takes place, because this fact does not alter the historical physiognomy of the classes facing one another.

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Therefore the concept of class must not suggest to us a static image, but instead a dynamic one. When we detect a social tendency, or a movement oriented towards a given end, then we can recognise the

existence of a class in the true sense of the word. But then the class party exists in a material if not yet in a formal way.

A party lives when there is the existence of a doctrine and a method of action. A party is a school of political thought and consequently an organisation of struggle. The first characteristic is a fact of consciousness, the second is a fact of will, or more precisely of a striving towards a final end.

Without those two characteristics, we do not yet have the definition of a class. As we have already said, he who coldly records facts may find affinities in the living conditions of more or less large strata, but no mark is engraved in history's development.

It is only within the class party that we can find these two characteristics condensed and concretised. The class forms itself as certain conditions and relationships brought about by the consolidation of new systems of production are developed - for instance the establishment of big factories hiring and training a large labour force; in the same way, the interests of such a collectivity gradually begin to materialise into a more precise consciousness, which begins to take shape in small groups of this collectivity. When the mass is thrust into action, only these first groups can foresee a final end, and it is they who support and lead the rest.

When referring to the modern proletarian class, we must conceive of this process not in relationship to a trade category but to the classes a whole. It can then be realised how a more precise consciousness of the identity of interests gradually makes its appearance; this consciousness, however, results from such a complexity of experiences and ideas, that it can be found only in limited groups composed of elements selected from every category. Indeed only an advanced minority can have the clear vision of a collective action which is directed towards general ends that concern the whole class and which has at its core the project of changing the whole social regime.

Those groups, those minorities, are nothing other than the party. When its formation (which of course never proceeds without arrests, crises and internal conflicts) has reached a certain stage, then we may say that we have a class in action. Although the party includes only a part of the class, only it can give the class its unity of action and movement, for it amalgamates those elements, beyond the limits of categories and localities, which are sensitive to the class and represent it.

This casts a light on the meaning of this basic fact : the party is only a part of the class. He who considers a static and abstract image of society, and sees the class as a zone with a small nucleus, the party, within it, might easily be led to the following conclusion: since the whole section of the class remaining outside the party is almost always the majority, it might have a greater weight and a greater right. However if it is only remembered that the individuals in that great remaining mass have neither class consciousness nor class will yet and live for their own selfish ends, or for their trade, their village, their nation, then it will be realised that in order to secure the action of the class as a whole in the historical movement, it is necessary to have an organ which inspires, unites and heads it - in short which officers it; it will then be realised that the party actually is the nucleus without which there would be no reason to consider the whole remaining mass as a mobilisation of forces.

The class presupposes the party, because to exist and to act in history it must possess a critical doctrine of history and an aim to attain in it.

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In the only true revolutionary conception, the direction of class action is delegated to the party. Doctrinal analysis, together with a Dumber of historical experiences, allow us to easily reduce to petty bourgeois and anti-revolutionary ideologies, any tendency to deny the necessity and the predominance of the party's function.

If this denial is based on a democratic point of view, it must be subjected to the same criticism that Marxism uses to disprove the favourite theorems of bourgeois liberalism.

It is sufficient to recall that, if the consciousness of human beings is the result, not the cause of the characteristics of the surroundings in which they are compelled to live and act, then never as a rule will the exploited, the starved and the underfed be able to convince themselves of the necessity of overthrowing the well-fed satiated exploiter laden with every resource and capacity. This can only be the exception. Bourgeois electoral democracy seeks the consultation of the masses, for it knows that the response of the majority will always be favourable to the privileged class and will readily delegate to that class the right to govern and to perpetuate exploitation.

It is not the addition or subtraction of the small minority of bourgeois voters that will alter the relationship. The bourgeoisie governs with the majority, not only of all the citizens, but also of the workers taken alone.

Therefore if the party called on the whole proletarian mass to judge the actions and initiatives of which the party alone has the responsibility, it would tie itself to a verdict that would almost certainly be favourable to the bourgeoisie. That verdict would always be less enlightened, less advanced, less revolutionary, and above all less dictated by a consciousness of the really collective interest of the workers and of the final result of the revolutionary struggle, than the advice coming from the ranks of the organised party alone.

The concept of the proletariat's right to command its own class action is only on abstraction devoid of any Marxist sense. It conceals a desire to lead the revolutionary party to enlarge itself by including less mature strata, since as this progressively occurs, the resulting decisions get nearer and nearer to the bourgeois and conservative conceptions.

If we looked for evidence not only through theoretical enquiry, but also in the experiences history has given us, our harvest would be abundant. Let us remember that it is a typical bourgeois cliché to oppose the good « common sense » of the masses to the « evil » of a « minority of agitators », and to pretend to be most favourably disposed towards the exploitersÕ interests. The right-wing currents of the workersÕ movement, the social-democratic school, whose reactionary tenets have been clearly shown by history, constantly oppose the masses to the party and pretend to be able to find the will of the class by consulting on a scale wider than the limited bounds of the party. When they cannot extend the party beyond all limits of doctrine and discipline in action, they try to establish that its main organs must not be those appointed by a limited number of militant members, but must be those which have been appointed for parliamentary duties by a larger body - actually, parliamentary groups always belong to the extreme right wing' of the parties from which they come.

The degeneracy of the social-democratic parties of the Second International and the fact that they apparently became less revolutionary than the unorganised masses, are due to the fact that they gradually lost their specific party character precisely through workerist and « laborist » practices. That is,

they no longer acted as the vanguard preceding the class but as its mechanical expression in an electoral and corporative system, where equal importance and influence is given to the strata that are the least conscious and the most dependent on egotistical claims of the proletarian class itself. As a reaction to this epidemic, even before the war, there developed a tendency, particularly in Italy, advocating internal party discipline, rejecting new recruits who were not yet welded to our revolutionary doctrine, opposing the autonomy of parliamentary groups and local organs, and recommending that the party should be purged of its false elements. This method has proved to be the real antidote for reformism, and forms the basis of the doctrine and practice of the Third International, which puts primary importance on the role of the party - that is a centralised, disciplined party with a clear orientation on the problems of principles and tactics. The same Third International judged that the « collapse of the socialdemocratic parties of the Second International was by no means the collapse of proletarian parties in general » but, if we may say so, the failure of organisms that had forgotten they were parties because they had stopped being parties.

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There is also a different category of objection to the communist concept of the party's role. These objections are linked to another form of critical and tactical reaction to the reformist degeneracy : they belong to the syndicalist school, which sees the class in the economic trade unions and pretends that these are the organs capable of leading the class in revolution.

Following the classical period of the French, Italian and American syndicalism, these apparently left-wing objections found new formulations in tendencies which are on the margins of the Third International. These too can be easily reduced to semi-bourgeois ideologies by a critique of their principles as well as by acknowledging the historical results they led to.

These tendencies would like to recognise the class within an organisation of its own - certainly a characteristic and a most important one - that is, the craft or trade unions which arise before the political party, gather much larger masses and therefore better correspond to the whole of the working class. From an abstract point of view, however, the choice of such a criterion reveals an unconscious respect for that selfsame democratic lie which the bourgeoisie relies on to secure its power by the means of inviting the majority of the people to choose their government. In other theoretical viewpoints, such a method meets with bourgeois conceptions when it entrusts the trade unions with the organisation of the new society and demands the autonomy and decentralisation of the productive functions, just as reactionary economists do. But our present purpose is not to draw out a complete critical analysis of the syndicalist doctrines. It is sufficient to remark, considering the result of historical experience, that the extreme right wing members of the proletarian movement have always advocated the same point of view, that is, the representation of the working class by trade unions; indeed they know that by doing so, they soften and diminish the movement's character, for the simple reasons that we have already mentioned. Today the bourgeoisie itself shows a sympathy and an inclination, which are by no means illogical, towards the unionisation of the working class ; indeed the more intelligent sections of the bourgeoisie would readily accept a reform of the state and representative apparatus in order to give a larger place to the « apolitical » unions and even to their claims to exercise control over the system of production. The bourgeoisie feels that, as long as the proletariat's action can be limited to the immediate economic demands that are raised trade by trade, it helps to safeguard the status-quo

and to avoid the formation of the perilous « political » consciousness - that is, the only consciousness which is revolutionary for it aims at the enemy's vulnerable point, the possession of power.

Past and present syndicalists, however, have always been conscious of the fact that most trade unions are controlled by right wing elements and that the dictatorship of the petty bourgeois leaders over the masses is based on the union bureaucracy even more than on the electoral mechanism of the social-democratic pseudo-parties. Therefore the syndicalists, along with very numerous elements who were merely acting by reaction to the reformist practice, devoted themselves to the study of new forms of union organisation and created new unions independent from the traditional ones. Such an expedient was theoretically wrong for it did not go beyond the fundamental criterion of the economic organisation : that is, the automatic admission of all those who are placed in given conditions by the part they play in production, without demanding special political convictions or special pledges of actions which may require even the sacrifice of their lives. Moreover, in looking for the « producer » it could not go beyond the limits of the « trade », whereas the class party, by considering the « proletarian » in the vast range of his conditions and activities, is alone able to awaken the revolutionary spirit of the class. Therefore, that remedy which was wrong theoretically also proved inefficient in actuality.

In spite of everything, such recipes are constantly being sought for even today. A totally wrong interpretation of Marxist determinism and a limited conception of the part played by facts of consciousness and will in the formation, under the original influence of economic factors, of the revolutionary forces, lead a great number of people to look for a « mechanical » system of organisation that would almost automatically organise the masses according to each individual's part in production; according to these illusions, such a device by itself would be enough to make the mass ready to move towards revolution with the maximum revolutionary efficiency.

Thus the illusory solution reappears, which consists of thinking that the everyday satisfaction of economical needs can be reconciled with the final result of the overthrow of the social system by relying on an organisational form to solve the old antithesis between limited and gradual conquests and the maximum revolutionary program. But - as was rightly said in one of the resolutions of the majority of the German Communist Party at a time when these questions (which later provoked the secession of the KAPD) were particularly acute in Germany - revolution is not a question of the form of organisation.

Revolution requires an organisation of active and positive forces united by a doctrine and a final aim. Important strata and innumerable individuals will remain outside this organisation even though they materially belong to the class in whose interest the revolution will triumph. But the class lives, struggles, progresses and wins thanks to the action of the forces it has engendered from its womb in the pains of history. The class originates from an immediate homogeneity of economic conditions which appear to us as the primary motive force of the tendency to destroy and go beyond the present mode of production. But in order to assume this great task, the class must have its own thought, its own critical method, its own will bent on the precise ends defined by research and criticism, and its own organisation of struggle channelling and utilising with the utmost efficiency its collective efforts and sacrifices. All this constitutes the Party.

Party and Class Action (1921)

In a previous article where we elaborated certain fundamental theoretical concepts, we have shown not only that there is no contradiction in the fact that the political party of the working class, the indispensable instrument in the struggles for the emancipation of this class, includes in its ranks only a part, a minority, of the class, but we also have shown that we cannot speak of a class in historical movement without the existence of a party which has a precise consciousness of this movement and its aims, and which places itself at the vanguard of this movement in the struggle.

A more detailed examination of the historical tasks of the working class on its revolutionary course, both before and after the overthrow of the power of the exploiters, will only confirm the imperative necessity of a political party which must direct the whole struggle of the working class. In order to have a precise, tangible idea of the technical necessity of the party, we should first consider - even if it may seem illogical - the tasks that the proletariat must accomplish after having come to power and after having wrenched the control of the social machine from the bourgeoisie.

After having conquered control of the state the proletariat must undertake complex functions. In addition to replacing the bourgeoisie in the direction and administration of public matters, it must construct an entirely new and different administrative and governmental machinery, with immensely more complex aims than those comprising the «governmental art» of today. These functions require a regimentation of individuals capable of performing diverse functions, of studying various problems, and of applying certain criteria to the different sectors of collective life: these criteria are derived from the general revolutionary principles and correspond to the necessity which compels the proletarian class to break the bonds of the old regime in order to set up new social relationships.

It would be a fundamental mistake to believe that such a degree of preparation and specialisation could be achieved merely by organising the workers on a trade basis according to their traditional functions in the old regime. Our task will not be to eliminate the contribution of technical competence previously furnished by the capitalist or by elements closely linked to him in order to replace them, factory by factory, by the training and experience of the best workers. We will instead have to confront tasks of a much more complex nature which require a synthesis of political, administrative and military preparation. Such a preparation, which must exactly correspond to the precise historical tasks of the proletarian revolution, can be guaranteed only by the political party; in effect the political party is the only organism which possesses on one hand a general historical vision of the revolutionary process and of its necessities and on the other hand a strict organisational discipline ensuring the complete subordination of all its particular functions to the final general aim of the class.

A party is that collection of people who have the same general view of the development of history, who have a precise conception of the final aim of the class they represent, and who have prepared in advance a system of solutions to the various problems which the proletariat will have to confront when it becomes the ruling class. It is for this reason that the rule of the class can only be the rule of the party. After these brief considerations, which can very evidently be seen in even a superficial study of the Russian Revolution, we shall now consider the phase preceding the proletariat's rise to power in order to demonstrate that the revolutionary action of the class against bourgeois power can only be a party action.

It is first of all evident that the proletariat would not be mature enough to confront the extremely difficult problems of the period of its dictatorship, if the organ that is indispensable in solving these problems, the party, had not begun long before to constitute the body of its doctrine and experiences.

The party is the indispensable organ of all class action even if we consider the immediate necessities of the struggles which must culminate in the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisie. In fact we cannot speak of a genuine class action (that is an action that goes beyond the trade interests and immediate concerns) unless there is a party action.

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Basically, the task of the proletarian party in the historical process is set forth as follows.

At all times the economic and social relationships in capitalist society are unbearable for the proletarians, who consequently are driven to try to overcome them. Through complex developments the victims of these relationships are brought to realise that, in their instinctive struggle against sufferings and hardships which are common to a multitude of people, individual resources are not enough. Hence they are led to experiment with collective forms of action in order to increase, through their association, the extent of their influence on the social conditions imposed upon them. But the succession of these experiences all along the path of the development of the present capitalist social form leads to the inevitable conclusion that the workers will achieve no real influence on their own destinies until they have united their efforts beyond the limits of local, national and trade interests and until they have concentrated these efforts on a far-reaching and integral objective which is realised in the overthrow of bourgeois political power. This is so because as long as the present political apparatus remains in force, its function will be to annihilate all the efforts of the proletarian class to escape from capitalist exploitation.

The first groups of proletarians to attain this consciousness are those who take part in the movements of their class comrades and who, through a critical analysis of their efforts, of the results which follow, and of their mistakes and disillusions, bring an ever-growing number of proletarians onto the field of the common and final struggle which is a struggle for power, a political struggle, a revolutionary struggle.

Thus at first an ever-increasing number of workers become convinced that only the final revolutionary struggle can solve the problem of their living conditions. At the same time there are increasing numbers who are ready to accept the inevitable hardships and sacrifices of the struggle and who are ready to put themselves at the head of the masses incited to revolt by their suffering, all in order to rationally utilise their efforts and to assure their full effectiveness.

The indispensable task of the party therefore is presented in two ways, that is first as a factor of consciousness and then as a factor of will. The first results in the theoretical conception of the revolutionary process that must be shared by all its adherents; the second brings a precise discipline which secures the co-ordination and thus the success of the action.

Obviously this strengthening of the class energies has never been and can never be a securely progressive, continuous process. There are standstills, setbacks and disbandings. Proletarian parties often lose the essential characteristics which they were in the process of forming and their aptitude for fulfilling their historical tasks. In general, under the very influence of particular phenomena of the capitalist world, parties often abandon their principal function which is to concentrate and channel the

impulses originating from the movement of the various groups, and to direct them towards the single final aim of the revolution. Such parties are satisfied with immediate and transitory solutions and satisfactions. They degenerate in their theory and practice to the point of admitting that the proletariat can find conditions of advantageous equilibrium within the capitalist regime, and they adopt as their political aim objectives which are merely partial and immediate, thereby beginning on their way towards class collaboration.

These phenomena of degeneration reached their peak with the great World War. After this a period of healthy reaction has followed: the class parties inspired by revolutionary directives - which are the only parties that are truly class parties - have been reconstructed throughout the world and are organising themselves into the Third International, whose doctrine and action are explicitly revolutionary and «maximalist».

Thus in this period, which everything indicates will be decisive, we can see again a movement of revolutionary unification of the masses, of organisation of their forces for the final revolutionary action. But once again, far from having the immediate simplicity of a rule, this situation poses difficult tactical problems; it does not exclude partial or even serious failure, and it raises questions which so greatly impassion the militants of the world revolutionary organization.

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Now that the new International has systematized the framework of its doctrine it musty still draw up a general plan of its tactical methods. In various countries a series of questions has arisen from the communist movement and tactical problems are on the order of the day. Once it has been established that the political party is an indispensable organ of the revolution; once it no longer can be a point of debate that the party can only be a part of the class (and this point has been settled in the theoretical resolutions of the Second World Congress, which formed the point of departure of the previous article) then the following problem remains to be solved: we must know more precisely how large the party organisation must be and what relationship it must have with the masses which it organises and leads.

There exists - or there is said to exist - a trend which wishes to have perfectly pure «small parties» and which would almost take pleasure in moving away from contact with the great masses, accusing them of having little revolutionary consciousness and capabilities. This tendency is severely criticised and is defined as deft opportunism. This label however seems to us to be more demagogic than justified; it should rather be reserved for those tendencies that deny the function of the political party and pretend that the masses can be organised on a vast scale for revolution by means of purely economic and syndical forms of organisation.

What we must deal with therefore is a more thorough examination of the relationship between the masses and the party. We have seen that the party is only a part of the working class, but how are we to determine the numerical size of this «proportion»? For us if there is a proof of «voluntarism» and therefore of typical anti-Marxist opportunism (and today opportunism can only mean heresy) it is the pretension of establishing such a numerical relationship as an a priori rule of organisation; that is to say of establishing that the communist party must have in its ranks, or as sympathisers, a certain number of workers which is either greater or less than a particular given percentage of the proletarian mass.

It would be a ridiculous mistake to judge the process of formation of communist parties, which proceeds through splits and mergers, according to a numerical criterion, that is to say to cut down the size of the parties which are too large and to forcibly add to the numbers of the parties which are too small. This would be in effect not to understand that this formation must be guided instead by qualitative and political norms and that it develops in a very large part through the dialectical repercussions of history. It cannot be defined by organisational rules which would pretend that the parties should be moulded into what is considered to be desirable and appropriate dimensions.

What can be stated as an unquestionable basis for such a discussion on tactics is that it is preferable that the parties should be numerically as large as possible and that they should succeed in attracting around them the largest possible strata of the masses. No one among the communists ever laid down as a principle that the communist party should be composed of a small number of people shut up in an ivory tower of political purity. It is indisputable that the numerical force of the party and the enthusiasm of the proletariat to gather around the party are favourable revolutionary conditions; they are unmistakable signs of the maturity of the development of proletarian energies and nobody would ever wish that the communist parties should not progress in that way.

Therefore there is no definite or definable numerical relationship between the party membership and the great mass of the workers. Once it is established that the party assumes its function as a minority of the class, the inquiry as to whether this should be a large minority or a small minority is the ultimate in pedantry. It is certain that as long as the contradictions and internal conflicts of capitalist society, from which the revolutionary tendencies originate, are only in their first stage of development, as long as the revolution appears to be far away, then we must expect this situation: the class party, the communist party, will necessarily be composed of small vanguard groups who have a special capacity to understand the historical perspective, and that section of the masses who will understand and follow it cannot be very large. However, when the revolutionary crisis becomes imminent, when the bourgeois relations of production become more and more intolerable, the party will see an increase in its ranks and in the extent of its following within the proletariat.

If the present period is a revolutionary one, as all communists are firmly convinced, then it follows that we must have large parties which exercise a strong influence over broad sections of the proletariat in every country. But wherever this aim has not yet been realised in spite of undeniable proofs of the acuteness of the crisis and the imminence of its outburst, the causes of this deficiency are very complex; therefore it would be extremely frivolous to conclude that the party, when it is too small and with little influence, must be artificially extended by fusing with other parties or fractions of parties which have members that are supposedly linked to the masses. The decision as to whether members of other organisations should be admitted into the ranks of the party, or on the contrary whether a party which is too large should eliminate part of its membership, cannot stem from arithmetical considerations or from a childish statistical disappointment.

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The formation of the communist parties, with the exception of the Russian Bolshevik Party, has grown at a very accelerated pace in Europe as well as outside of Europe because the war has opened the door, at a very accelerated rate, to a crisis of the system. The proletarian masses cannot attain a firm political consciousness in a gradual way; on the contrary they are driven here and there by the necessities of the revolutionary struggle, as if they were tossed by the waves of a stormy sea. There has continued to

survive, on the other hand, the traditional influence of social-democratic methods, and the social-democratic parties themselves are still on the scene in order to sabotage the process of clarification, to the greatest advantage of the bourgeoisie.

When the problem of how to solve the crisis reaches the critical point and when the question of power is posed to the masses, the role of the social-democrats becomes extremely evident, for when the dilemma proletarian dictatorship or bourgeois dictatorship is posed and when choice can no longer be avoided, they choose complicity with the bourgeoisie. However when the situation is maturing but not yet fully developed, a considerable section of the masses remain under the influence of these social-traitors. And in those cases when the probability of revolution has the appearance, but only the appearance, of diminishing, or when the bourgeoisie unexpectedly begins to unfurl its forces of resistance, it is inevitable that the communist parties will temporarily lose ground in the field of organisation and in their leadership of the masses.

Given the present unstable situation, it is possible that we will see such fluctuations in the generally secure process of development of the revolutionary International. It is unquestionable that communist tactics must try to face these unfavourable circumstances, but it is no less certain that it would be absurd to hope to eliminate them by mere tactical formulas, just as it would be excessive to draw pessimistic conclusions from these circumstances.

In the abstract hypothesis of the continuous development of the revolutionary energies of the masses, the party sees its numerical and political forces increase in a continuous way, quantitatively growing but remaining qualitatively the same, inasmuch as the number of communists rises, in relation to the total number of proletarians. However in the actual situation the diverse and continually changing factors of the social environment act upon the mood of the masses in a complex way; the communist party, which is made up of those who more clearly perceive and understand the characteristics of the historical development, nevertheless does not cease to be an effect of this development and thus it cannot escape fluctuations in the social atmosphere. Therefore, although it acts constantly as a factor of revolutionary acceleration, there is no method it can use, however refined it may be, which can force or reverse the situation in regards to its fundamental essence.

The worst remedy which could be used against unfavourable consequences of situations, however, would be to periodically put on trial the theoretical and organisational principles that are the very basis of the party, with the objective of enlarging its zone of contact with the masses. In situations where the revolutionary inclinations of the masses are weakening, this movement to «bring the party towards the masses», as some call it, is very often equivalent to changing the very nature of the party, thus depriving it of the very qualities that would enable it to be a catalyst capable of influencing the masses to resume their forward movement.

The conclusions in regard to the precise character of the revolutionary process, which are derived from the doctrine and historical experience, can only be international and thus result in international standards. Once the communist parties are solidly founded on these conclusions, then their organisational physiognomy must be considered to be established and it must be understood that their ability to attract the masses and to give them their full class power depends on their adherence to a strict discipline regarding the program and the internal organisation.

The communist party possesses a theoretical consciousness confirmed by the movement's international experiences, which enables it to be prepared to confront the demands of revolutionary struggle. And because of this, even though the masses partially abandon it during certain phases of its life, it has a guarantee that their support will return when they are confronted with revolutionary problems for which there can be no other solution than that inscribed in the party's program. When the necessities of revolutionary action reveal the need for a centralised and disciplined organ of leadership, then the communist party, whose constitution will have obeyed these principles, will put itself at the head of the masses in movement.

The conclusion that we wish to draw is that the criteria which we must use as a basis to judge the efficiency of the communist parties must be quite different from an a posteriori estimate of their numerical forces as compared with those of the other parties which claim to represent the proletariat. The only criteria by which to judge this efficiency are the precisely defined theoretical bases of the party's program and the rigid internal discipline of all its organisational sections and of all its members; only such a discipline can guarantee the utilisation of everyone's work for the greatest success of the revolutionary cause. Any other form of intervention in the composition of the party which is not logically derived from the precise application of these principles can only lead to illusory results and would deprive the class party of its greatest revolutionary strength: this strength lies precisely in the doctrinal and organisational continuity of all its propaganda and all its action, in its ability do state in advance, how the process of the final struggle between classes will develop and in its ability to give itself the type of organisation which responds to the needs of this decisive phase.

During the war, this continuity was irretrievably lost throughout the world and the only thing to do was to start again from the beginning. The birth of the Communist International as a historical force has materialised, on the basis of a perfectly clear and decisive revolutionary experience, the lines on which the proletarian movement could reorganise itself. The first condition for a revolutionary victory for the world proletariat is consequently the attainment of the organisational stabilisation of the International, which could give the masses throughout the world a feeling of determination and certitude, and which could win the support of the masses while making it possible to wait for them whenever it is indispensable that the development of the crisis still should act upon them, that is when it is unavoidable that they still experiment with the insidious advice of the social-democrats. There do not exist any better recipes for escaping this necessity.

The Second Congress of the Third International understood these necessities. At the beginning of a new epoch which must lead to revolution, it had to establish the points of departure of an international work of organisation and revolutionary preparation. It would have perhaps been preferable for the Congress, instead of dealing with the different themes in the order that they were treated in the theses - all of which dealt with theory and tactics at the same time - to have established first the fundamental basis of the theoretical and programmatic conception of communism, since the organisation of all adhering parties must be primarily based on the acceptance of these theses. The Congress then would have formulated the fundamental rules of action which all members must strictly observe on the trade-union, the agrarian, and the colonial questions and so on. However, all this is dealt with in the body of resolutions adopted by the Second Congress and is excellently summarised in the theses on the conditions of admission of the parties.

It is essential to consider the application of these conditions of admission as an initial constitutive and organisational act of the International, that is as an operation which must be accomplished once and for all in order to draw all organised or organizable forces out of the chaos into which the political proletarian movement had fallen, and to organise these forces into the new International.

All steps should be taken without further delay in order to organise the international movement on the basis of these obligatory international standards. For, as we have said before, the great strength which must guide the International in its task of propelling the revolutionary energies is the demonstration of the continuity of its thought and action towards a precise aim that will one day appear clearly in the eyes of the masses, polarising them around the vanguard party, and providing the best chances for the victory of the revolution.

If, as a result of this initial - though organisationally decisive - systematisation of the movement, parties in certain countries have an apparently small membership, then it can be very useful to study the causes of such a phenomenon. However it would be absurd to modify the established organisational standards and to redefine their application with the aim of obtaining a better numerical relationship of the Communist Party to the masses or to other parties. This would only annihilate all the work accomplished in the period of organisation and would make it useless; it would necessitate beginning the work of preparation all over again, with the supplementary risk of several other starts. Thus this method would only result in losing time instead of saving it.

This is all the more true if the international consequences of this method are considered. The result of making the international organisational rules revocable and of creating precedents for accepting the «remoulding» of parties - as if a party was like a statue which could be recast after not turning out well the first time - would be to obliterate all the prestige and authority of the «conditions» that the International laid down for the parties and individuals that wished to join. This would also indefinitely delay the stabilisation of the staff of the revolutionary army, since new officers could constantly aspire to enter while «retaining the privileges of their rank».

Therefore it is not necessary to be in favour of large - or small- parties; it is not necessary to advocate that the orientation of certain parties should be reversed, under the pretext that they are not «mass parties». On the contrary, we must demand that all communist parties be founded on sound organisational, programmatic, and tactical directives which crystallise the results of the best experiences of the revolutionary struggle on the international scale.

These conclusions, although it is difficult to make it evident without very long considerations and quotations of facts taken from the life of the proletarian movement, do not spring from an abstract and sterile desire to have pure, perfect and orthodox parties. Instead they originate from a desire to fulfil the revolutionary tasks of the class party in the most efficient and secure way.

The party will never find such a secure support from the masses, the masses will never find a more secure defender of their class consciousness and of their power, than when the past actions of the party have shown the continuity of its movement towards revolutionary aims, even without the masses or against them at certain unfavourable moments. The support of the masses can be securely won only by a struggle against their opportunist leaders. This means that where non-communist parties still exert an influence among the masses, the masses must be won over by dismantling the organisational network of these parties and by absorbing their proletarian elements into the solid and well-defined organisation

of the Communist Party. This is the only method which can give useful solutions and can assure practical success. It corresponds exactly to Marx's and Engels' positions towards the dissident movement of the Lassalians.

That is why the Communist International must look with extreme mistrust at all groups and individuals who come to it with theoretical and tactical reservations. We may recognise that this mistrust cannot be absolutely uniform on the international level and that certain special conditions must be taken into account in countries where only limited forces actually place themselves on the true terrain of communism. It remains true, however, that no importance should be given to the numerical size of the party when it is a question of whether the conditions of admission should be made more lenient or more severe for individuals and, with still more reason, for groups who are more or less incompletely won over to the theses and methods of the International. The acquisition of these elements would not be the acquisition of positive forces; instead of bringing new masses to us, this would result in the risk of jeopardising the clear process of winning them over to the cause of the party. Of course we must want this process to be as rapid as possible, but this wish must not urge us on to incautious actions which might, on the contrary, delay the final solid and definitive success.

It is necessary to incorporate certain norms which have constantly proved to be very efficient into the tactics of the International, into the fundamental criteria which dictate the application of these tactics, and into the solution of the complex problems which arise in practice. These are: an absolutely uncompromising attitude towards other parties, even the closest ones, keeping in mind the future repercussions beyond immediate desires to hasten the development of certain situations; the discipline that is required of members, taking into consideration not only their present observance of this discipline but also their past actions, with the maximum mistrust in regard to political conversions; a consideration of the past accountability of individuals and groups, in place of recognising their right to join or to leave the communist army whenever they please. All this, even if it may seem to enclose the party in too narrow a circle for the moment, is not a theoretical luxury but instead it is a tactical method which very securely ensures the future.

Countless examples would show that last-minute revolutionaries are out of place and useless in our ranks. Only yesterday they had reformist attitudes that were dictated by the special conditions of the period and today they have been led to follow the fundamental communist directive because they are influenced by their often too optimistic considerations about the imminence of the revolution. Any new wavering in the situation - and in a war who can say how many advances and retreats would occur before the final victory - will be sufficient to cause them to return to their old opportunism, thus jeopardising at the same time the contents of our organisation.

The international communist movement must be composed of those who not only are firmly convinced of the necessity of revolution and are ready to struggle for it at the cost of any sacrifice, but who also are committed to act on the revolutionary terrain even when the difficulties of the struggle reveal that their aim is harder to reach and further away than they had believed.

At the moment of the intense revolutionary crisis we shall act on the sound base of our international organisation, polarising around us the elements who today are still hesitating, and defeating the social-democratic parties of various shades.

If the revolutionary possibilities are less immediate we will not run the risk, even for a single moment, of letting ourselves be distracted from our patient work of preparation in order to retreat to the mere solving of immediate problems, which would only benefit the bourgeoisie.

* * *

Another aspect of the tactical problem which the communist parties must solve is that of choosing the moment at which the calls for action must be launched, whether it is a secondary action or the final one.

This is why the tactics of the offensive of communist parties are passionately discussed today; these consist of organising and arming the party militants and the close sympathisers, and of manoeuvring them at the opportune moment in offensive actions aiming at rousing the masses in a general movement, or even at accomplishing spectacular actions in response to the reactionary offensive of the bourgeoisie.

On this question too there are generally two opposing positions neither of which a communist would probably support.

No communist can harbour prejudices towards the use of armed actions, retaliations and even terror or deny that these actions, which require discipline and organisation, must be directed by the communist party. Just as infantile is the conception that the use of violence and armed actions are reserved for the «Great Day» when the supreme struggle for the conquest of power will be launched. In the reality of the revolutionary development, bloody confrontations between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie are inevitable before the final struggle; they may originate not only from unsuccessful insurrectional attempts on the part of the proletariat, but also from inevitable, partial and transitory clashes between the forces of bourgeois defence and groups of proletarians who have been impelled to rise in arms, or between bands of bourgeois «white guards» and workers who have been attacked and provoked by them. It is not correct either to say that communist parties must disavow all such actions and reserve all their force for the final moment, because all struggles necessitate a preparation and a period of training and it is in these preliminary actions that the revolutionary capacity of the party to lead and organise the masses must begin to be forged and tested.

It would be a mistake, however, to deduce from all these preceding considerations that the action of the political class party is merely that of a general staff which could by its mere will, determine the movement of the armed forces and their utilisation. And it would be an imaginary tactical perspective to believe that the party, after having created a military organisation, could launch an attack at a given moment when it would judge its strength to be sufficient to defeat the forces of bourgeois defence.

The offensive action of the party is conceivable only when the reality of the economic and social situation throws the masses into a movement aimed at solving the problems directly related, on the widest scale, to their conditions in life; this movement creates an unrest which can only develop in a truly revolutionary direction on the condition that the party intervenes by clearly establishing its general aims, and rationally and efficiently organising its action, including the military technique. It is certain that the party's revolutionary preparation can begin to translate itself into planned actions even in the partial movements of the masses: thus retaliation against white terror - whose aims are to give the proletariat the feeling that it is definitively weaker than its adversaries and to make it abandon the revolutionary preparation - is an indispensable tactical means.

However it would be another voluntarist error - for which there cannot and must not be any room in the methods of the Marxist International - to believe that by utilising such military forces, even though they may be extremely well organised on a broad scale, it is possible to change the situations and to provoke the starting of the general revolutionary struggle in the midst of a stagnating situation.

One can create neither parties nor revolutions; one leads the parties and the revolutions, by unifying all the useful international revolutionary experiences in order to secure the greatest chances of victory of the proletariat in the battle which is the inevitable outcome of the historical epoch in which we live. This is what seems to us to be the necessary conclusion.

The fundamental criteria which direct the action of the masses are expressed in the organisational and tactical rules which the International must fix for all member-parties. But these criteria cannot go as far as to directly reshape the parties with the illusion of giving them all the dimensions and characteristics that would guarantee the success of the revolution. They must, instead, be inspired by Marxist dialectics and based above all on the programmatic clarity and homogeneity on one hand, and on the centralising tactical discipline on the other.

There are in our opinion two «opportunistic» deviations from the correct path. The first one consists of deducing the nature and characteristics of the party on the basis of whether or not it is possible, in a given situation, to regroup numerous forces: this amounts to having the party's organisational rules dictated by situations and to giving it, from the outside, a constitution different from that which it has attained in a particular situation. The second deviation consists of believing that a party, provided it is numerically large and has achieved a military preparation, can provoke revolutionary situations by giving an order to attack: this amounts to asserting that historical situations can be created by the will of the party.

Regardless of which deviation should be called «right wing» or left wings it is certain that both are far removed from the correct Marxist doctrine. The first deviation renounces what can and must be the legitimate intervention of the international movement with a systematic body of organisational and tactical rules; it renounces that degree of influence - which derives from a precise consciousness and historical experience - that our will can and must exercise on the development of the revolutionary process. The second deviation attributes an excessive and unreal importance to the will of the minorities, which results in the risk of leading to disastrous defeats.

Communist revolutionaries must be those who on the contrary have been collectively tempered by the experiences of the struggle against the degenerations of the proletarian movement, who firmly believe in the revolution, and who strongly desire it, but not like someone who would expect a payment and would sink into despair and discouragement if the due date was to be delayed for only one day.

The Democratic Principle (1922)

The use of certain terms in the exposition of the problems of communism very often engenders ambiguities because of the different meanings these terms may be given. Such is the case with the words democracy and democratic. In its statements of principle, Marxist communism presents itself as a critique and a negation of democracy; yet communists often defend the democratic character of proletarian organisations (the state system of workers' councils, trade unions and the party) and the

application of democracy within them. There is certainly no contradiction in this, and no objection can be made to the use of the dilemma, «either bourgeois democracy or proletarian democracy» as a perfect equivalent to the formula «bourgeois democracy or proletarian dictatorship».

The Marxist critique of the postulates of bourgeois democracy is in fact based on the definition of the class character of modern society. It demonstrates the theoretical inconsistency and the practical deception of a system which pretends to reconcile political equality with the division of society into social classes determined by the nature of the mode of production.

Political freedom and equality, which, according to the theory of liberalism, are expressed in the right to vote, have no meaning except on a basis that excludes inequality of fundamental economic conditions. For this reason we communists accept their application within the class organisations of the proletariat and contend that they should function democratically.

In order to avoid creating ambiguities, and dignifying the concept of democracy, so entrenched in the prevailing ideology which we strive relentlessly to demolish, it would be desirable to use a different term in each of the two cases. Even if we do not do this, it is nonetheless useful to look a little further into the very content of the democratic principle, both in general and in its application to homogeneous class organs. This is necessary to eliminate the danger of again raising the democratic principle to an absolute principle of truth and justice. Such a relapse into apriorism would introduce an element foreign to our entire theoretical framework at the very moment when we are trying, by means of our critique, to sweep away the deceptive and arbitrary content of «liberal» theories.

I

A theoretical error is always at the root of an error of political tactics. In other words, it is the translation of the tactical error into the language of our collective critical consciousness. Thus the pernicious politics and tactics of social-democracy are reflected in the error of principle that presents socialism as the inheritor of a substantial part of the doctrine that liberalism opposed to the old spiritualist doctrines. In reality, far from ever accepting and completing the critique that democratic liberalism had raised against the aristocratic and absolute monarchies of the ancien regime,Marxist socialism in its earliest formulations demolished it utterly. It did so not to defend the spiritualist or idealist doctrine against the Voltairean materialism of the bourgeois revolutionaries, but to demonstrate how the theoreticians of bourgeois materialism had in reality only deluded themselves when they imagined that the political philosophy of the Encyclopedists had led them out of the mists of metaphysics and idealist nonsense. In fact, like all their predecessors, they had to surrender to the genuinely objective critique of social and historical phenomena provided by Marx’s historical materialism.

It is also important from a theoretical point of view to demonstrate that no idealist or neo-idealist revision of our principles is needed to deepen the abyss between socialism and bourgeois democracy, to restore to the theory of proletarian revolution its powerfully revolutionary content which had been adulterated by the falsifications of those who fornicate with bourgeois democracy. It is enough merely to refer to the positions taken by the founders of Marxism in the face of the lies of liberal doctrines and of bourgeois materialism.

To return to our argument, we will show that the socialist critique of democracy was in essence a critique of the democratic critique of the old political philosophies. Marxism denies their alleged universal opposition and demonstrates that in reality they are theoretically similar, just as in practise the proletariat did not have much reason to celebrate when the direction of society passed from the hands of the feudal, monarchical and religious nobility into the hands of the young commercial and industrial bourgeoisie. And the theoretical demonstration that the new bourgeois philosophy had not overcome the old errors of the despotic regimes, but was itself only an edifice of new sophisms, corresponded concretely to the appearance of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat which contained the negation of the bourgeois claim of having forever established the administration of society on a peaceful and infinitely perfectible basis, thanks to the introduction of suffrage and of parliamentary democracy.

The old political doctrines based on spiritualist concepts or even on religious revelation claimed that the supernatural forces which govern the consciousness and the will of men had assigned to certain individuals, families or castes, the task of ruling and managing the collective existence, making them the repositories of «authority» by divine right. To this, the democratic philosophy which asserted itself at the time of the bourgeois revolution counterposed the proclamation of the moral, political and juridical equality of all citizens, whether they were nobles, clerics or plebeians. It sought to transfer «sovereignty» from the narrow sphere of caste or dynasty to the universal sphere of popular consultation based on suffrage which allowed a majority of the citizens to designate the leaders of the state, according to its will.

The thunderbolts hurled against this conception by the priests of all religions and by spiritualist philosophers do not suffice to give it recognition as the definitive victory of truth over obscurantist error, even if the «rationalism» of this political philosophy seemed for a long time to be the last word in social science and the art of politics, and even if many would-be socialists proclaimed their solidarity with it. This claim that the time of «privilege» was over, once a system with its social hierarchy based on the consent of the majority of electors had been set up, does not withstand the Marxist critique, which throws a completely different light on the nature of social phenomena. This claim may look like an attractive logical construction only if it is admitted from the outset that thevote, that is, the judgement, the opinion, the consciousness of each elector has the same weight in delegating power for the administration of the collective business. It is already evident that this conception is unrealistic and unmaterialist because it considers each individual to be a perfect «unit» within a system made up of many potentially equivalent units, and instead of appraising the value of the individual's opinion in the light of his manifold conditions of existence, that is, his relations with others, it postulates this value a priori with the hypothesis of the «sovereignty» of the individual. Again this amounts to denying that the consciousness of men is a concrete reflection of the facts and material conditions of their existence, to viewing it as a spark ignited with the same providential fairness in each organism, healthy or impaired, tormented or harmoniously satisfied in all its needs, by some undefinable supreme bestower of life. In the democratic theory, this supreme being no longer designates a monarch, but confers on everyone the equal capacity to do so! In spite of its rationalist front, the democratic theory rests on a no less childish metaphysical premise than does «free will» which, according to the catholic doctrine of the afterlife, wins men either damnation or salvation. Because it places itself outside of time and historical contingencies, the democratic theory is no less tainted with spiritualism than are the equally erroneous philosophies of revelation and monarchy by divine right.

To further extend this comparison, it is sufficient to remember that many centuries before the French Revolution and the declaration of the rights of man and citizen, the democratic political doctrine had been advanced by thinkers who took their stand resolutely on the terrain of idealism and metaphysical philosophy. Moreover, if the French Revolution toppled the altars of the Christian god in the name of Reason, it was, wittingly or not, only to make Reason into a new divinity.

This metaphysical presupposition, incompatible with the Marxist critique, is characteristic not only of the doctrine constructed by bourgeois liberalism, but also of all the constitutional doctrines and plans for a new society based on the «intrinsic value» of certain schemes of social and state relations. In building its own doctrine of history, Marxism in fact demolished medieval idealism, bourgeois liberalism and utopian socialism with a single blow.

II

To these arbitrary constructions of social constitutions, whether aristocratic or democratic, authoritarian or liberal, as well as to the anarchist conception of a society without hierarchy or delegation of power, which is rooted in analogous errors, the communist critique opposed a much more thorough study of the nature and causes of social relations in their complex evolution throughout human history and a careful analysis of their characteristics in the present capitalist epoch from which it drew a series of reasoned hypotheses about their further evolution. To this can now be added the enormous theoretical and practical contribution of the proletarian revolution in Russia.

It would be superfluous here to develop the well-known concepts of economic determinism and the arguments which justify its use in interpreting historical events and the social dynamic. The apriorism common to conservatives and utopians is eliminated by the analysis of factors rooted in production, the economy, and the class relations they determine. This makes possible a scientific explanation of the juridical, political, military, religious and cultural facts which make up the diverse manifestations of social life.

We will merely retrace the historical evolution of the mode of social organisation and grouping of men, not only in the state, an abstract representation of a collectivity fusing together all individuals, but also in other organisations which arise from the relations between men.

The basis of the interpretation of every social hierarchy, whether extended or limited, is the relations between different individuals, and the basis of these relations is the division of tasks and functions among these individuals.

We can imagine without serious error that at the beginning the human species existed in a completely unorganised form. Still few in number, these individuals could live from the products of nature without the application of technology or labour, and in such conditions could do without their fellow beings. The only existing relations, common to all species, were those of reproduction. But for the human species - and not only for it - these were already sufficient to form a system of relations with its own hierarchy - the family. This could be based on polygamy, polyandry or monogamy. We will not enter into a detailed analysis here; let us say only that the family represents an embryo of organised collective life, based on a division of functions directly determined by physiological factors, since the mother nourished and

raised the children, and the father devoted himself to the hunt, to the acquisition of plunder and to the protection of the family from external enemies, etc.

In this initial phase, where production and economy are almost totally absent, as well as in later stages when they are developing, it is useless to dwell on the abstract question of whether we are dealing with the individual-unit or the society-unit. Without any doubt, the individual is a unit from a biological point of view, but one cannot make this individual the basis of social organisation without falling into metaphysical nonsense. From a social perspective, all the individual units do not have the same value. The collectivity is born from relations and groupings in which the status and activity of each individual do not derive from an individual function but from a collective one determined by the multiple influences of the social milieu. Even in the elementary case of an unorganised society or non-society, the simple physiological basis which produces family organisation is already sufficient to refute the arbitrary doctrine of the individual as an indivisible unit free to combine with other fellow units, without ceasing to be distinct from, yet somehow, equivalent to them. In this case, obviously the society-unit does not exist either, since relations between men, even reduced to the simple notion that others exist, are extremely limited and restricted to the sphere of the family or the clan. The self-evident conclusion can be drawn in advance: the society-unit has never existed and probably never will except as a «limit» which can be brought progressively nearer by the disappearance of the boundaries of classes and states.

Setting out from the individual-unit in order to draw social conclusions and to construct social blueprints or even in order to deny society, is setting out from an unreal supposition which, even in its most modern formulations, only amounts to refurbishing the concepts of religious revelation and creation and of a spiritual life which is not dependent upon natural and organic life. The divine creator - or a single power governing the destiny of the universe - has given each individual this elementary property of being an autonomous well-defined molecule endowed with consciousness, will and responsibility within the social aggregate, independent of contingent factors deriving from the physical influence of the environment. Only the appearance of this religious and idealist conception is modified in the doctrine of democratic liberalism or libertarian individualism. The soul as a spark from the supreme Being, the subjective sovereignty of each elector, or the unlimited autonomy of the citizen of a society without laws - these are so many sophisms which, in the eyes of the Marxist critique, are tainted with the same infantile idealism, no matter how resolutely «materialist» the first bourgeois liberals and anarchists may have been.

This conception finds its match in the equally idealist hypothesis of the perfect social unit - of social monism - based on the divine will which is supposed to govern and administer the life of our species. Returning to the primitive stage of social life which we were considering and to the family organisation discovered there, we conclude that we do not need such metaphysical hypotheses of the individual-unit and the society-unit in order to interpret the life of the species and the process of its evolution. On the other hand, we can positively state that we are dealing with a type ofcollectivity organised on a unitary basis, i.e. the family. We take care not to make this a fixed or permanent type or to idealise it as the model form of the social collectivity, as anarchism or absolute monarchy do with the individual. Rather we simply record the existence of the family as the primary unit of human organisation, which will be succeeded by others, which itself will be modified in many aspects, and which will become a constituent element of other collective organisations, or, one may suppose, will disappear in very advanced social forms. We do not feel at all obliged to be for or against the family in principle, any more than, for example, for or against the state. What does concern us is to grasp the evolutionary direction of these

types of human organisation. When we ask ourselves whether they will disappear one day, we do so objectively, because it could not occur to us to think of them as sacred and eternal, or as pernicious and to be destroyed. Conservatism and its opposite (i.e. the negation of every form of organisation and social hierarchy) are equally weak from a critical view-point, and equally sterile.

Thus leaving aside the traditional opposition between the categories individual and society, we follow the formation and the evolution of other units in our study of human history: organised human collectivities, broad or restricted groupings of men with a hierarchy based on a division of functions, which appear as the real factors and agents of social life. Such units can in a certain sense be compared to organic units, to living organisms whose cells, with their different functions and values, can be represented by men or by rudimentary groups of men. However the analogy is not complete, since while a living organism has well-defined limits and obeys the inflexible biological laws of its growth and death, organised social units do not have fixed boundaries and are continually being renewed, mingling with one another, simultaneously splitting and recombining. If we dwelt on the first conspicuous example of the family unit, it was to demonstrate the following: if these units which we are considering are clearly composed of individuals and if their very composition is variable, they nonetheless behave like organic and integral «wholes», such that to split them into individual units has no real meaning and is tantamount to a myth. The family element constitutes a whole whose life does not depend on the number of individuals that comprise it, but on the network of their relationships. To take a crude example, a family composed of the head, the wives and a few feeble old men is not equal to another made up of its head and many strong young men.

Setting out from the family, the first organised social form, where one finds the first example of division of functions, the first hierarchies, the first forms of authority and the direction of individuals' activities and the administration of things, human evolution passes through an infinite series of other organisational forms, increasingly broad and complex. The reason for this increasing complexity lies in the growing complexity of social relations and hierarchies born from the ever-increasing differentiation between functions. The latter is directly determined by the systems of production that technology and science place at the disposal of human activity in order to provide an increasing number of products suited to satisfying the needs of larger societies evolving towards higher forms of life. An analysis which seeks to understand the process of formation and change of different human organisations, as well as the interplay of relations within the whole of society, must be based on the notion of the development of productive technology and the economic relations which arise from the distribution of individuals among the different tasks required by the productive mechanism. The formation and evolution of dynasties, castes, armies, states, empires, corporations and parties can and must be studied on the basis of these elements. One can imagine that at the highest point of this complex development a kind of organised unit will appear which will encompass all of mankind and which will establish a rational division of functions between all men. What significance and limits the hierarchical system of collective administration will have in this higher form of human social life is a matter for further study.

III

To examine those unitary bodies whose internal relations are regulated by what is generally called the «democratic principle», for reasons of simplicity we will distinguish between organised collectivities whose hierarchies are imposed from outside and those that choose their own hierarchy from within.

According to the religious conception and the pure doctrine of authority, in every epoch human society is a collective unit which receives its hierarchy from supernatural powers. We will not repeat the critique of such a metaphysical over-simplification which is contradicted by our whole experience. It is the necessity of the division of functions which gives rise naturally to hierarchies; and this is what has happened in the case of the family. As it develops into a tribe or horde, it must organise itself in order to struggle against rival tribes. Leadership must be entrusted to those most able to use the communal energies, and military hierarchies emerge in response to this need. This criterion of choice in the common interest appeared thousands of years before modern democratic electoralism; in the beginning kings, military chiefs and priests were elected. In the course of time, other criteria for the formation of hierarchies prevailed, giving rise to caste privileges transmitted by inheritance or even by initiation into closed schools, sects and cults. Nevertheless, in normal practice, accession to a given rank and inheritance of that rank were motivated by the possession of special aptitudes. We do not intend to follow here the whole process of the formation of castes and then of classes within society. We will only say that their appearance no longer corresponds to the logical necessity of a division of functions alone, but also to the fact that certain strata occupying a privileged position in the economic mechanism end up monopolising power and social influence. In one way or another, every ruling caste provides itself with its own organisation, its own hierarchy, and likewise, economically privileged classes. To limit ourselves to one example - the landed aristocracy of the Middle Ages, by uniting itself for the defence of its common privileges against the assaults of the other classes, constructed an organisational form culminating in the monarchy, which concentrated public powers in its own hands to the complete exclusion of the other layers of the population. The state of the feudal epoch was the organisation of the feudal nobility supported by the clergy. The principal element of coercion of the military monarchy was the army. Here we have a type of organised collectivity whose hierarchy was instituted from without since it was the king who bestowed the ranks, and in the army, passive obedience was the rule. Every form of state concentrates under one authority the organising and officering of a whole series of executive hierarchies: the army, police, magistracy, bureaucracy. Thus the state makes material use of the activity of individuals from all classes, but it is organised on the basis of a single or a few privileged classes which appropriate the power to constitute its different hierarchies. The other claim, and in general all groups of individuals for whom it was only too evident that the state, in spite of its claims, by no means guaranteed the interests of everyone, seek to provide themselves with their own organisations in order to make their own interests prevail. Their point of departure is that their members occupy an identical position in production and economic life.

As for organisations which provide themselves with their own hierarchy, if we ask what is the best way to ensure the defence of the collective interests and to avoid the formation of privileged strata, some will propose the democratic method whose principle lies in using the majority opinion to select those to fill the various offices.

Our critique of such a method must be much more severe when it is applied to the whole of society as it is today, or to given nations, than when it is introduced into much more restricted organisations, such as trade unions and parties.

In the first case it must be rejected without hesitation as without foundation, since it takes no account of the situation of individuals in the economy and since it presupposes the intrinsic perfection of the system without taking into consideration the historical evolution of the collectivity to which it is applied.

The division of society into classes distinguished by economic privilege clearly removes all value from majority decision-making. Our critique refutes he deceitful theory that the democratic and parliamentary state machine which arose from modern liberal constitutions is an organisation of all citizens in the interests of all citizens. From the moment that opposing interests and class conflicts exist, there can be no unity of organisation, and in spite of the outward appearance of popular sovereignty, the state remains the organ of the economically dominant class and the instrument of defence of its interests. In spite of the application of the democratic system to political representation, bourgeois society appears as a complex network of unitary bodies. Many of these, which spring from the privileged layers and tend to preserve the present social apparatus, gather around the powerful centralised organism of the political state. Others may be neutral or may have a changing attitude towards the state. Finally, others arise within the economically oppressed and exploited layers and are directed against the class state. Communism demonstrates that the formal juridical and political application of the democratic and majority principle to all citizens while society is divided into opposed classes in relation to the economy, is incapable of making the state an organisational unit of the whole society or the whole nation. Officially that is what political democracy claims to be, whereas in reality it is the form suited to the power of the capitalist class, to the dictatorship of this particular class, for the purpose of preserving its privileges.

Therefore it is not necessary to devote much time to refuting the error of attributing the same degree of independence and maturity to the vote of each elector, whether he is a worker exhausted by excessive physical labour or a rich dissolute, a shrewd captain of industry or an unfortunate proletarian ignorant of the causes of his misery and the means of remedying them. From time to time, after long intervals, the opinion of these and others is solicited, and it is claimed that the accomplishment of this «sovereign» duty is sufficient to ensure calm and the obedience of whoever feels victimised and ill-treated by the state policies and administration.

IV

It is clear that the principle of democracy has no intrinsic virtue. It is not a principle but rather a simple mechanism of organisation, responding to the simple and crude arithmetical presumption that the majority is right and the minority is wrong. Now we shall see if and to what extent this mechanism is useful and sufficient for the functioning of organisations comprising more restricted collectivities which are not divided by economic antagonisms. To do this, these organisations must be considered in their process of historical development.

Is this democratic mechanism applicable in the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e. in the state form born from the revolutionary victory of rebel classes against the power of the bourgeois states? Can this form of state, on account of its internal mechanism of the delegation of powers and of the formation of hierarchies, thus be defined as a «proletarian democracy»? The question should be broached without prejudice, because if although we might reach the conclusion that the democratic mechanism is useful under certain conditions, as long as history has not produced a better mechanism, we must be convinced that there is not the slightest reason to establish a priori the concept of the sovereignty of the «majority» of the proletariat. In fact the day after the revolution, the proletariat will not yet be a totally homogeneous collectivity nor will it be the only class. In Russia for example, power is in the hands of the working class and the peasantry, but if we consider the entire development of the revolutionary

movement, it is easy to demonstrate that the industrial proletarian class, although much less numerous than the peasantry, nevertheless plays a far more important role. Then it is logical that the Soviet mechanism accords much more value to the vote of a worker than that of a peasant.

We do not intend to examine thoroughly here the characteristics of the proletarian state constitution. We will not consider it metaphysically as something absolute, as reactionaries do the divine right of the monarchy, liberals, parliamentarism based on universal suffrage, and anarchists, the non-state. As it is an organisation of one class destined to strip the opposing classes of their economic privileges, the proletarian state is a real historical force which adapts itself to the goal it pursues, that is, to the necessities which gave birth to it. At certain moments its impulse may come from either broad mass consultations or from the action of very restricted executive organs endowed with full powers. What is essential is to give this organisation of proletarian power the means and weapons to destroy bourgeois economic privilege and the political and military resistance of the bourgeoisie, in a way that prepares for the subsequent disappearance of classes themselves, and for the more and more profound modifications of the tasks and structure of the proletarian state.

One thing is sure - while bourgeois democracy's real goal is to deprive the large proletarian and petty-bourgeois masses of all influence in the control of the state, reserved for the big industrial, banking and agricultural oligarchies, the proletarian dictatorship must be able to involve the broadest layers of the proletarian and even semi-proletarian masses in the struggle that it embodies. But only those who are the victims of democratic prejudice could imagine that attaining this end merely requires the setting up of a vast mechanism of electoral consultation. This may be excessive or - more often - insufficient, because this form of participation by many proletarians may result in their not taking part in other more active manifestations of the class struggle. On the other hand, the intensity of the struggle in particular phases demands speed of decision and movement and a centralised organisation of efforts in a common direction, which, as the Russian experience is demonstrating with a whole series of examples, imposes on the proletarian state constitutional characteristics which are in open contradiction to the canons of bourgeois democracy. Supporters of bourgeois democracy howl about the violation of liberties, whereas it is only a matter of unmasking the philistine prejudices which have always allowed demagogues to ensure power to the privileged. In the dictatorship of the proletariat, the constitutional mechanism of the state organisation is not only consultative, but at the same time executive. Participation in the functions of political life, if not of the whole mass of electors, then at least of a wide layer of their delegates, is not intermittent but continuous. It is interesting to note that this is accomplished without at all harming the unitary character of the action of the whole state apparatus - rather to the contrary. And this is thanks precisely to the criteria opposed to those of bourgeois hyperliberalism, that is, virtual suppression of direct elections and proportional representation, once, as we have seen, the other sacred dogma of the equal vote, has been overthrown.

We do not claim that these new criteria introduced into the representative mechanism, or codified in a constitution, stem from reasons of principle. Under new circumstances, the criteria could be different. In any case we are attempting to make it clear that we do not attribute any intrinsic value to these forms of organisation and representation. This is translated into a fundamental Marxist thesis: the revolution is not a problem of forms of organisation. On the contrary, the revolution is a problem of content, a problem of the movement and action of revolutionary forces in an unending process, which cannot be theorised and crystallised in any scheme for an immutable «constitutional doctrine».

In any case, in the mechanisms of the workers' councils we find no trace of the rule of bourgeois democracy, which states that each citizen directly chooses his delegate to the supreme representative body, the parliament. On the contrary, there are different levels of workers' and peasants' councils, each one with a broader territorial base culminating in the congress of Soviets. Each local or district council elects its delegates to a higher council, and in the same way elects its own administration, i.e. its executive organ. At the base, in the city or rural council, the entire mass is consulted. In the election of delegates to higher councils and local administrative offices, each group of electors votes not according to a proportional system, but according to a majority system, choosing its delegates from lists put forward by the parties. Furthermore, since a single delegate is sufficient to establish a link between a lower and higher council, it is clear that the two dogmas of formal liberalism - voting for several members from a list and proportional representation - fall by the wayside. At each level, the councils must give rise to organs that are both consultative and administrative and directly linked to the central administration. Thus it is natural that as one progresses towards higher representative organs, one does not encounter parliamentary assemblies of chatterboxes who discuss interminably without ever acting; rather, one sees compact and homogeneous bodies capable of directing the action and political struggle, and of giving revolutionary guidance to the whole mass thus organised in a unitary fashion.

These capacities, which are definitely not automatically inherent in any constitutional schema, are reached in this mechanism because of the presence of an extremely important factor, the political party, whose content goes far beyond pure organisational form, and whose collective and active consciousness and will allow the work to be oriented according to the requirements of a long and always advancing process. Of all the organs of the proletarian dictatorship, the political party is the one whose characteristics most nearly approach those of a homogeneous unitary collectivity, unified in action. In reality, it only encompasses a minority of the mass, but the properties which distinguish it from all other broad-based forms of representative organisation demonstrate precisely that the party represents the collective interests and movement better than any other organ. All party members participate directly in accomplishing the common task and prepare themselves to resolve the problems of the revolutionary struggle and the reconstruction of society, which the majority of the mass only become aware of when they are actually faced with them. For all these reasons, in a system of representation and delegation based not on the democratic lie but on a layer of the population whose common fundamental interests propel them on the course of revolution, it is natural that the choices fall spontaneously on elements put forward by the revolutionary party, which is equipped, to respond to the demands of the struggle and to resolve the problems for which it has been able to prepare itself. We do not attribute these capacities of the party to its particular constitution, anymore than we do in the case of any other organisation. The party may or may not be suited to its task of leading the revolutionary action of a class; it is not any political party but a precise one, namely the communist party, that can assume this task, and not even the communist party is immune to the numerous dangers of degeneration and dissolution. What makes the party equal to its task is not its statutes or mere internal organisational measures. It is the positive characteristics which develop within the party because it participates in the struggle as an organisation possessing a single orientation which derives from its conception of the historical process, form a fundamental programme which has been translated into a collective consciousness and at the same time from a secure organisational discipline.

To return to the nature of the constitutional mechanism of the proletarian dictatorship - of which we have already said that it was executive as well as legislative at all levels - we must add something to

specify what tasks of the collective life this mechanism's executive functions and initiatives respond to. These functions and initiatives are the very reason for its formation, and they determine the relationships existing within its continually evolving elastic mechanism. We refer here to the initial period of proletarian power whose image we have in the four and a half years that the proletarian dictatorship has existed in Russia, because we do not wish to speculate as to what the definitive basis of the representative organs will be in a classless communist society. We cannot predict how exactly society will evolve as it approaches this stage; we can only envisage that it will move in the direction of a fusion of various political, administrative and economic organs, and at the same time, a progressive elimination of every element of coercion and of the state itself as an instrument of power of one class and a weapon of struggle against the surviving enemy classes.

In its initial period, the proletarian dictatorship has an extremely difficult and complex task that can be subdivided into three spheres of action: political, military and economic. Military defence against counter-revolutionary attacks from within and without and the reconstruction of society on a collective basis depend upon a systematic and rational plan of activity which, while utilising the diverse energies of the whole mass with the maximum efficiency and results, must also achieve a powerful unity. As a consequence, the body which leads the struggle against the domestic and foreign enemy, that is, the revolutionary army and police, must be based on discipline, and its hierarchy must be centralised in the hands of the proletarian power. The Red Army itself is thus an organised unit whose hierarchy is imposed from without by the government of the proletarian state, and the same is true for the revolutionary police and tribunals.

The problems of the economic apparatus which the victorious proletariat erects in order to lay the foundations of the new system of production and distribution is more complex. The characteristic that distinguishes this rational administration from the «chaos» of bourgeois private economy is centralisation. Every enterprise must be managed in the interest of the entire collectivity and in harmony with the requirements of the whole plan of production and distribution. On the other hand, the economic apparatus (and the groups of individuals that comprise it) is continually being modified, not only through its own gradual development but also by the inevitable crises in a period of such vast transformations, which cannot be without political and military struggles. These considerations lead to the following conclusions: in the initial period of the proletarian dictatorship, although the councils at different levels. must appoint their delegates to the local executive organs as well as to the legislative organs at higher levels, the absolute responsibility for military defence, and in a less rigid way, for the economic campaign, must remain with the centre. For their part, the local organs serve to organise the masses politically so that they will participate in fulfilling the plans and accept military and economic organisation. They thereby create the conditions for the broadest and most continuous mass activity possible, and can channel this activity towards the formation of a highly centralised proletarian state.

These considerations certainly are not intended to deny all possibility of movement and initiative to the intermediary organs of the state hierarchy. But we wanted to show that one cannot theorise that they must be formed by the application of groups of electors organised on the basis of factories or army divisions to the revolution's executive tasks of maintaining military or economic order. The structure of such groups is simply not able to confer any special abilities on them. The units in which the electors are grouped at the base can therefore be formed according to empirical criteria. In fact they will constitute themselves according to empirical criteria, among which, for instance, the convergence in the workplace, the neighbourhood, the garrison, the battlefront or any other situation in daily life, without

any of them being excluded a priori or held up as a model. This does not prevent the representative organs of the proletarian state from being based on a territorial division into electoral districts. None of these considerations is absolute, and this takes us back to our thesis that no constitutional schema has the value of a principle, and that majority democracy in the formal and arithmetic sense is only one possible method for co-ordinating the relations that arise within collective organisations. No matter what point of view one takes, it is impossible to attribute to it an intrinsic character of necessity or justice. For Marxists these terms have no meaning. Therefore we do not propose to substitute for the democratic schema which we have been criticising any other schema of a state apparatus which in itself will be exempt from defects and errors.

V

It seems to us that enough has been said about the democratic principle in its application to the bourgeois state, which claims to embrace all classes, and also in its application to the proletarian class exclusively as the basis of the state after the revolutionary victory. Something should be said about the application of the democratic mechanism to organisations existing within the proletariat before (and also after) the conquest of power, i.e. in trade unions and the political party.

We established above that a true organisational unity is only possible on the basis of an identity of interests among the members. Since one joins unions or parties by virtue of a spontaneous decision to participate in a specific kind of action, a critique which absolutely denies any value to the democratic mechanism in the case of the bourgeois state (i.e. a fallacious constitutional union of all classes) is not applicable here. Nevertheless, even in the case of the party and the trade union it is necessary not to be led astray by the arbitrary concept of the «sanctity» of majority decisions.

In contrast to the party, the trade union is characterised by the virtual identity of its members' immediate material interests. Within the limits of the category, it attains a broad homogeneity of composition and it is an organisation with voluntary membership. It tends to become an organisation which all the workers of a given category or industry join automatically or are even, as in a certain phase of the dictatorship of the proletariat, obliged to join, it is certain that in this domain number remains the decisive factor and the majority decision has a great value, but we cannot confine ourselves to a schematic consideration of its results. It is also necessary to take into account other factors which come into play in the life of the union organisation: a bureaucratised hierarchy of functionaries which paralyses the union under its tutelage and the vanguard groups that the revolutionary party has established within it in order to lead it onto the terrain of revolutionary action. In this struggle, communists often point out that the functionaries of the union bureaucracy violate the democratic idea and are contemptuous of the will of the majority. It is correct to denounce this because the right-wing union bosses parade a democratic mentality, and it is necessary to point out their contradictions. We do the same with bourgeois liberals each time they coerce and falsify the popular consultation, without proposing that even a free consultation would resolve the problems which weigh on the proletariat. It is right and opportune to do this because in the moments when the broad masses are forced into action by the pressure of the economic situation, it is possible to turn aside the union bureaucrats' influence, which is in substance an extra-proletarian influence of classes and organisations alien to the trade union, thereby augmenting the influence of the revolutionary groups. But in all this there are no «constitutional» prejudices, and communists, provided that they are understood by the masses and can

demonstrate to them that they are acting in the direction of their most immediate felt interests can and must behave in a flexible way vis-à-vis the canons of formal democracy. For example, there is no contradiction between these two tactical attitudes: on one hand, taking the responsibility of representing the minority in the leadership organs of the unions insofar as the statues allow; and on the other hand, stating that this statutory representation should be suppressed once we have conquered these organisations in order to speed up their actions. What should guide us in this question is a careful analysis of the developmental process in the unions in the present phase. We must accelerate their transformation from organs of counter-revolutionary influence on the proletariat into organs of revolutionary struggle. The criteria of internal organisation have no value in themselves but only insofar as they contribute to this objective.

We now analyse the party organisation which we have already touched on in regard to the mechanism of the worker's state. The party does not start from as complete an identity of economic interests as does the union. On the contrary it bases the unity of its organisation not on category, like the union, but on the much broader basis of the entire class. This is true not only in space, since the party strives to become international, but also in time, since it is the specific organ whose consciousness and action reflect the requirements of victory throughout the process of the proletariat's revolutionary emancipation. When we study the problems of party structure and internal organisation, these well-known considerations force us to keep in mind the whole process of its formation and life in relation to the complex tasks which it continually has to carry out. At the end of this already long exposition, we cannot enter into details of the mechanism which should regulate consultation of the party's mass membership, their recruitment and the designation of responsible officers. There is no doubt that for the moment there is nothing better to do than hold to the majority principle. But as we have emphasised, there is no reason to raise use of the democratic mechanism to a principle. Besides its consultative functions, analogous to the legislative tasks of the state apparatus, the party has executive tasks which at the crucial moment of the struggle, correspond to those of an army and which demand maximum discipline toward the hierarchy. In fact, in the complex process which has led to the formation of communist parties, the emergence of a hierarchy is a real and dialectical phenomenon which has remote origins and which corresponds to the entire past experience of the functioning of the parry's mechanism. We cannot state that the decisions of the party majority are per se as correct as those of the infallible supernatural judges who are supposed to have given human societies their leaders, like the gods believed in by all those who think that the Holy Spirit participates in papal conclaves. Even in an organisation like the party where the broad composition is a result of selection through spontaneous voluntary membership and control of recruitment, the decision of the majority is not intrinsically the best. If it contributes to a better working of the party's executive bodies, this is only because of the coincidence of individual efforts in a unitary and well-oriented work. We will not propose at this time replacing this mechanism by another and we will not examine in detail what such a new system might be. But we can envisage a mode of organisation which will be increasingly liberated from the conventions of the democratic principle, and it will not be necessary to reject it out of unjustified fears if one day it can be shown that other methods of decision, of choice, of resolution of problems are more consistent with the real demands of the party's development and its activity in the framework of history.

The democratic criterion has been for us so far a material and incidental factor in the construction of our internal organisation and the formulation of our party statutes; it is not an indispensable platform for them. Therefore we will not raise the organisational formula known as «democratic centralism» to the

level of a principle. Democracy cannot be a principle for us. Centralism is indisputably one, since the essential characteristics of party organisation must be unity of structure and action. The term centralism is sufficient to express the continuity of party structure in space; in order to introduce the essential idea of continuity in time, the historical continuity of the struggle which, surmounting successive obstacles, always advances towards the same goal, and in order to combine these two essential ideas of unity in the same formula, we would propose that the communist party base its organisation on «organic centralism». While preserving as much of the incidental democratic mechanism that can be used, we will eliminate the use of the term «democracy», which is dear to the worst demagogues but tainted with irony for the exploited, oppressed and cheated, abandoning it to the exclusive usage of the bourgeoisie and the champions of liberalism in their diverse guises and sometimes extremist poses.

Report on Fascism to the Third International (1922)

Kolaroff: The session is now open. I call on comrade Bordiga to report on the question of Fascism.

Bordiga: Dear comrades, I regret that the present extraordinary conditions of communications between the delegation and the Party will not permit me to avail myself of all the documents upon this question.

A report was written on the subject by our Comrade Togliatti, but I have not had an opportunity of seeing it. It has not yet arrived, I would advise the comrades who desire to obtain exact information on the subject to read that report when it arrives, for as soon as it is received it will be translated and distributed here.

However, last night I was able to get additional information, as the special emissary of our Party has arrived in Moscow and furnished me with more detailed information on the impressions of our comrades in Italy in connection with the latest fascist events, and with those I will deal in the closing part of my report.

I will deal with the question raised by comrade Radek yesterday as to the attitude of the Communist Party towards Fascism.

Our comrade criticised the attitude of our Party on the question of Fascism, which is the dominant political question in Italy. He criticised our point of view – our alleged point of view – which is supposed to consist of a desire to have a small party and to limit the consideration of all questions solely to the aspect of Party organisation and their immediate importance, without going any farther into the larger questions at issue.

I will try to be brief, on account of the time limit, with these few remarks I will start my report.

The Origin of the Fascist Movement

As regards the origins of the Fascist movement, in what we might call the direct and external sense, it can be traced back to 1914-1915, namely to the period which preceded Italy's intervention in the world war. In fact its founding groups, which espoused a range of political tendencies, were precisely the ones which supported this intervention. There was a group on the right, led by Salandra and the big industrialists, which had vested interests in war, and which before clamouring for intervention on the

side of the Entente had avidly supported a war against it. Then there were the tendencies of the left wing bourgeoisie: the Italian radicals, i.e., the democrats of the left and the republicans, traditionally in favour of liberating Trieste and Trent. And finally, within the interventionist movement, there were certain elements of the proletarian movement too, namely the revolutionary syndicalists and anarchists. And amongst the latter groups we find (a matter of one individual, true, but nevertheless a very important one) the leader of the left-wing of the socialist party and director of Avanti!: Mussolini.

It may be stated, as a rough approximation, that the Centre groups did not participate in the formation of the Fascist movement but kept within the framework of traditional bourgeois politics. Remaining in the Fasci di Combattimento movement were those of the extreme Right and those of the extreme Left, i.e. ex-anarchists, ex-syndicalists and former revolutionary syndicalists.

These political groups, which in May 1915 scored a major victory by forcing Italy into the war against the will of the majority of the country and even of parliament (which was unable to resist a sudden coup de main) saw their influence decline after the war, and indeed this had been noticeable even during the conflict itself.

They had presented the war as a very easy enterprise, and when the war became prolonged they lost the popularity, which had only ever been minimal in any case. The end of the war therefore marked the reduction of their influence to a minimum.

Between the end of 1918 and the first half of 1920, which was a period of demobilization and slump, this political tendency was of little consequence due to the general malcontent provoked by the aftermath of the war. Nevertheless, it is easy to establish the political and organic connection between this movement, seemingly so insignificant then, and the formidable movement confronting us today.

The Fasci di Combattimento never ceased to exist. Mussolini remained the leader of the Fascist movement, and their paper Il Popolo d'Italia continued to be published. Despite their daily newspaper and their political chief being based in Milan, the Fascists were completely defeated in Milan in the October 1919 elections. Having obtained a ridiculously low number of votes they nevertheless continued their activities.

After the war, the revolutionary socialist current within the proletariat had been considerably strengthened by the revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses, but it had failed to exploit this favourable situation. It suffered a further attenuation because all the objective and psychological factors which favoured a strengthening of revolutionary organization found no party capable of building on them to create a permanent and stable organization. I do not assert – as Comrade Zinoviev has accused me of saying – that the Socialist Party could have brought about the revolution in Italy, but at least it could have provided the revolutionary forces of the working masses with a sound organisation. It proved unequal to the task. Hence, even though it was always opposed to the war, we have now seen the popularity the Socialist tendency used to enjoy in Italy drop away.

To the extent that the Socialist movement failed to take advantage of the social crisis in Italy and committed one error after another, the opposite movement – Fascism – started growing. Fascism benefited above all from the looming economic crisis which was starting to exert its influence within the proletariat's trade union organization. In addition, during a particularly difficult period, Fascism found support in the D'Annunzio expedition to Fiume. It is from the Fiume expedition that Fascism derived a

certain moral strength as well as the birth of its organization and its armed forces; even though the D'Annunzio movement and the Fascist movement were not identical.

We have spoken of the stance of the proletarian socialist movement: the International has repeatedly criticized its mistakes. The consequence of these mistakes has been a complete change in the mentality of the bourgeoisie and the other classes. The proletariat became disorganized and demoralized. Having seen victory slip though its fingers, it has undergone a complete change of heart. One could say that in 1919, and during the first half of 1920, the Italian bourgeoisie had almost become resigned to the idea of having to see out the triumph of the revolution. The middle class and the petty bourgeoisie were ready to play a passive role, not in the wake of the big bourgeoisie, but in the wake of the proletariat which was on the road to victory. They have now undergone a complete change of heart as well. Instead of submitting to a victory of the proletariat, we see the bourgeoisie organizing to defend itself. The middle class became discontented when it saw the Socialist Party was incapable of organizing in such a way as to gain the upper hand; and having lost confidence in the proletarian movement it turned to the opposition. It was then that the capitalist offensive of the bourgeoisie started. Basically it exploited the current state of mind of the middle class. Fascism, by reason of its extremely heterogeneous character, offered a solution to the problem of how to mobilize the bourgeoisie behind the capitalist offensive.

The Italian case is a classic example of the capitalist offensive. It represents, as Comrade Radek told us yesterday from this platform, a complex phenomenon, which should be considered not only from the standpoint of reduced wages and longer hours, but also from the general standpoint of political and military action of the bourgeoisie against the working class.

In Italy, during the period when Fascism was evolving, we saw every manifestation of the capitalist offensive. If we want to consider the capitalist offensive in its entirety, we must examine the situation under its various aspects, in the industrial as well as in the agrarian field.

In the industrial field the capitalist offensive directly exploits the effects of the economic crisis. The crisis starts; there is unemployment. Some of the workers have to be sacked, and the employers take advantage of the situation by kicking the union leaders and the more extreme elements out of the factories. The industrial crisis provided the employers with a good pretext for cutting wages and revoking the disciplinary and moral concessions which the factory workers had previously forced them to make. At the beginning of this crisis in Italy the General Confederation of Industry was formed, an association of the employing class which takes the lead in the fight against the workers and subjects each individual industrial sector to its discipline.

In the big cities, you can't launch an offensive against the working class by using violent means from the start. Urban workers generally form a substantial mass. They can easily gather in large numbers and put up serious resistance. There has been a tendency therefore to provoke the proletariat into struggles of an essentially trade-union character; ones they usually lost due to the economic crisis being in its most acute stage and unemployment still on the up. The only way the economic struggles in the industrial sphere could be led to a victorious conclusion was by transfering the activity in the trade union field over to the revolutionary domain, converting it into the dictatorship of a genuinely communist political party. But the Socialist Party was nothing of the sort. At the decisive moment it proved incapable of giving a revolutionary lead to the action of the Italian proletariat. The period of great successes in the Italian trade-union organisation's fight for the amelioration of the workers' conditions gave place to a

new period in which strikes became defensive strikes on the part of the working class, and defeats became the order of the day.

Since, within the revolutionary movement in Italy, the agrarian classes (mainly the agricultural labourers, but including those strata which are not completely proletarianised) are very important, the ruling classes were compelled to seek a way of combating the influence acquired by the Red organisations in the rural districts. Throughout a substantial part of Italy, in particular in the most important agricultural districts of the Po valley, a state of affairs prevailed which closely resembled a local dictatorship of the proletariat, or of groups of agricultural labourers at any rate. The communes, captured by the Socialist Party at the end of 1920, pursued a policy of imposing local taxes on the agrarian bourgeoisie and the middle classes. We had flourishing trade unions, important co-operative organisations and numerous sections of the Socialist Party. And, even where the movement was in the hands of reformists, the working class movement in the rural districts adopted a decidedly revolutionary stance. The employers were even forced to deposit sums of money as a kind of guarantee that they would carry out agreements imposed on them by the trade union struggle. Thus a situation arose in which the agricultural bourgeoisie could no longer live on their estates and had to seek refuge in the cities.

But the Italian socialists committed a number of blunders, particularly as regards the matter of the occupation of vacated lands and of the tendency of the small tenant farmers, after the war, to acquire land in order to become petty proprietors. The reformist organisations compelled these small farmers to remain, so to speak, the serfs of the agricultural labourers' movement; in such circumstances the Fascist movement found it could draw on significant support.

In agriculture there was no crisis linked to widespread unemployment such as to allow the landed proprietors, on the terrain of basic trade-union struggles, to wage a successful counter offensive. It was here therefore that the Fascists began to introduce their methods of physical violence, of armed brute force, drawing support from the rural proprietor class and exploiting the discontent generated among the agricultural middle classes by the blunders of the Socialist Party and the reformist organisations. Fascism benefited also from the general situation and from a growing malaise and discontent which was spreading through all layers of the petty-bourgeois, affecting small shopkeepers, petty proprietors and the discharged soldiers and ex-officers who were disappointed in their lot following the glories of war. All these elements were grist to the mill, and once organised into military formations, the movement for the destruction of the Red organisations in the rural districts of Italy could get underway.

The methods employed by Fascism are rather peculiar. Having assembled all those demobilised elements which had failed to find a place for themselves in post-war society, it made full use of their military experience, and started to form its military organisations not in the big industrial cities, but in those cities which may be considered as the capitals of Italian agricultural regions, such as Bologna and Florence. And it would be supported in this end (as we will see) by the State authorities. The Fascists possess arms, means of transportation, enjoy immunity of the law, and take advantage of these favourable conditions even where they are not yet as numerous as their revolutionary adversaries.

The mode of action for their "punitive expeditions" is somewhat as follows. They invade some small place in the country, destroy the headquarters of the proletarian organisations, force the municipal council to resign at the point of a bayonet, and assault or murder those who oppose them, or at best force them to quit the district. The local workers are powerless to resist such a concentration of armed forces backed by the police. The local Fascist groups, which previously didn't dare to take on the

proletarian forces, now have the upper hand because the local workers and peasants have been terrorised, and are afraid of taking any action for fear the Fascist expedition might return in even greater numbers.

Fascism thus proceeds to the conquest of a dominant position in Italian politics in a sort of territorial campaign, the kind which lends itself very well to being traced out on a map. The Fascist campaign got underway in Bologna, the city where in September-October 1922 a socialist administration had been installed and where there had been a consequent mobilisation of the red forces. Several incidents took place: the meeting of the municipal council was broken up by external provocation. Shots were fired at the benches occupied by the bourgeois minority, probably by agents-provocateurs. These events led to the Fascists' first big coup de main. From this point militant reaction spread throughout the country, putting the torch to proletarian clubs and maltreating their leaders. With the full backing of the police and the authorities they took the city. The terror started at Bologna on the historic date of November 21, 1920, when the Municipal Council of Bologna was prevented by violence from assuming its powers.

From Bologna Fascism followed a route which we won't outline in detail here; suffice to say that geographically it went in two directions, on the one hand towards the industrial triangle of the North-West, viz. Milan, Turin and Genoa, and on the other, towards Tuscany and the centre of Italy, in order to encircle and lay siege to the Capital. It was clear from the outset that the South of Italy was no more capable of giving birth to a Fascist movement than to a great socialist movement. Fascism is so little a movement of the backward part of the bourgeoisie that it appeared first of all not in Southern Italy, but rather in those districts where the proletarian movement was more developed and the class struggle more in evidence.

On the basis of these facts, how are we to interpret the Fascist movement? Is it purely an agrarian movement? This was not at all what we meant when we said the movement originated in the rural districts. Fascism cannot be considered as the independent movement of a particular part of the bourgeoisie, as the organisation of the agrarian interest in opposition to the industrial capitalists. And what is more, it was in the cities that Fascism formed its political and military organisation, even in those provinces where it confined its violent actions to the rural districts.

We have seen that after its participation in the 1921 elections the Fascists formed a parliamentary group, but this did not prevent an agrarian party forming independently of the Fascists. During successive events, we have seen the industrial employers supporting the Fascists. A decisive factor in the new situation has been the latest declaration of the General Confederation of Industry, which pronounced in favour of entrusting the formation of a new Cabinet to Mussolini. But a more striking phenomenon in this respect is the appearance of Fascist syndicalism. As already mentioned, the Fascists have taken advantage of the fact that the socialists never had an agrarian policy of its own, and that certain elements in the countryside, those which are not purely proletarian, have interests opposed to those of the socialists. Fascism, although an armed movement used to employing the most brutal forms of violence, knew how to use such methods alongside the most cynical methods of demagoguery, and to create class organisations among the peasants, and even among the agricultural labourers. In a certain sense it even opposed the landlords. There are examples of trade union struggles led by Fascists in which the methods used show marked similarities to those employed by the Red organisations. We cannot consider this Fascist syndicalism, which works through the use of force and terror, as a form of

anti-capitalist struggle, but neither can we, on the other hand, draw the conclusion that Fascism is specifically a movement of the agricultural employers.

In reality, Fascism is a great unitary movement of the dominant class, capable of putting at its disposal any and all means, and of subjugating every partial and local interest of the various employers, in agriculture and in industry, in pursuit of its wider goals.

The proletariat has not properly understood the necessity of joining together in a single unitary organisation in order to take power and the need to sacrifice the immediate interests of this or that particular group in pursuit of this aim; it wasn't able to resolve this problem when the moment was favourable. The Italian bourgeoisie profited from this circumstance by attempting to do the same thing on behalf of its own class. The dominant class constructed an organisation which would defend its power, which would be completely under its control and which would therefore follow a unitary plan of capitalist, anti-proletarian offensive.

Fascism created a trade union organisation. Why? In order to take part in the class struggle? Never! The watchword of the trade-union movement Fascism created may be summed up as follows: all economic interest groups have the right to organise; one can form associations of workers, peasants, business men, capitalists, land owners, etc; all can organise on the same principle: that trade-union activity of all organisations should be subordinate to the national interest, national production, national prestige, etc. This is nothing but class collaboration, it is not class struggle. All interests are directed towards a self-styled national unity. This national unity is nothing more than the counter revolutionary conservation of the bourgeois state and its institutions.

We believe that the genesis of Fascism can be attributed to three main factors: the State, the capitalist class, and the middle class. Foremost amongst these is the State. In Italy the State apparatus has had an important role in the foundation of Fascism. Reports about successive government crises in Italy have led to the idea that the Italian capitalist class is in possession of a State apparatus so unstable that a simple coup de main would be enough to overthrow it. That is not the case. The fact that the Italian bourgeoisie was able to form the Fascist organisation was a measure of just how consolidated its State apparatus was.

In the period immediately after the war, the Italian State underwent a crisis, whose manifest cause was demobilisation; all those who had taken part in the war were suddenly thrown onto the Labour market. At this critical point the State machine, which had previously been organised to its highest pitch to resist the foreign enemy, had to suddenly transform itself into an apparatus to defend capitalist interests against internal revolution. It was a huge problem for the bourgeoisie; a problem which could be resolved neither in a technical or a military manner but had to be resolved by political means. We see the birth of the radical governments of the post-war period: the rise to power of Nitti and Giolitti.

It was actually the policies of these two politicians which made the subsequent victory of Fascism inevitable. First of all it was necessary to make concessions to the working class; precisely at the moment the State mechanism needed to be consolidated, Fascism appeared on the scene; and it was pure demagoguery when the latter accused the post-war governments of backing down to the revolutionaries,. As a matter of fact, the Fascist victory was possible precisely because of the first post-war ministries. Nitti and Giolitti made a few concessions to the working class. Certain demands of the Socialist Party – demobilisation, a democratic regime and amnesty for deserters – were acceded to.

These various concessions were made in order to gain time to re-establish the State apparatus on a solid footing. It was Nitti who formed the Guardia Regia, the "Royal Guard", an organisation not so much of the police type but rather of a new military type. One of the biggest mistakes made by the reformists was not considering this a fundamental question; even though it could have been dealt with purely as a constitutional issue, as a protest against the fact that the State was forming a second army. The socialists failed to grasp this point, seeing in Nitti a man they might well collaborate within a Left Government,. This was yet more evidence of this Party's incapacity to see the way Italian politics was going.

Giolitti completed the work Nitti started. It was a member of Giolitti's cabinet, Bonomi the Minister of War, who fostered the beginnings of Fascism by placing demobilised officers at the disposal of the nascent movement; officers who although they had re-entered civilian life were still in receipt of a large part of their army salaries. The State machine was placed at the disposal of the Fascisti in as large a measure as possible, and furnished all necessary material for the creation of an army.

At the time of the occupations, the Giolitti government was very well aware that the armed proletariat had taken control of the factories and that the agricultural proletariat, under the impulse of its revolutionary offensive, was well on its way to taking possession of the land. It realised that accepting battle, before the counter-revolutionary forces were ready, would be a big mistake. As the government prepared the reactionary forces destined one day to destroy the proletarian movement, they knew they could utilise the manoeuvring of the treacherous leaders of the General Federation of Labour (who were then members of the Socialist Party). By conceding the law on Workers' Control – which has never been voted on, let alone applied – the Government was able to save the bourgeois State.

The proletariat had seized the workshops and the landed estates, but the Socialist Party once again failed to secure united action by the industrial and agricultural workers. And it is precisely this inability to secure united action which enabled the master class to achieve counter revolutionary unity, and so defeat on the one hand the industrial workers, and on the other the agricultural workers. As we can see, the State has played the leading role in the development of the Fascist Movement.

After the Nitti, Giolitti and Bonomi governments there came the Facta Cabinet. Its job was to disguise the fact that Fascism had been allowed complete freedom of action during its territorial advance. During the strike in August 1922, bitter struggles erupted between workers and the Fascisti, with the latter openly supported by the government. We can cite the example of Bari, where the workers remained undefeated after an entire week of fighting, and where barricaded inside their houses within the old city they put up an armed defence, despite the full deployment of Fascist forces. The Fascisti had to beat a retreat, leaving several casualties behind. And what did the Facta government do? During the night they had the old town surrounded with thousands of soldiers, hundreds of Carabinieri and Royal Guards, and ordered a siege. From the harbour, a torpedo boat shelled the houses; machine guns, armoured cars and rifles went into action. The workers, surprised in their sleep, were defeated; the Camera del Lavoro, the Chamber of Labour, was occupied. It was the same throughout the country. Wherever Fascism had been beaten back by the workers, the power of the State intervened; workers who resisted were shot down; workers who were guilty of nothing but self-defence were arrested and sentenced, whereas the Fascists, who were generally known to have committed innumerable crimes, were systematically acquitted by the magistrates.

Thus, the State is the primary factor. The second factor in the development of Fascism is, as already mentioned, the big bourgeoisie. The capitalists of industry, finance and commerce, and also the large landed proprietors, had an obvious interest in the formation of a combative organisation which would support their attack on the workers.

But the third factor plays a no less important role in the genesis of Fascist power. In order to form an illegal reactionary organisation alongside the State, one has to recruit elements other than those belonging to the highest echelons of the dominant class. Such elements are obtained by turning to those sections of the middle class we've already mentioned and by endeavouring to forge alliances with them by defending their interests. This is what Fascism tried to do and, lets admit it, succeeded in doing. They recruited from the strata closest to the proletariat; from amongst those suffering the effects of the war, from the petty bourgeois, the semi-bourgeois, shop-keepers and tradesmen, and above all from intellectual elements amongst the bourgeois youth, who in adhering to Fascism found the strength to morally redeem themselves, and 'dressed in the toga' of struggle against the proletariat would end up subscribing to the most fanatical patriotism and imperialism. The latter elements, flocking to Fascism in considerable numbers, would allow it to organise militarily.

These are the three factors which have allowed our adversaries to confront us with a movement which is unequalled in its ferocity and brutality, but which, nevertheless – and we need to recognise this – is well organised and has highly capable political leaders. The Socialist Party never understood the significance of nascent Fascism. Avanti! never understood what the bourgeoisie was planning, or how the criminal errors of the working class leaders would assist those plans. They didn't even like mentioning Mussolini's name in case it gave him publicity!

As we can see, Fascism is not a new political doctrine. It does, however, have a strong political and military organisation, and has a considerable press conducted with a good deal of journalistic flair and eclecticism. It has no ideas, and no programme, but now that it has arrived at the helm of the State, and finds itself confronted by concrete problems, it is forced to concern itself with organising the Italian economy. And in the passage from negative to positive activities, despite the strength of their organisation, they will show their weaknesses.

The Fascist Programme

We have examined the historical and social factors influencing the birth of the Fascist movement. We shall now discuss the Fascist ideology, and the programme used to draw its various adherents toward it.

Our critique leads us to the conclusion that Fascism has added nothing new to the ideology and traditional programme of bourgeois politics. Its superiority and originality consists in its organisation, its discipline and its hierarchy. But despite its exceptional military capabilities, Fascism is still left with a thorny problem it can't resolve: whilst economic crisis keeps the reasons for a revolutionary upsurge continually to the fore, Fascism is incapable of reorganising the bourgeois economic machine. Fascism, which will never be able to overcome the economic anarchy of the capitalist system, has another historical task which we may define as the struggle against political anarchy, against the anarchy of

bourgeois class organisation as a political party. The different strata of the Italian ruling class have always formed political and parliamentary groups which aren't based on soundly organised parties and which have fought amongst themselves. Under the leadership of career politicians, the competition between these groups around private and local interests has led to all kinds of intrigues in the corridors of parliament. The counter-revolutionary offensive has forced the ruling class, in the realm of social struggle and government policy, to unify its forces. Fascism is the realisation of this. Placing itself above all the traditional bourgeois parties, it is gradually sapping them of their membership, replacing them in their functions and – thanks to the mistakes of the proletarian movement – managing to exploit the political power and human material of the middle classes. But it will never manage to equip itself with a practical ideology, and a programme of social and administrative reforms, which goes beyond traditional bourgeois politics; a politics which has come to nought a thousand times before.

The critical part of Fascist doctrine has no great value. It is anti-socialist and at the same time anti-democratic. As far as anti-socialism is concerned, it is clear that Fascism is the movement of the anti-democratic forces. It is therefore natural that it should declare itself against all socialistic and semi-socialistic tendencies. It is unable, however, to present any new justification of the system of private ownership and seems happy just to trot out the tired old cliché about the failure of communism in Russia. As for democracy, it is supposed to make way for the Fascist State because it failed to combat the revolutionary and anti-national tendencies. But that is just an empty phrase.

Fascism is not a tendency of the Right-wing bourgeoisie, which, basing itself upon the aristocrats, the clergy, and the high civil and military functionaries, wants to replace the democracy of a constitutional monarchy by a monarchic despotism. In reality, Fascism conducts its counter-revolutionary struggle by means of an alliance of all components of the bourgeoisie, and for this reason it is not absolutely necessary for it to destroy democratic institutions. From the Marxian point of view, this fact need by no means be considered paradoxical, as we know well that the democratic system is nothing more than a scaffolding of false guarantees erected in order to hide the domination of the ruling class over the proletariat.

Fascism uses both reactionary violence and those demagogic sophistries by which the liberal bourgeoisie has always deceived the proletariat while assuring the supremacy of capitalist interests. When the Fascisti move from their so-called criticism of liberal Democracy to formulating their positive conception, inspired by patriotic fanaticism and a conception of a historical mission of the people, they are basing it upon a historical myth which is easily exposed, by a genuine social critique of that country of sham victories called 'Italy'. In their methods of influencing the mob, we see nothing more than an imitation of the classic posture of bourgeois democracy: when it is stated that all interests must be subordinated to the higher national interest, this just means that the principal of the collaboration of classes should be supported, whilst in practice it is just a means of protecting bourgeois institutions against the revolutionary attacks of the proletariat. Thus has liberal democracy always proceeded.

The original feature of Fascism resides in its organisation of the bourgeois party of government. Political events in the chambers of the Italian Parliament made it appear that the bourgeois State had plunged into a crisis so severe that one shove would be enough to bring it crashing down. In reality, it was just a crisis in the bourgeois governmental system, brought about by the impotence of the old political groupings and the traditional Italian political leaders, who had failed to conduct an effective counter revolutionary struggle during an acute crisis. Fascism constructed an organ capable of taking on the role

of head of the State machine. But when alongside their negative anti-proletarian campaign the Fascisti try to set out a positive programme, and concrete proposals for the re-organisation of the economic life of the country and the administration of the State, all they can do is repeat the banal platitudes of democracy and social-democracy. They have provided us with no evidence of an original and coordinated programme. For example, they have always said the Fascist programme advocates a reduction of the State bureaucracy, which starting with a reduction in the number of ministers then proceeds to extend into all branches of the administration. However, if it is true that Mussolini has renounced the special railway carriage usually allotted to the Premier, he has, nevertheless, increased the number of cabinet ministers and under secretaries in order to create jobs for his cronies.

Fascism, after temporarily flirting with republicanism, has rallied to the most strict and loyalist monarchism; after railing against parliamentary corruption, has now completely accepted conventional parliamentary procedure.

Fascism, in short, has showed so little inclination to embrace the tendencies of pure reaction that it has left plenty of room for trade-unionism. During their Rome congress in 1921, where their attempts at formulating doctrines verged on the ridiculous, they even tried to characterise Fascist trade-unionism as being predominantly a movement of the intellectual categories of workers. The lie to this self-proclaimed theoretical orientation has however been amply provided by harsh reality. Fascism, basing its trade union categories upon the use of physical violence and the "closed shop" (sanctioned by the employers with the object of breaking up the revolutionary trade unions) has not managed to extend its power to those organisations where the technical specialisation of labour is higher. Their methods have met with some success among agricultural workers and certain sections of skilled urban workers, the dock workers for example, but not amongst the more advanced and intelligent sections of the proletariat. It hasn't even provided a new impulse to the trade union organisation of office workers and artisans. There is no real substance to Fascist syndicalism.

The programme and ideology of Fascism contains a confused mixture of bourgeois and petty bourgeois ideas and demands, and its systematic use of violence against the proletariat does not prevent it making use of the opportunist methods used by social democracy. This is shown in the stance of the Italian reformists whose politics, for a while, appeared to be dominated by anti-Fascist principles, and by the illusion that a bourgeois-proletarian coalition government could be formed against the Fascisti, but who today have rallied behind triumphant Fascism. This convergence is not at all paradoxical; it is derived from a particular set of circumstances and many things rendered it highly predictable. For instance, there is the d'Annunzio movement, which on the one hand is linked to Fascism, but on the other endeavours to appeal to the working class organisations on the basis of a programme, deriving from the Fiume Constitution, which claims to be based on proletarian, and even socialist, foundations.

The recent events

I would have liked to cover other important points regarding the Fascist phenomenon, but I am running out of time. When the report is discussed other Italian comrades will be able to fill in the gaps. I have intentionally omitted the sentimental side of the question and not referred to the sufferings experienced by the Italian workers and communists because I didn't feel it was the essential aspect of the question.

I must now turn to the recent events in Italy, a subject about which the Congress expects to be thoroughly informed.

Our delegation left Italy before the recent events took place, and up to now it has not received proper information about them. Last night, a comrade delegated by the Central Committee arrived here and gave us the necessary information. I vouch for the bona fide character of the news which we have received, and I will put it before you.

The Facta Government, as mentioned earlier, enabled the Fascists to carry out their policy on a very large scale. I will give just one example of this: it is a fact that the catholic-peasant Italian Popular Party, which was strongly represented in the successive string of governments around this time, didn't prevent the Fascists from continuing their campaign against said party's organisations, members and institutions. The existing government was merely a sham government whose sole activity consisted in supporting the Fascist offensive in its bid to take power, an offensive which we have defined as purely territorial and geographical. In fact the government was preparing the ground for the Fascist coup. However the situation was changing fast. Another ministerial crisis arose. There were calls for Facta's resignation. The previous elections had brought about a situation in Parliament which made it impossible to secure a working majority using the old methods of the traditional bourgeois parties. In Italy we were accustomed to saying the "powerful Liberal Party" was in power, but in fact it was not a Party in the true sense of the word. It had never existed as an actual Party, it had no party organisation, and was really just a conglomeration of personal cliques, grouped around particular politicians in the North and the South and around factions of the industrial and agricultural bourgeoisie, which were manoeuvred by professional politicians. This loose ensemble of parliamentarians in fact formed the kernel of every parliamentary combination.

Fascism had reached a point where it had to choose between putting an end to this situation, or else experience a very serious internal crisis. The question of organisation also had to be considered. Means had to be found to provide for the needs of the Fascist movement and to keep it financially viable. These means were to a great extent provided by the employing class, and, so it appears, also by foreign governments. France has given money to the Mussolini group. At a secret session of the French Government a budget was discussed which included the considerable sums of money handed over to Mussolini in 1915. Evidence of this, and similar documents, came to the notice of the Socialist Party but they failed to do anything about it, because they'd decided that Mussolini was already done for. The Italian Government has also facilitated the task of the Fascisti by, for example, allowing its troops to use the railways free of charge. Nevertheless, if its leaders had decided not to take power, given the enormous expenses incurred by the Fascist movement, they would have been in a very difficult situation. They couldn't afford to wait until the next elections in spite of the certainty of success.

The Fascists already have a strong political organisation. Already they have 300,000 members, although they would say that is a low estimate. They could even have won just using democratic means. However they were obliged to accelerate the process, and accelerate it they did. On October 24th a National Fascist Council was held in Naples. We now know that this event, which was actively publicised by the bourgeois press, was merely a manoeuvre to divert attention away from the "Coup d'Etat". At a given moment the members of the congress were told: "Cut short your debates, there are more important things to do, every man to his post"! The Fascist mobilisation was underway. It was October 26th. All was quiet in the Capital. Facta had declared his determination not to resign, or at least not until he had

called a cabinet meeting in line with normal procedure. Nevertheless, in spite of this declaration, he would hand in his resignation to the King. Negotiations got underway to form a new Government. The Fascists began their march on Rome, the centre of their activity (they were particularly active in central Italy, especially in Tuscany). They were left to get on with it.

Salandra was charged with forming a new Government but declined due to the attitude of the Fascists. If at this stage the job hadn't been entrusted to Mussolini, the fascists may well have taken to banditry and gone on a destructive rampage through the towns and rural districts, even if against the wishes of their leaders. Public opinion started to show signs of disquiet. The Facta Government threatened to declare Martial Law. Martial law was duly declared, and for an entire day there was an expectation of a collision between the forces of the State and the Fascist forces. Our comrades remained very sceptical about such a possibility. And in reality the Fascists did not meet with any serious resistance anywhere. And yet certain sectors of the army were inimical to the Fascists: the soldiers were ready to fight them. The majority of the officers however were pro-Fascist.

The King refused to sign the declaration of martial law. This would have been tantamount to accepting the conditions of the Fascists which had been set out in the Popolo D'Italia as follows: "In order to obtain a legal solution, it is only necessary to ask Mussolini to form a new Cabinet. If this is not done, we shall march on Rome".

A few hours after the revoking of the declaration of martial law, it was known Mussolini was on his way to Rome. A military defence of the city had already been got ready, troops had been concentrated in the area; but by now the negotiations were already over. On October 31st the Fascists entered Rome without a shot being fired.

Mussolini then formed a new government the composition of which you already know. Although the Fascist Party only had 35 seats in Parliament, it had an absolute majority in the Government. Mussolini reserved for himself the position of President of the Council, and the portfolios of the Ministry of the Interior and of Foreign Affairs. Other important portfolios were divided among the members of the Fascist Party. But, since a complete break with the traditional parties had not yet occurred, the government included two representatives of Social Democracy, that is, of the bourgeois left, as well as some right-wing liberals and one of Giolitti's supporters. Representing the monarchy we find General Diaz at the Ministry of war, and Admiral Thaon de Revel at the Admiralty. The popular party, which carries a lot of weight in the Chamber, has shown its readiness to compromise with Mussolini. Under the pretext that the official organs of this Party could not meet in Rome, the responsibility for accepting Mussolini's offers were deputed to an unofficial assembly composed of some of the Party's parliamentarians. A few concessions were wrung from Mussolini, and the press of the popular party was able to announce that the new Government hadn't really changed the way by which the people were represented through the electoral system.

The compromise was even extended to the Social Democrats, and at one point it was thought that Baldesi, the reformist socialist, would also join the Cabinet. With considerable astuteness, Mussolini approached him via one of his lieutenants, and after Baldesi had declared he would be happy to accept the post, Mussolini represented the whole affair as a personal démarche by one of his friends… at which point Baldesi decided not to enter the Cabinet after all. And if Mussolini doesn't have any representatives of the reformist Confederazione Generale del Lavoro in the Government, it is principally because Right-wing elements in the Cabinet are opposed to it. But now that the CGL has become

independent of any revolutionary party, he still thinks that it is necessary to have one of its representatives in his "Grand National Coalition",.

In these events we can see a compromise between the traditional political cliques and various sections of the ruling class, i.e., the landed proprietors, and the financial and industrial capitalists. And all of these have been rallied to the new State regime by a movement receiving strong support from the petty bourgeoisie.

As far as we are concerned, Fascism is a way of retaining power by using all means at the disposal of the ruling classes, including even the utilisation of the lessons of the first victorious proletarian revolution, the Russian Revolution. Faced with a severe economic crisis, power can not be maintained by the forces of the State alone. There must also be a united party, a centralised counter-revolutionary organisation. The Fascist Party, in relation to the bourgeoisie, is somewhat like the Russian Communist Party in relation to the proletariat – an organ for the direction and control of the State machine which is solidly organised and disciplined. The Fascist Party in Italy has placed its political agents inside every important branch of the State. It is the bourgeois organ for the control of the State during the period of capitalist decadence. This is, in my opinion, an adequate historical interpretation of Fascism and the recent events in Italy.

The first measures of the new government show that no fundamental changes are going to be made to the traditional institutions. I do not mean, of course, that the present situation favours the proletarian and socialist movement, and yet I do predict that Fascism will end up as liberal and democratic. All that the working class has ever received from Democratic governments are proclamations and promises. For example the Mussolini Government has assured us that it will respect the liberty of the press. It has been careful to add though that the press must be deserving of such liberty. What does this mean? It means that despite the government promising to respect the liberty of the press, it will allow its militarist Fascist organisations, if they feel so inclined, to gag the Communist newspapers. Indeed, there have already been a few cases of this happening. Conversely, we must recognise that although the Fascist government has made some concessions to bourgeois liberals, we cannot pin much hope on Mussolini's assurance that he will transform his military organisations into athletic associations or something similar (we have heard about dozens of Fascists being arrested because they refused to obey the demobilisation order issued by Mussolini).

What has been the effect of these events upon the proletariat? It has found itself in the position of playing no important role in the struggle and has had to behave in an almost passive manner. So far as the Communist Party is concerned, it has always known that the victory of Fascism equates with defeat of the revolutionary movement. Since today it is an indubitable fact that we are incapable of launching an actual offensive against Fascist reaction, the essential question is whether the tactics of the Communist Party have managed to derive the maximum possible gains, from a defensive vantage point, as far as the defence of the Italian proletariat is concerned. If, instead of a compromise between the bourgeoisie and the Fascisti there had been a military conflict, a civil war, the proletariat might have been able to play a certain role, by creating a united front for the general strike and scoring some successes. But as matters stood, the proletariat wasn't able to take part in the action. However important recent events might be, one mustn't lose sight of the fact that the change in the political scene has been much less sudden than might appear. There had been a daily accumulation of events leading up to the final coup of the Fascisti. As an example of the battle between the State and the

Fascisti if suffices to mention the clash in Cremona, during which there were six casualties. The workers fought only in Rome, where the revolutionary working class forces clashed with the Fascisti and many were wounded. The next day the Royal Guard occupied the working class quarters and deprived it of all means of defence, and thus made it possible for the Fascisti to go in and shoot down the workers in cold blood. Amongst recent struggles in Italy this has been the most bloody.

When the Communist Party proposed a General Strike, the Confederazione Generale del Lavoro disarmed the proletariat by urging them not to follow the dangerous exhortations of the revolutionary groups. At the very moment when our press was prevented from appearing, they spread the rumour that the Communist Party had been dissolved.

The most damaging incident involving our Party in Rome was the invasion by the Fascisti of the editorial offices of Il Comunista. On the 31st October, while the city was occupied by 100,000 Fascisti, the printing plant was entered by a band of Fascisti just as the paper was coming out. All staff were able to evade the Fascisti by leaving through emergency exits with the exception of comrade Togliatti, our editor in chief, who was in his office. The Fascisti entered and seized him. Boldly he declared that he was the chief editor of Il Comunista, and he was stood up against the wall to be shot. As the Fascisti pushed back the crowd in preparation for his execution, they were informed that the other editors were escaping over the roofs. Only when the aggressors set off in pursuit was our comrade able to make his escape. Not that this prevented our comrade, only a few days later, from speaking at a meeting in Turin to celebrate the anniversary of the Russian Revolution (Applause).

But this is an isolated case. The organisation of our party is in pretty good shape. If the publication of Il Comunista is suspended it is not because of a governmental order, but because the printers refuse to publish it. We have published it illegally in another printing plant. The difficulties in publishing it were not of a technical nature, but economic.

The building of the Ordine Nuovo in Turin has been seized and the arms kept on the premises for its defence have been confiscated. But the paper is now being published elsewhere. In Trieste the police invaded the printing plant of our paper Il Lavoratore, but this paper is appearing illegally as well. The possibilities of legal work still exist for our Party and our situation is not that tragic. But it is difficult to foresee future developments and it is for this reason that I must express myself in a slightly guarded way with regard to the future situation of our party and the progress of our work. The comrade who has just arrived is in charge of an important local organisation of our party, and he expresses the interesting opinion, which is shared by many militants, that it is easier to work now than previously. I do not want to present this opinion as an established fact, but the comrade who voiced it is a militant working among the masses and his view is not to be taken lightly.

I have already told you that the opposition press spread the false news that our party had dissolved. We have denied this and re-established the truth. Our central political organs, our illegal military centre, our trade union centre, are working flat out, and our links with the rural districts have been almost completely re-established. Our comrades in Italy did not for a single moment lose their heads, and they are now making all necessary arrangements. As for the socialists, the Avanti! offices were destroyed by the Fascisti, and it will be some time before the paper comes out again. The headquarters of the Socialist Party in Rome, along with its archives, were completely destroyed by fire. With regard to the stance of the Maximalists in the polemic between the Communist Party and the Confederazione Generale del Lavoro, we have no statement or document whatsoever. As far as the reformists are

concerned, it is clear from the tone of their publications (which continue to be published) that they will ally themselves with the new government.

Regarding the trade union situation, comrade Repossi of our trade union committee thinks it will be possible for this work to continue. This is the latest information we have received, as of November 6th.

I have already talked for quite a while and I won't touch upon the question of the stance our party has taken over the whole period of the development of Fascism, whilst I reserve my right to do so at some other stage in the Congress. With regard to prospects for the future, we believe that Fascism will have to face the discontent provoked by its governmental policies. But, as we know only too well, when one controls not only the State but a military organisation too, it is a lot easier to suppress manifestations of discontent and master unfavourable economic conditions. This factor is also extremely decisive in the case of the dictatorship of the proletariat, when historical developments are in our favour. Undoubtedly the Fascisti are very well organised and have set themselves clear objectives. Under these circumstances one may conclude that the position of the Fascist Government is by no means insecure.

You may have noted that I have not exaggerated the conditions under which our Party has been conducting its struggle. That is because I wished to avoid turning it into a sentimental issue. Perhaps the Communist Party of Italy has committed certain errors. We are entitled to criticise these, but I believe, at the present time, that the attitude of our comrades is proof that we have carried out an important task: the formation of a revolutionary party of the proletariat, basis for the recovery of the working class in Italy.

Italian Communists have a right to be recognised for who they are. Even if their approach hasn't always met with approval, they feel they have nothing to reproach themselves with before the revolutionary movement and the Communist International.

Communist Organization and Discipline (1924)

A premise to the question

The important discussion presently going on within the Russian Communist party throws into relief problems concerning the internal life of revolutionary parties. They also arise within the polemics of communists against other movements who seek to appeal to the proletariat and in the internal debates, and whenever disagreements or particular crises arise within our international communist organisation.

However, as is often the case, it is wrong to pose the question by setting one against the other two allegedly contrasting positions: mechanical dependence on the centre versus majoritarian democracy. The issue should instead be approached with a dialectical and historical method; a "principle", either centralist or democratic, to be used as a fundamental reference point to start from compulsorily in order to solve the problem, would be a nonsense for us Marxists.

In one of "Rassegna Comunista" issues we published an article on the "Democratic Principle", taking into consideration its application both in the State and in the political and union organisations, and demonstrating that for us such a principle has no subsistence whatsoever; we can only speak of a

mechanism of numerical and majoritarian democracy, which can be convenient, for certain organisations, in given historical situations, to introduce or not.

The illusion of democracy is that the majority always knows the best way ahead, and that by voting each individual carries the same weight and influence. A criticism of this idea is implicit in Marxist thought, and this criticism not only rebuts the monumental swindle of bourgeois parliamentarianism, but also applies to the majority principle being utilised within the revolutionary state, the economic organisations of the working class and even to our party, with the exception of situations where alternative organisational choices do not exist. Nobody knows better than we Marxists the importance of organised minorities and the absolute necessity, for he proletarian class and the party that directs it, to act in a strictly disciplined manner and in strict accord with the party's policy.

But if we are thus liberated from any egalitarian and democratic prejudice, that still should not lead us to base our action on a new or different prejudice which is the formal and metaphysical negation of the former. In this sense, we make reference to what written in the first part of the article on the national question (Prometeo no. 4) on how to face the great problems of communism.

The expression used in the texts of the International, "democratic centralism", indicates sufficiently that the practice and rules of Communist parties are somehow at a half way house between absolute centralism and absolute democracy, and comrade Trotsky has drawn attention to this in a letter which has given rise to large debates amongst the Russian comrades.

Let us however say straightaway that if we are not able to seek a solution for revolutionary problems by appealing to the traditional abstract principles of Liberty or Authority, we do not find it any more expedient to look for a solution in a mixture of the two, as if they were fundamental ingredients to be combined.

For us, the communist position on the question of organisation and discipline should be more complete, satisfactory and original. To define it briefly, we have for a long time preferred the expression "organic centralism", thus indicating that we are against any autonomist federalism, and that we accept the term centralism for its meaning of synthesis and unity, as opposed to the almost random and "liberal" association of forces arisen from the most varied independent initiatives. As concerns a more thorough development of the above conclusion, we believe it can be derived, far better than from the continuation of this study of which we are giving here a mere preliminary outline, from texts that are likely to be discussed in the fifth world Communist Congress. In part, the problem is also dealt with in the theses on tactics for the fourth Congress.

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Let us now pass to some historical experiences, which are to be borne in mind in order to avert any simplistic solution of the problem, either that requiring at all moments a poll to prove the rightness of the majority, or that agreeing at any rate and all the time with the central and supreme hierarchies. It's a matter of showing how, by a real and dialectical process, we can actually overcome painful questions, often engendered in everyday party life by disciplinary issues. If we recall the history of the traditional socialist parties and of the IInd International we see that these parties, i.e., the opportunist groups that had their leaderships, used to shelter themselves with the bourgeois principles of democracy and autonomy of the party organs. That nevertheless did not prevent them from using largely the bugbear of

discipline towards majorities and leaders, against the left elements that reacted to opportunist and revisionist tendencies.

This method eventually became the main expedient by which those parties were able to carry out, above all at the outbreak of the world war, the function of instruments for the ideological and political mobilisation of the working class by the bourgeoisie, a function that meant their final degeneration. In this way an out and out dictatorship of the right was built up in these parties; the revolutionaries had to fight it, not because intrinsic principles of internal party democracy were violated, or to oppose the idea of centralisation of the class party (which the Marxist left was in favour of), but because in the concrete situation it was necessary to fight actual anti-proletarian and anti-revolutionary forces. Thus, within those parties the method of creating fractions, opposed to the leaderships and devoted to pitilessly criticise them, was fully justified; this activity would eventually lead to separations and scissions that made the foundation of present day Communist Parties possible. It is therefore obvious that the principle of discipline for discipline is, in given situations, utilised by the counterrevolutionaries to hinder the development leading to the formation of the true class revolutionary party.

The best example of the way to deal with such demagoguery and sophistry was given by Lenin himself. He was a hundred times attacked as dissolver, disintegrator, violator of party rules, but he nevertheless unflinchingly kept his course and perfectly logically became the champion of the sound Marxist criteria of organic centralisation within both the State and the Party of the revolution. On the contrary, the most unfortunate example of a formalistic and bureaucratic enforcement of party discipline was given by the vote Karl Liebknecht felt bound to give on August 4, 1914, in favour of war credits.

It therefore appears certain that in certain moments and in given situations (the likelihood of occurrence and reproduction of which we will have to better examine in due time) the revolutionary direction is marked by a break of discipline and by the hierarchical centralisation of a pre-existent organisation. The situation is no different within trade unions, many of which are still led by counterrevolutionary groups. Again in this case, the leaders are touched by democracy and bourgeois freedom, and side with those who reject with repugnance the communist theses on violence and revolutionary dictatorship. Nevertheless, the communists who fight within such organisms must continually denounce the dictatorial procedures of these bureaucratic mandarins; and the best way to dethrone them is to require in assemblies and ballots the respect of democratic procedures. This does not mean however that we must develop a dogmatic worship for statutory democracy, as we do not rule out at all the possibility, in certain circumstances, of taking the leadership of these organisms by means of a surprise attack. A guidance able to connect us to our revolutionary end cannot therefore be given by the formal and constant homage paid to officially invested leaders, and not even by the impeccable accomplishment of all formalities of an electoral consultation. We repeat that our solution is to be constructed in a quite different and superior way.

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The matter appears to be more difficult and delicate when we pass to consider the internal life of the Parties and of the Communist International. A whole historical process separates us from the situation which, within the old International, determined the constitution of fractions, which were parties within the party, as well as the systematical breaches of discipline and the ensuing scissions, fraught with revolutionary consequences.

Our opinion on this is that the problem of organisation and discipline within the communist movement cannot be resolved without connecting it strictly to the questions of theory, programme and tactics. We could set ourselves the task of designing an ideal model of a revolutionary party, as the final goal we expect to achieve, and try to work out the internal structure and rules of such a party. We would easily arrive at the conclusion that in such a party both fractional struggles and disagreements of peripheral organisms with the directions of the central organ shall not be allowed. We would however have solved nothing if we applied these conclusions, as they are, to our party and the International not certainly because such integral application would not be highly desirable for us all, but because in real life we are not even close to such a picture. Real facts lead us to recognise that the divisions of Communist parties into fractions, and the differences that sometimes turn into conflicts between these parties and the International are not isolated exceptions, but the rule.

Unfortunately the solution is not so simple. We must understand that the International does not yet function as a single world communist party. It is undoubtedly on the way to achieving this result, and has made immense steps forward if compared with the old International. But to be sure that it is actually advancing in the best possible way in the desired direction, and to adapt to such a goal our activity as communists, we must tie our faith in the revolutionary nature and capacity of our glorious world organisation to a continuous work, based on the control and on the rational evaluation of our political choices and of what goes on within our ranks.

To consider a total and perfect discipline, as would derive from a universal consensus as regards also the critical evaluation of all the problems of the movement, not just as a result, but as an infallible means of resolving problems by simply saying: the International is the world Communist Party, and whatever its central organs issue is to be faithfully followed; all this is to sophistically turn the problem upside down.

We must remember, to start our analysis of the question, that communist parties are organisations which one joins "voluntarily". This fact is inherent in the historical nature of parties, rather than the recognition of whatsoever "principle" or "model". As a matter of fact, we cannot force anyone to take out a party card, we cannot conscript communists, we cannot set sanctions against those who do not conform to internal discipline: every member is free to leave us when he wishes. We don't want to say now whether this situation is desirable or not: this is the way it is, and there's no means to change it. It follows therefore that we cannot adopt the formula, undoubtedly full of advantages, of absolute obedience to orders from on high.

The orders coming from central hierarchies are not the starting point, but rather the result of the functioning of the movement, considered as a community. This is not to be understood in a foolishly democratic or legalistic way, but in its realistic and historical sense. By saying this, we are not advocating a "right" for the mass of communists to elaborate the policy which the leaders should follow: we just recognise that it is in these terms that the formation of a class party takes place, and on this basis we will have to approach the study of the question. The schematic conclusions we are getting to are thus outlined.

There is no automatic discipline which can assure enforcement of orders and provisions from on high, "whatever they are"; there is a series of orders and provisions, coming up to the real origins of the movement, able to guarantee the maximum of discipline, i. e., unitary action of the whole organism; and there is a set of other provisions which, though coming from the centre, may compromise both discipline and organisational solidity. It is therefore a question of outlining the task of the steering

organs. Who is to do it? The whole party, the whole organisation will do it; not in the trite and parliamentary sense of a right to be consulted on the "mandate" to give to the elected leaders and on the limits it must have; but in the dialectical sense that consists of tradition, preparation, real continuity of the movement as concerns thought and action. Precisely because we are antidemocratic, we believe that in the matter a minority may have views that correspond better to the interest of the revolutionary process than those of the majority. For sure this only happens exceptionally, and the occurrence of such disciplinary upsets, as happened in the old International and we hope will not take place in our ranks, indicates an extremely serious situation. But even without going to this extreme, there may be other less sharp and critical situations, when it is useful and even essential that groups demand the leading centre to give clarifications on its policies.

This is, in short, the basis for the study of the question, which must be faced by taking into account the true historical nature of the class party: an organism with the tendency to express the unification of all the individual proletarian struggles that arise on the social ground towards a central and common goal; an organism characterised by voluntary adhesions. We thus summarise our thesis, and we believe in this way to be faithful to Marxist dialectics: the action the party carries out, and the tactics it adopts, i.e., the way the party behaves towards the "outside", have in turn consequences on its organisation and "internal" structure. To claim, in the name of an invariable discipline, to keep the party available for "whatever" action, tactics or strategic manoeuvre, that is without limits or boundaries determined beforehand and known to all militants of the organisation, is to fatally compromise it. The maximum desirable unity and disciplinary solidity can be effectively achieved only by facing the problem on this platform, and not by claiming that it is prejudicially solved by a simple rule of mechanical obedience.

Report on Fascism to the Third International (1924)

At the Fourth Congress it is well-known I made a report on fascism at a decisive turning point in the history of fascism in Italy. Our delegation left Italy to be here on the day before Mussolini took power.

Today I need to speak about the matter a second time, and again at a crucial turning point in the development of fascism, prompted, as you know, by the Matteotti affair. Fate has also decreed, same as before, that this event should occur immediately after the Italian delegation's departure for the 5th Congress. In both cases, therefore, the timing of the reports has been appropriate in terms of illustrating the extremely important social and political phenomenon of fascism.

Naturally, I am not going to repeat here everything I said in my first report about the historical development of fascism because there are too many other points I need to cover. I will therefore just briefly recall the main ideas in the critique of fascism I made at that time. I will do so in a schematic way such as to maintain the integrity of what I said at the 4th Congress.

First of all: the origins of fascism.

In terms of its historical origins the fascist movement is linked to a number of groups which advocated Italian intervention in the world war. There were many groups that supported such a policy, including an extreme left composed of renegades from syndicalism, anarchism, and in some cases – especially in

Mussolini's group – renegades from socialism's extreme left. This latter group completely identified itself with the politics of national harmony and military intervention against the Central Powers. And it is very characteristic that this was the group to provide post war fascism with its General Staff. Relations between this earlier political grouping and the great fascist movement we are faced with today can be followed in an unbroken succession.

The date of birth of classic fascist action is November 2, 1920, the day the events in Bologna (Palazzo D'Accursio) took place. I will nevertheless omit this point of a purely historical character and move on to other matters.

Somebody typified the governmental crisis in Italy as follows: fascism represents the political negation of the period in which bourgeois liberal and left democratic politics held sway; it is the harshest form of reaction against the policy of concessions which was put into practice by Giolitti and co in the post-war period. We, on the other hand, are of the opinion that the two periods are dialectically linked: that the former attitude of the Italian bourgeoisie during the State crisis brought about by the post-war period, was nothing but a natural preparation for Fascism.

In this period there a proletarian offensive threatened. The forces of the bourgeoisie weren't sufficient to withstand a direct attack. They therefore had to resort to cunning manoeuvres to avoid the engagement; and while these manoeuvres were being put into effect by the politicians of the left, fascism was able to prepare its subsequent massive instruments of coercion and lay the groundwork for the second phase, when it would take the offensive itself to deal a death blow to the revolutionary forces. It isn't possible here to go over every argument that supports this interpretation. Again, what I said at the 4th Congress still holds true. Another fact. Fascism starts out from the agricultural districts. This is extremely typical. The attack on positions held by the revolutionary proletariat starts in the peasant zones. Bologna is a rural centre. It is the capital city of a large agricultural area in the Po valley, and it was here that fascism started its triumphal tour through the whole of Italy, spreading out in various directions. In our first report we gave a geographical description of this triumphal tour. Suffice here to recall that fascism only attacks the industrial centres and the large cities during a second phase.

But although it is true that fascist action began in the non-industrial areas, we should not draw the conclusion that the fascist movement was created to serve the interests of the landed bourgeoisie, the large landowners. Quite the contrary. Behind this movement there stands the interests of big industry, commerce, and high finance as well. It is an attempt at a unitary counter-revolutionary offensive of all of the bourgeois forces. This is another thesis which I will be hammering out and returning to it many times in the course of this report. One should add – third point – the fact of the mobilization of middle classes. At first sight, going by external appearances, fascism does not give the impression of being a movement of the above mentioned upper social strata, i.e., the great landowners and the big capitalist bourgeoisie, but rather a movement of the petty and middle bourgeoisie, of ex-servicemen, intellectuals and all those classes which the proletariat has not yet managed to draw into its orbit and rally around the watchword of revolutionary dictatorship. Within these classes a powerful ideological, political and organisational mobilization has been developed; their discontent and their restlessness have been organised. They were told: you are the third class to enter the battlefield, that is, a new force that not only rebels against the proletariat, but also against the old bourgeoisie and its traditional politicians. During the post-war crisis the proletariat didn't manage to enforce its revolutionary policy, and seize the power which was slipping out of the hands of the old ruling class. Now a third class appears on the

scene. Such is the external appearance which fascism likes to give itself. But in reality it is a mobilisation of the middle classes, driven by and under the leadership of the conservative forces of the big bourgeoisie, with the cooperation and help of the State apparatus. Hence the dual face of fascism: firstly, it defends the interests of the big bourgeoisie, that is, the interests of the upper class; secondly, it mobilises the middle classes, that is, the important social forces of the small and middle bourgeoisie, in defence of those interests. In my first report I made a critique of fascist ideology. I asked: what is the ideology on which this movement based? Nowadays it has become a commonplace to state that fascism has no theory, has done nothing to outline a new political theory. It claims to have accomplished a revolution, to have given a new face to social and political struggle. In actual fact, from a theoretical point of view, it has created absolutely nothing that could serve as the constructive basis for the programme of such a revolution; of this self styled top to toe renewal of Italian society which, according to Mussolini, may tomorrow be extended to societies in other countries. It is a fact that to begin with fascism possesses a program that borrows a number of points from the programs of the extreme left. But this program exclusively serves the needs of the mobilisation which we referred to earlier. It is quickly forgotten, in fact transformed into its exact opposite, as soon as fascism gets into power; and from that moment its program of renewal fizzles out.

Fascism is not a revolutionary movement. It is a purely conservative movement for the defence of the established bourgeois order. It does not produce a new programme. However, as soon as we move from the ideological to the organisational sphere, we can see that it is bringing in something new. We can immediately see that there is something here that the bourgeoisie in Italy, and in other countries, haven't so far employed. Although the Italian bourgeoisie had great political leaders, professional politicians, parliamentarians who could be assured of a great popular following at elections, and although it had its great liberal party, its policy used to be characterised by the fact that it lacked any organisational force. The liberal party had a clear and concrete doctrine, a well-defined historical tradition, and an ideology which was entirely adequate from a bourgeois point of view. But it lacked organisation. Fascism completely turned this state of affairs on its head. It brings nothing new in ideological terms (we will see soon enough the worth of its critique of the ideology of old bourgeois parties). But it does deploy a new factor which the old parties completely lacked : a powerful campaigning apparatus, powerful both in terms of its political organisation and its military organisation.

This shows that in the present period of grave capitalist crisis the State apparatus is no longer sufficient to defend the bourgeoisie. It needs to be backed up by a well-organised party which is capable of operating on a countrywide level and which struggles to gain support from the middle classes, and maybe even to sidle up to certain strata of the working class. During this crisis the bourgeoisie can face out the impending revolution only thanks to the mobilisation of the non-bourgeois classes. What relations exist between fascism and the proletariat? Fascism is by its nature an anti-socialist, and therefore anti-proletarian, movement. Since its inception fascism has presented itself as the destroyer of even the most minor conquests of the working class. Nevertheless it is incorrect to identify fascism with the traditional reaction of the extreme right: with its states of siege, its terror, its emergency laws and its prohibition of the revolutionary organisations. Fascism goes farther. It is a more modern movement. And being more sophisticated, it also endeavours to gain influence amongst the proletarian masses, and to this end it unhesitatingly accepts the principles of trade union organisation. It tries to create workers' economic organisations.

Clearly these trade unions bear no comparison with free trade unions. Nevertheless, in my opinion, we must establish that the very existence of fascist unions represents a very significant argument against revolutionary syndicalism, which sees the economic organisation as the decisive weapon of class struggle. The facts show that this weapon can just as well be exploited for counter-revolutionary ends.

Of course the fascist trade union movement is to be distinguished from the real trade union movement by one very characteristic feature, i.e., it recruits amongst the ranks of all classes and not just amongst the working class because it is actually a form of organisation based on the sectors of production. The intention is to create parallel organisations of workers and employers on the basis of class collaboration.

We have thus reached a point where fascism and democracy converge. In short, fascism is playing the old game of the left wing bourgeois parties and social-democracy, that is, calling on the proletariat to declare a civil truce. To achieve this end it tries to form trade unions of industrial workers and of agricultural workers which are then manoeuvred into a de facto collaboration with the bosses' organisations. The sole intention of this action, of course, is to annihilate the revolutionary organisations and to allow the proletarian masses to be fully exploited by the capitalists. And yet the upper propertied strata does not portray fascism as a brutal method of oppressing the workers, on the contrary it is presented as a way of organising the entire productive forces of the country, with the recognition of this requirement taking the form of the collaboration of all economic groups in the "national interest".

Obviously what underlies all this is the exploitation of nationalistic and patriotic ideology. This isn't something entirely new. During the war, the formula of the submission of all particular interests to the general interest of the whole country had already been widely utilised in the national interest. Fascism is therefore reverting to an old programme of bourgeois politics. However, this programme appears in a form which somehow echoes the programme of social democracy but on the other hand really does contain something new, that is a powerful political and military organisation at the service of the conservative forces.

The conclusion I drew in the report I made to the 4th Congress was that the fascist programme is actually based on a fundamental historical and social contradiction. Fascism would like to reconcile and silence all economic and social conflicts within society. But this is just the outward appearance. In reality it endeavours to achieve unity within the bourgeoisie, a coalition between the upper layers of the propertied classes in which individual contrasts between the interests of the different groups of the bourgeoisie and of the different capitalist enterprises are smoothed out.

On the economic terrain, fascism is entirely stuck in the rut of old bourgeois liberalism: it rejects any State intervention in the economy; preaches unlimited freedom of action for business; and advocates the free interplay of the forces which stem from capitalism. However this causes it to get caught up in an insoluble contradiction: it is extremely difficult to put into practice a unitary politics of the bourgeois class so long as there is complete freedom among economic organisations to develop in whatever way they choose, and so long as individual groups of capitalists are completely free to compete among themselves. The conclusion we draw from this is that fascism is destined to fail due to the economic anarchy of capitalism despite it holding the reins of government firmly in its grasp, despite it commanding the powerful weapon of the state apparatus, and despite the fact it has an organisation extending throughout the entire peninsula which mobilises the middle classes, and to a certain extent the proletariat as well, in the interests of the united bourgeoisie. The mighty fascist apparatus may give the impression that fascist power will last, but at its very roots this power suffers from a fundamental

contradiction, because fascism hasn't shown that it possess any new way of overcoming the capitalist crisis.

Today, same as before, we believe that the capitalist crisis will not be overcome by "heroic" means. I have repeated here the fundamental concepts for the analysis of fascism which I expounded in my first report. The conclusions we have drawn are the same as before, and they are fully confirmed by almost two years of fascist dictatorship.

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Let us return to the historical phase we were in at the time of the 4th Congress, when the fascists took power: the conclusion of the general offensive against the revolutionary forces and against the old detainers of power in Italy, the March on Rome. In that report I hadn't yet touched on the controversial question that arose in our ranks during the 4th Congress, although comrade Zinoviev mentioned it in his speech. What happened during our absence from Italy? A coup or a comedy? I will briefly take up this issue although in my opinion there were three options: coup, comedy – or revolution?

Let us remind ourselves of the characteristic features of the fascist seizure of power. There was no armed struggle. There was merely a mobilisation of fascism which threatened a revolutionary conquest of power, and a sort of defensive mobilisation of the State, which at a certain point actually declared a state of emergency. But the State didn't put up any real resistance. There was no armed struggle. Instead of fighting, a compromise was reached, and at a certain moment the struggle was, so to speak, put on hold, postponed. This was not because the King, at the right moment, refused to sign the decree of martial law, but because the compromise had evidently been prepared a long time before. The fascist government therefore established itself in the normal way: after the resignation of the Facta government, the King summoned Mussolini to form a new cabinet. The leader of this self-styled revolution reached Rome from Milan in a sleeping car, and at every stop along the way he was cheered by official representatives of the State. Why one cannot talk of a revolution is not merely because power was taken without an insurrectional attack, but because of all the other reasons we touched on earlier when considering the historical significance of fascism. From a social point of view fascism does not represent a major change; it does not represent the historical negation of the old bourgeois methods of government, it merely represents the completely logical and dialectical continuation of the preceding stage of so-called democratic and liberal bourgeois government.

We resolutely oppose the statement, repeated over and over again by the fascists, that their assumption of power can be equated with revolution. In his speeches Mussolini says, "we made a revolution". But when we retort, "there was no revolution, no struggle, no revolutionary terror, because an out and out 'seizure of power' never took place, and nor was there a real annihilation of the enemy", then Mussolini answers with an argument which, from an historical point of view, is quite laughable: "we still have time for that", he says, "we will complete our revolution in due course". But a revolution cannot be 'put on ice' ; not even the most daring and powerful of leaders has that kind of power. Such arguments aren't enough to refute the critique which points out the revolution never took place. You cannot say, "it's true, these events haven't yet happened, but that can be remedied whenever we want". It is of course always possible that new battles will take place. But the March on Rome was certainly not a battle, not a revolution. It is also said, "there has, nevertheless, been an unusual kind of changeover of governmental power, a coup", but I won't dwell on this point because in the end just boils down to a play on words. Also, when we use the term "coup d'Ètat" we understand it to mean not

merely a change of government personnel, a mere change in the general staff of the party in power, but rather an action that eliminates, in a violent way, the underlying orientation of every government which had ruled up to that time. Fascism didn't do that. Fascism talks a lot about how it is against parliamentarism, and about how antidemocratic and antiparliamentarian it is. But, taken as a whole, its social programme is the same old programme of democratic lies, just an ideological weapon for the conservation of bourgeois rule. Even before fascism took power it very rapidly became "parliamentarian"; indeed it ruled for a year and a half without dispersing the old lower house which was composed of a majority of non-fascists, and even of anti-fascists. Displaying the flexibility so characteristic of bourgeois politicians, this house then hastened to put itself at Mussolini's disposal in order to legalize his position and to grant him as many votes of confidence as he deigned to ask of them. Even the first Mussolini cabinet – as he frequently recalls in his "left wing speeches" – was not built on purely fascist foundations. It included representatives of the most significant of the remaining bourgeois parties, ranging from Giolitti's party and the Popolari, to the democratic left. It was therefore a coalition government. Here then is what the so-called coup has begotten! A party with only 35 MPs in the House took power and occupied the overwhelming majority of ministerial and vice ministerial posts.

There is another important historical event which occurred in Italy which is nothing to do with the March on Rome and which also needs to be highlighted. I refer to the occupation of Italy as a whole by the fascists; an occupation set in train by previous events and whose geographical spread can be clearly plotted. The seizure of power by Mussolini was merely the acknowledgement of a previously existing relationship of forces. Every government raised to power – above all Facta's – had given fascism free rein. It was the latter which really governed the country; it was given a completely free hand and had the state apparatus at its disposal. The Facta cabinet was only in charge for two months, awaiting the moment when fascism would deem it proper to take power.

These are the reasons why we used the term "Comedy". At any rate, we completely stand by our statement that this is not a revolution. What has happened is rather a change in the bourgeois leadership; a change, moreover, which was prepared for in advance, and accomplished gradually. In the economic and social field, it does not represent, not even in the realm of domestic policy, any kind of transformation of the programme of Italian bourgeoisie. As a matter of fact the great shock wave of the so-called fascist revolution, both before and after the March on Rome, does not rest on the official utilisation of the state apparatus, but rather on illegal reaction flanked by the tacit support of the police, local administration, bureaucracy and army; tacit support – and we need to be emphatic about this – which was already there, in abundance, even before the fascists took power.

In Mussolini's first speeches to the House, he said, "I could throw you out of this room with the support of my troops. I could do it, but I'm not going to. The house can continue to perform its duties, provided it is ready to collaborate with me". The overwhelming majority of the old House was quite willing to bow to the orders of the new chief.

As a matter of fact, no new legislation was introduced after the fascists took power. In the realm of domestic policy, no emergency laws were enacted. Certainly there have been political persecutions (which we will discuss later) but officially the laws have not been modified. There have been no exceptional decrees like those approved by bourgeois governments during revolutionary phases, such as for example the ones enacted by Crispi and Pelloux, who periodically sought protection against the

revolutionary parties and their leaders by adopting a policy consisting of states of emergency, military jurisdiction and repressive measures.

Fascism, on the other hand, continues to use the same original and modern technique against the proletarian forces it used before taking power. They have even declared that they will disband their illegal assault troops as soon as the other parties have done the same. In reality, the fascist fighting corps have disappeared as organisations external to the State only to then be inserted into the state apparatus through the formation of the "National Militia". And now, as before, this armed force remains at the disposal of the fascist party, and of Mussolini in person. It represents a new organisation, officially absorbed within the state apparatus. It is the pillar on which fascism rests.

On the agenda the question remains: should we allow this organisation to disappear or not? Can fascism be required to rely on constitutional means in domestic politics rather than on these new organs? Of course fascism hasn't so far acknowledged the old norms of constitutional law, and at present the Militia is the harshest enemy of all those who aspire to bring down fascist rule.

Legally speaking, there are no emergency laws in our country. When in February 1923 thousands of Italian communists were arrested, we expected fascism to start a legal campaign against us, to take drastic steps and to obtain the harshest sentences. But the situation developed in a very favourable way and we were judged according to the old democratic laws. The Italian penal code, the work of a representative of the extreme bourgeois left, minister Zanardelli, is extremely liberal and leaves much room for interpretation. With regard to crimes to do with politics and beliefs it is particularly mild and flexible. It was therefore easy for us to assume the following position: "fascism getting rid of its enemies and taking dictatorial measures against us is quite understandable. It is perfectly right to judge us and find us guilty because we are communists, and because we aim to overthrow the existing government by revolutionary means. However, from a legal point of view, what we do is not prohibited. Other things certainly are prohibited, but you have absolutely no evidence of the alleged conspiracy, of the criminal association on which the charge is based". Not only did we stick to this line, but thanks to it we were acquitted by the tribunals, because it was absolutely impossible to convict us on the basis of the existing laws.

We could therefore see that the judiciary and police apparatus, from fascism's point of view, were not up to the task. Fascism had got hold of the state apparatus but was unable to transform it to suit its purposes. It did not know how to get rid of the communist leaders through court rulings. It had its cadres, it own terrorist organisations, but within the justice system it did not deem it necessary to employ new weapons. This is for me a further demonstration of the total inadequacy of bourgeois-liberal guarantees and of liberal justice in the struggle against the freedom of movement of the proletariat. It is true that in such circumstances our defence had to adopt legal means as well, but if the enemy possesses an illegal organisation, by means of which it can resolve the issue in quite a different way, these democratic guarantees lose any meaning.

Fascism sticks to the old policy of left democratic lies, of equality before the law for all, and so on and so forth. This does not stop it from continuing to seriously persecute the proletariat. I merely wish to say, with reference to the purely political trials by which the leaders of the revolutionary proletariat were supposed to be crushed, that the new situation created by fascism hasn't changed the classic system of the democratic-bourgeois governments at all. A revolution, on the other hand, is always characterized by the transformation of the political laws.

I will now briefly deal with the events which occurred after fascism took power.

First of all a few words on the economic situation in Italy. Fascists are continually telling us that the economic crisis of 1920 and 1921 was followed, after they took power, by a period of economic growth. They maintain that in the past two years the situation has stabilized, economical equilibrium has returned, order has been re-established and the whole situation has undergone a marked improvement. These are supposed to be the advantages of fascism for all social classes, the blessing for which the Italian people is indebted to fascism. This official position is supported by a full scale mobilisation of the whole of the press, and by the employment of all the means a party firmly entrenched in power has at its disposal. But this is just an official lie. The current economic situation in Italy is bad. The rate of exchange of the lira has plummeted to the lowest level since the end of the war: it is worth just 4.3 U.S. cents, i.e., fluctuations in the exchange rate have seen it drop to the lowest value so far recorded. Fascism hasn't been able to improve the situation. It is true that, according to Mussolini, without him the lira's rate of exchange would have dropped even lower, but this argument cannot be taken seriously.

The fascists also claim to have re-established a balanced budget. This is true from a material point of view: after all, it is well known that with State Budgets you can demonstrate whatever you want. In any case, fascists did not contradict the statement made by the Opposition's experts, according to whom if the price of coal had not dropped compared with the 1920-21 prices, and if war costs, which have to be discharged over a given period of time, had not been recorded in a different way, the budget deficit would be far higher today than in 1920-21, as can be proven by the figures alone.

The index of the economic situation certainly shows widespread decline. As regards the unemployment figures they were very high in 1920, and particularly in 1921, and it is true they are lower now, but the data over the last few months shows that unemployment is rising again, and that the industrial crisis has not been overcome once and for all. In the business world the situation is extremely tense; trade is encountering major difficulties. This is proven by the statistics on bankruptcies which show an enormous increase compared with recent years. Also the cost of living index in large cities is rising. It is quite clear that the whole economic situation in Italy is getting worse; it hasn't stabilized at all. And what fascism has produced, by means of enormous pressure exerted by the bourgeoisie, is only an external stability. The official indices show that all that has been obtained is just the expression of this terrible pressure exerted on the proletariat; that all that has been accomplished has been at the expense of the proletarian class and solely in the interest of the ruling class. Nor should it be forgotten that the very existence of this pitiless pressure makes it very likely that there will be an eruption of those very classes which were sacrificed in the fascist attempt to stabilize the economic situation in the exclusive interest of the big bourgeoisie.

I will now move on to the fascist government's attitude towards the workers. I pointed out earlier that the great political trials staged against us have provided evidence of the inadequacy of the fascist State's legal apparatus. Nevertheless, whenever they have been able to accuse comrades of committing common-law offences, rather than those the law considers 'political', they have come down very heavily indeed. Numerous clashes have occurred, and are still taking place, between fascists and proletarians (mainly communists); and in such skirmishes there are generally casualties on both sides. It is a notorious fact that, long after the fascists took power, fascists who had killed workers were still being granted complete immunity, even when the proof against them was conclusive. Workers, on the other hand, who wounded or killed fascists in self defence received extremely severe sentences. The amnesty

which has been decreed is only to the advantage of those who committed common-law offences for national ends: in other words it is an amnesty for fascist assassins, while those common criminals who pursue anti-national ends, i.e., who fight against fascism, must expect the harshest punishments. It is an unalloyed class amnesty.

A later amnesty would reduce sentences to between 2 and 3 years; but it is important to know that our comrades are generally sentenced to 10, 15 or even 20 years of imprisonment. Hundreds and hundreds of workers, Italian comrades, are today in jail because they didn't manage to get over the border quickly enough after armed confrontations with the fascists; confrontations they'd participated in but which were almost inevitably provoked by the fascists. Thus the present Italian government is carrying out the most ferocious oppression against the working class. Whenever the working class tries to defend itself against the fascist terror, legal action immediately follows, in a way that does not differ much from the old political trials for "treason". In strictly legal terms, the right of the communist party, anarchist movement, etc, to exist continues to be guaranteed by the law as before. What isn't possible... in theory?

And it is pretty much the same as far as the press is concerned. Officially, there is still freedom of the press. All parties are allowed to publish their organs but, although there is no legal pretext for it, the police authorities can prohibit the distribution of a newspaper. Up to now only communists have been the target of this prohibition. Our daily paper, Il Lavoratore of Trieste, has been prohibited in accordance with an Austrian law still enforced in that town. Thus the old Austrian laws are used against the revolutionaries, that is, against those who during the war, due to their defeatism, were called accomplices of Austria!

To this we can add the suppression of newspapers by armed bands, the raids on editorial offices by which the publication of proletarian press is made impossible, the sabotage of journalists associations, and so on and so forth. Even now our newspapers, as well as those of the opposition, are still often destroyed or burnt when they reach their destination.

The fascist government exerts a terrible pressure on the trade unions. Workers are forced to join the fascist unions. The red trade union offices have been destroyed. But despite this, they haven't managed to rally the masses in the fascist economical organizations. The figures published by the fascists are a bluff. In fact the proletariat is today unorganized from a trade union point of view. At times the masses go along with the movements led by fascists unions but only because it offers them their only opportunity to strike. Many workers, many categories, which in their overwhelming majority are not in favour of the fascist unions, and which in the elections for the internal commissions vote in their overwhelming majority against fascists and for the revolutionary candidates, have to join the fascist trade union just so they can at least try to fight the bourgeoisie. Thus a grave conflict ensues within the fascist trade union movement. It can't avoid strikes and is drawn into the struggle against the fascist organisations of bosses. This conflict within the fascist and government organs is always resolved to the detriment of the workers. Hence the discontent, the grave crisis that the leaders of the fascist union movement have been unable to conceal at their recent meetings. Their attempts at organising the industrial proletariat have completely failed. Their action aims to create a pretext – a superfluous pretext – for putting a break on the activity of free unions and keeping the proletariat in a state of disorganisation.

Recently the Government has taken steps against the free trade unions as well: official State control of the internal organisational and administrative work of unions has been introduced. This is a very serious step, but it does not change the essence of the situation as the work of the free unions had already been almost completely paralysed by earlier measures.

Free unions continue to exist, as do the Chambers of Labour (Camere del Lavoro), the trade guilds, etc., but it is absolutely impossible to provide accurate figures regarding their membership, even when they have managed to remain in contact with the masses. This is because orderly and continuous collection of contributions, and recruitment drives, are almost completely forbidden. Up to now it hasn't been possible in Italy to reconstruct the cadres of the trade union organisations. But the great advantage of fascism is supposedly that there will be no more strikes. This, for the bourgeoisie and the philistines of the petty bourgeoisie, is the real clincher.

Back in 1920, when there was no fascism, they say, masses of workers could be seen taking to the streets every day. Here a strike, there a procession, open confrontations breaking out. Nowadays there are no longer any strikes, there is no longer any unrest. In the factories the work is no longer interrupted, and peace and order reign. This is the employers' point of view.

Nevertheless, strikes are still called, and during these strikes incidents worthy of mention have occurred arising out of the relations existing between fascist trade unions, revolutionary workers, government and employers. The situation is definitely unstable. The continued presence of class struggle is demonstrated by a number of significant events. Indeed there is no doubt, despite the obstacles, that it is on the rise. The action of the fascist government is also directed against workers in the State owned enterprises. For example, out and out terror is being used against the railway workers. A great number of them have been sacked. Of course the first ones to be gotten rid of have been active members of the revolutionary organizations (the railway workers' organization used to be one of the trade unions whose leadership was much further to the left). The Government has acted in the same way towards several other State-linked enterprises.

The fascist riposte: but we have given proletarians the 8 hour day! The 8 hour day is now established by law! These are great conquests! Name another bourgeois government of a major country which has promulgated such a law!

But this law contains rider clauses which totally annul the principle of the 8 hour working day. In fact, even if the law were rigorously enforced it would be possible to introduce an average working day which was a lot longer than 8 hours. In any case, the law is not enforced. With the approval of the fascist trade unions the employers do whatever they want within the workplace. And finally, the proletariat in Italy had already conquered the 8 hour day with its own organisations in any case; indeed, several federations had obtained a working day which was even shorter. We aren't, therefore, talking about a "gift" bestowed by fascism on the Italian proletariat. In fact we could say that unemployment is increasing because the bosses are forcing the workers in the factories to work a lot more than 8 hours a day.

The other "conquests" are not even worthy of mention. Workers who had previously secured certain rights, a certain freedom of movement and action in the factories, are now subjected to an iron discipline. The Italian worker works today under the knout.

As regards the economic situation, all available figures show that wages have dropped dramatically after having temporarily reached a level corresponding to the rise in prices of indispensable goods, the prices of which today are 4-5 times higher than before the war. The workers' standard of living has worsened. Certainly "order" has been re-established in the workplace, but it is a reactionary order, an order in the general interest of exploitation by the bosses. There is plenty of tangible proof that all fascist action, including that of their trade unions, is in the service of the employers and of the Union of Industrialists.

As regards the dockers' organisation, despite it being led by notorious opportunists of the likes of Giulietti (or maybe precisely because of this) it managed, up to a certain point, to resist the fascist power and to survive the March on Rome. Existing alongside this organisation there was a dockers' cooperative, called the "Garibaldi" . Just as the new contract was about to be signed between the Government and the ship-owners, the Garibaldi thought it would make a more competitive offer. This would have meant dangerous competition for the ship-owners. It would have forced them to make a more attractive, but less profitable, offer. So what did they do? The group representing the shipping magnates, the maritime kings, issued an order to the fascist government, and the fascist government hastened to carry it out. Using the pretext of a conflict provoked by the local authorities, police officers were sent to occupy the offices of the cooperative and it was forced it to suspend its activities.

The situation is very complicated, but we can sum it up as follows: it is clear that the fascist state apparatus is in the service of the capitalist groups fighting against the working class. Today the whole life of the proletariat, the whole industrial life of Italy, provides the most damning proof, and clearest demonstration, that the development of government into a steering organ and business committee of capitalists has been realised in its most extreme form in our country. We should also be aware that similar phenomena are affecting the farm labourers. I cite as an example the strike led by the fascist trade union which was fought by the so-called "rice weeders" in the fields of Lomellina. Launched with the approval of the fascist union, it was a strike which would eventually see the full might of reactionary terror hurled against it; the strikers, women all, were attacked by the police and themilitia, that is, by the organs of the fascist government, and the strike was stifled in blood.

There are hundreds of similar examples giving a picture of the situation in which the Italian proletariat finds itself today. The fascist trade union policy allows workers to try and conduct struggles; but as soon as there is anyactual conflict between workers and bosses, the government intervenes with brutal violence in the interests of capitalist exploitation.

What is the relationship between fascism and the middle classes? A whole series of events gives damning proof of the disappointment of the middle classes. At first they saw fascism as their movement, as the start of a new historical period. They believed that the rule of the big bourgeoisie and its political leaders had been brought to an end, and without the need for any proletarian dictatorship; without the Bolshevik revolution which had caused them to tremble in 1919 and 1920. They believed that the rule of the middle classes, of the ex-servicemen, of those who had fought a victorious war, was about to be realised; they thought they could create a powerful organisation which would enable them to take up the reins of the State. In order to defend their own interests they wanted to develop an autonomous policy which would fight against both capitalist and proletarian dictatorships. The bankruptcy of this program is shown by the measures adopted by the fascist government; measures which not only hit the proletariat extremely hard, but also the middle classes who were raving about having created their own power, their own dictatorship, and who had even been drawn into demonstrations against the old

apparatus of bourgeois rule, which they thought to have brought down with the fascist revolution. All of fascism's governmental measures show that it is in the service of the big bourgeoisie, of industrial, financial and commercial capital, and that its power is directed against the interests of every other class; not just the proletariat, but the middle classes as well.

For instance, measures introduced in the housing field have hit all classes indiscriminately. During the war a moratorium was introduced which imposed certain limitations on the rent increases landlords could impose. The fascists have abolished these, giving landlords the option of raising rents. True, after having re-established unlimited freedom in this field, they had to enact a new law which limited the rights of landlords. But this new law is of a purely demagogic nature. Its only purpose is to placate the anger the first law aroused. Yet there remains a huge shortage of lodgings. The same applies to the educational reform. This was defined by Mussolini as "the most fascist of all reforms", and was drafted by the famous philosopher Gentile. From a technical point of view it is a reform which has to be taken seriously. To resolve the issue according to the new criteria, truly remarkable work has been done. But the whole tendency of the reform is aristocratic: a good education for the sons of workers, the poor, the petty bourgeois is rendered impossible. It means that only the well-to-do, that is, those families which can afford the high school fees for their children, will enjoy the privilege of culture. And that is why this reform has been very badly received by the middle class and petty bourgeoisie, and even by teachers and professors, whose economic condition has further deteriorated, and who are now subjected to a stricter discipline.

Another example: to solve the problem of bureaucratic reform, fascism has carried out a review of the salaries of State white-collar workers according to the principle: decrease of the lowest salaries, increase of the salaries of senior functionaries. This reform has provoked a feeling of discontent towards the fascist government amongst the junior ranks of the State bureaucracy as well.

There is also the question of taxes, which I won't deal with in depth here, but which clearly shows the class character of the fascist government. Basically, the latter wanted to rebalance the budget. However, it didn't take any measures against the capitalists in pursuit of this aim. In order to raise more revenue it simply increased the burden weighing down on the proletariat, on consumers and on the middle and petty bourgeoisie.

One of the main reasons for discontent towards fascism resides in its treatment of the rural population, small tenants, etc.

Fascism is the enemy of the industrial proletariat but it has caused a no less marked worsening in the conditions of the peasant class. Previous governments had already taken measures to regulate land taxation but they were never applied. The fascist minister De Stefani has now tried to enforce them in such a draconian way that an unbearable fiscal burden now weighs heavily upon the whole of small land property, even affecting the incomes of small farmers, tenants and farm hands. This is aggravated by municipal and provincial taxes, which local socialist administrations in the past had managed to manoevre in an anti-capitalistic direction which was favourable to the workers. Nowadays taxes on cattle and other taxes are instead causing a severe decline in the condition of small farmers. Recently the tax on wine was slightly reduced, a reduction which aimed to blunt the sharpness of discontent in the countryside. But all these taxes represent, now as before, a terrible burden for the rural population.

I will just give the example of a comrade from the Italian delegation who is himself a small farmer. For his 12 hectare plot, which he part owns, part rents, he must pay £.1,500, that is 12,5% of an output of £.12,000. Just imagine how intensively he has to farm that plot to ensure the existence of his family and employees!

A noteworthy phenomenon has taken place in the South of Italy. Last year, the grape harvest was excellent. Prices fell dramatically, and this year wine is only fetching very low prices. In the South there are many tenant farmers who say they are not making any money. But they grow other crops as well as the grape, and they generally use the other crop to somehow cover production costs, whilst grape growing provides the income on which they live. But, given the current wine prices, taxes and wine production costs, etc., there is nothing left over for them. Production costs and retail prices are the same; the peasant farmer doesn't have enough to provide for his family. He is then forced to get into debt, to ask for advances from the petty bourgeois of the rural centres or from the large landlords, and in the latter case he has to mortgage his land. In the immediate post-war period, raising rents was forbidden by law. This law was abolished by the fascists. Small tenants now have to pay a rent to landlords which has gone up by anything from 100 to 400%. Even the clauses concerning the division of the crop between tenant and landlord have been drastically modified to the advantage of the latter. In order to survive the small landowner is forced to sell part of his land, or give up the plot for which he paid half cash, half-loan. If one day he can't pay, he immediately loses both the acquired land and the money already paid out. What is presently taking place is an out and out expropriation of small farmers. Those who paid high prices for their land in the post war period, and are now without cash, are being forced to sell for less than they paid. I repeat, this is a real expropriation of small landowning farmers by large landowners, a phenomenon that tends to become increasingly widespread. Every measure the fascist government has taken in this sphere has had but one consequence: the worsening of the condition of the rural proletariat.

Formerly the socialists conducted an agitation whose methods we couldn't entirely endorse: they tried to get the government to undertake major land reclamation works to occupy the farm workers, to fight unemployment, and thus improve labour's bargaining position in the countryside. The fascist government has now suspended these works in order to balance the budget. A huge number of rural workers have consequently been thrown onto the labour market, poverty in the countryside has increased and the proletariat's standard of living has further declined.

Discontent has been directed at the government. The fascists have talked at length about the parasitism of the old red cooperatives, which by means of parliamentary pressure in favour of public works used to systematically exploit the State, but now they are doing exactly the same thing. They are trying, with their fascist cooperatives (almost the entire cooperative apparatus of the socialists has been forcibly transferred to them) to carry out a similar policy in the interests of the new fascist bureaucracy.

The dire conditions which has been foisted on the peasantry by fascism means this class now sees the fascist government as a power which is hostile to its interests and it is gradually taking up a more combative stance. There have already been instances of armed peasant revolts against taxes, and against the fascist municipal administrations, which have resulted in bloody clashes. The fact that this has happened is extremely important and it characterises the situation very well.

Having commented on fascism's social policy, I'll now move to consider its policy in other fields, starting with religion. The stance fascism takes on this issue is an example of its theoretical flexibility. To begin

with, in order to exploit certain attitudes traditionally held by the middle classes and by intellectuals, fascism adopted an anticlerical programme; thus did it fight the catholic Popular Party in order to undermine its influence in the countryside. In a second period fascism started competing with the Popolari, and became the official party of religion and of Catholicism. Both from an historical and a theoretical point of view this is quite remarkable. The Vatican is conducting a pro-Fascist policy. It has been very happy with the concessions the fascist government has made by agreeing to improve conditions for the clergy and restoring the teaching of religion in schools. Mussolini, who when he was in Switzerland was the editor of a petty collection of anti-religious books (tuppenny ha'penny pamphlets in which the non-existence of God was demonstrated and you could read about papal misdeeds, the story of the woman elected to the papal throne, and all the other rubbish which for centuries has clouded the minds of workers) this same Mussolini nowadays, whenever he deems it useful, invokes 'the Lord' and proclaims that he is governing 'in God's name'.

The political opportunism of the Vatican hides a fundamental antagonism which is brought out in the clash between the fascists and popolari (the latter representing a kind of Christian democracy). The catholic idea, as such, is opposed to fascism, because fascism represents an exaltation of the fatherland, of the nation, and its deification. From a catholic point of view this is a heresy. Fascism would like to make of Catholicism an Italian national question, but the catholic church's policy is inherently international and universal because it seeks to extend its political and moral influence across all borders. This extremely significant conflict has been resolved, for the time being, thanks to a compromise.

Let us now look briefly at fascist foreign policy. The fascists, as far as international politics is concerned, claim to have found Italy in an extremely dire situation; the country was a laughing stock but after fascism took power, and Italy acquired a strong government, it started to be treated very differently, and its position on the international stage is now very much changed.

Events have nevertheless shown that all fascist foreign policy can do is continue the old tradition of the Italian bourgeoisie. Indeed nothing has changed, nothing new has occurred. After playing his main card in the famous Corfu Incident, Mussolini immediately renounced coups of this sort, saw reason, and was welcomed into the ranks of orthodox diplomacy, taking great care not to repeat the earlier mistake elsewhere. The great French and English newspapers write that Mussolini is a very astute politician, and that following the Corfu expedition, which was really rather a childish action, he has become very wise and prudent. As a matter of fact Mussolini's international policy is the only option Italy has; a second rate policy, because in the struggle between the great world powers Italy plays a subordinate role. In the matter of war reparations and in the Franco-German conflict Mussolini has always taken an intermediate stance, which has exerted absolutely no influence, one way or the other, on the existing power relations. Its erratic attitude has been welcomed with satisfaction, one minute by Germany, then by France, then by Great Britain.

It is true that fascism was able to modify, or rather overturn, power relations within the Italian border. But it wasn't able to pull off the same stunt again on an international scale because it has absolutely no influence on inter-state relations. Since the necessary historical and social presuppositions for such influence are lacking, one cannot really talk seriously of an Italian imperialism.

A few facts will place the extremely modest foreign policy which Mussolini is constrained to follow in the correct light. The Fiume question was resolved by means of a compromise with Yugoslavia. Threats of war against Yugoslavia have given way to a policy of compromise and reconciliation with this country.

Here, too, imperialist nationalism has had to bow before the real facts of foreign politics. The recognition of Soviet Russia also shows that although it is quite possible to conduct an extreme right-wing policy in Italy, the fact of the fascists taking power is not sufficient to extend such a policy onto the international level.

What effect did the recognition of Soviet Russia have on the Italian proletariat? The Italian proletariat has had a fairly good revolutionary education, and didn't swallow the bait dangled by the fascist press; a press that until the day before had recorded every anti-Bolshevik slander, every fairy tale about Russia, and then all of a sudden, on command, had started to write exactly the opposite: that is, that the communist revolution is no more, that bolshevism is liquidated and that Russia is a bourgeois country like any other; that Italy and Russia share common interests, that Russia and Italy can collaborate, etc. A gross blunder was also made when they said: we stand before two revolutions, two dictatorships, two examples of the same political method of eliminating democracy, which by their very nature must arrive at a parallel action, and so on and so forth. This is an explanation that can only cause hilarity. In reality, what we are talking about here is unadorned capitalist interest. Having been unable to prevent industrial decline due to an unfavourable balance of trade, Italian capitalists became interested in establishing relations with Russia in the search for new markets for their commodities. The Italian proletariat has judged this event as proof of fascism's weakness, not Soviet Russia's. I must nevertheless remark that the correct political interpretation of this international event of primary importance for the Italian proletariat has been clouded by an unpleasant incident: some Russian comrades issued statements which in explaining this political event went rather too far, containing as they did declarations of friendship towards Italy that could be interpreted as declarations of friendship towards official Italy, towards Gran Duce Mussolini. This was bound to provoke a certain degree of uneasiness amongst a proletariat which is being persecuted and hunted down by the fascists. If this false step had been avoided, everything else would have met with the full comprehension of the Italian revolutionary proletariat.

We come now to the relations which exist between the fascist party apparatus and the State apparatus under the new government. These relations have raised quite thorny problems the effect of which has been severe crises and continuous conflict within the ranks of fascism. From the very start the internal life of the fascist organisations has been extremely turbulent, but with 700,000 members it is a very large organisation and conflicts are inevitable in an organisation of that size. Nevertheless, the harshness and violence of the internal conflicts within the fascist movement in Italy are exceptional. At the start, the problem of the relations between party and State was resolved in a very imperfect way by placing political commissioners drawn from the ranks of the party alongside the State authorities. These exerted a certain influence over State officials, and therefore had de factopower in their hands. The inevitable outcome, of course, was friction. This method of organisation was then reviewed and the old rights of the state apparatus had to be restored, eliminating the fascist commissaries. But the crisis, which was overcome only with the greatest of difficulty, has not been resolved in a definitive way because within the fascist movement two currents have formed. The first of them, which aims at a revision of extremist fascism, wants to return to legality, and declares: power is in our hands, we have our great leader Mussolini, we can restrict ourselves to governing through the normal and legal exercise of power; the whole state apparatus is at our disposal, we form the government, our Duce is trusted by all parties, therefore, the party does not need to get caught up in administrative matters anymore. This

current would like to renounce violent struggle, and the use of illegal means, and get back to normal relations. It tries to influence Mussolini by isolating him from the more extreme fascist elements.

These extremist elements are recruited among the local hierarchs, and they are designated by the Abyssinian term, 'Ras'. 'Rassism' is for local dictatorships of fascist occupation troops throughout Italy, and indeed it advocates a "second wave" of terror against its opponents. Farinacci, who recently proposed the death penalty for antifascists, is one of its typical representatives.

Between these two extremes, between the tendency which advocates a "second wave" offensive against the opposition, and which says: if Mussolini says that the revolution is not yet accomplished then we must complete it; then we must immediately order (their words) "five minutes of shooting to annihilate all the enemies of fascism, once and for all" – between this tendency, and the one which would prefer better relations between fascism and certain opposition elements, and even with reformists such as the leaders of the Confederazione Generale del Lavoro, Mussolini has, up to now, maintained a certain equilibrium by making shrewd concessions, now to the one side, now to the other. He has restored the old rights to the State apparatus officials but has no intention of renouncing the key support provided by the organisations operating independently from the State apparatus since it is these organisations which sustain the fascist power, and which allow it to defend itself against revolutionary attacks.

Fascism hasn't dissolved parliament. The old parliament, as I pointed out earlier, was constantly passing votes of confidence in Mussolini and conceding him full powers which granted him everything he asked for. Nevertheless, fascism wanted to modify the electoral law. In Italy the system in place was proportional representation. Fascism wanted to be certain of retaining the majority. I believe this would still have been possible using the machinery of the old electoral system. Even under proportional representation, with polls, fascism would have obtained what it has now. On the basis of the new electoral law, the party list which wins the majority of the votes, and obtains at least 25% of all votes cast, has the right to two thirds of the seats in the new parliament. This means that a quarter of the overall vote is enough to occupy two thirds of the seats, on condition, of course, that another party list doesn't gain 26% or 27% of the entire vote, in which case the latter list would be awarded the majority. On the majority party's national list there were 375 names. So in actual fact these deputies have been elected by Mussolini himself since the fact that this list would obtain more than 25% of the vote was in no doubt. A real battle about who would be nominated has broken out inside the fascist party. Around 10 thousand fascist Rases had set their sights on being amongst the 375 elected. It wasn't even possible to reserve all the posts on the list for fascist candidates.

In the elections a dual tactic was employed. In the North, where fascist organisation is very strong, there was no need for compromise and electoral lists composed exclusively of fascists were put forward. In the South, where fascist organisation is much weaker, they had to compromise and politicians of the old regime were allotted plenty of slots on the national list. Thus some of the candidates would be new men from the ranks of the fascist party, and some would be, for want of a better word, 'traditional' politicians.

The elections have now taken place and we won't talk about them in detail. We know that the fascist terror hasn't yet reached the stage where it is absolutely impossible for the opposition to exercise their vote. The fascist government manoeuvred with a certain dexterity. It knew that by totally removing the opposition vote the elections would have immediately lost all political significance. The government

therefore restricted itself to influencing the outcome. Mussolini could now say, "the elections are now over. The vast majority has voted for us; this consensus of the vast majority of the Italian people legitimises our power. One can no longer speak of the rule of a minority".

In order to assess the conduct and the outcome of the elections it is necessary to clearly distinguish between the North and South of Italy. In the North the fascist organisations are very powerful, mainly in the country but also in the industrial towns. Thus up there it can keep an eye on its electorate and check that party members vote they way they are supposed to; in other words, it can almost totally suppress the secret ballot. Certainly the fascists have fought ruthlessly against their adversaries but because they were counting on their own strength they had to let them exercise their right to vote. Therefore in the North fascism only obtained a very small majority (that is, a majority in the true sense of more than 50% rather than the artificial majority of over 25% which they introduced). In some cities, like Milan, it is well known that the fascist national list was in a minority compared to the opposition lists.

In the South on the other hand fascism's list of candidates collected an overwhelming majority of the votes. The overall number of votes cast in Italy as a whole was 7.3 million, and the fascists obtained 4.7 million of them (3.65 million is half the votes cast; the fascists polled over a million more than that). That is the strangest aspect of the thing.

In the South, apart from a few districts where agrarian conflicts similar to the ones in the Po valley have taken place, a died in the wool fascism has never really existed. Fascism gained a foothold there in the following manner. After the fascists took power the local bourgeois cliques thought it as well to adhere to fascism, in a formal sense, in order to retain their hold over the local administrative machinery and to be able to continue to exploit it. In the South a significant level of fascist organisation doesn't really exist and yet it is actually in the South, by employing very simple means, that fascism has obtained the overwhelming majority referred to above. Here the elections have been conducted at will; representatives on the rival lists have been chased off, the fascist squads have been organised, granted electoral certificates, and been put at the disposal of the local administration; with every member of these squads voting 30, 40 or even 50 times. Given this situation, Mussolini has been forced to make the extraordinary admission that it was the South of Italy which saved the country; that the most seasoned forces in the battle against revolutionary democracy were to be found in the South; that in 1919 and 1920 it was the South which hadn't allowed itself be led astray. Thus his previous political interpretation of the Italian situation that the north was the most progressive and civilised part of the country – has been turned on its head. In recent speeches, true, he has gone back to his previous theory and seems to have given up trying to make his pronouncements agree with the official statistical results of the elections. Fascism is extremely weak in the South. In relation to the Matteotti affair one can say in fact that the South has been unanimous in its condemnation of the government. This important fact shows how artificial are the means by which fascism maintains itself in power.

A quick glance, then, at the other parties which participated in the elections. Firstly, before passing to the pro-fascists I want to recall the nationalist party, which is now officially wholly integrated into the fascist party. The nationalist party had been around for a long time before anyone had heard of fascism. It exerted a major influence on the latter's development, and it was they who equipped fascism with its flimsy theoretical armoury. The right-wing of the Liberals, with Salandra at their head, have also completely merged with fascism and their members were candidates on the fascist list. In order to try

and grab some of the seats reserved to the minority other 'liberal' personalities and groups, not included on the fascist lists, would stand beside them on parallel lists which were also purely fascist.

Alongside the official lists and these parallel lists there were liberal lists of candidates which were unofficially supported by the government. There were also other, not declaredly anti-fascist, lists such as Giolitti's towards which the government maintained a neutral stance, allowing them to win a few uncontested seats.

Regarding the opposition, we need to focus first of all on the defeat of the various parliamentary parties which composed the 'democracy', parties which once had such a powerful majority. Bonomi (extreme right-wing social reformist) wasn't re-elected. Di Cesare and Amendola only managed to salvage a small group of supporters after the Government's bitter attack against them, and specifically against the latter.

The Popular Party has also suffered a serious defeat. During the old parliament it even took part in the fascist government. Its attitude has always been equivocal. It was only during the struggle against the new electoral law that it made a clean break with Mussolini, who responded by getting rid of the Popolari ministers. The resulting crisis forced the party chief, Don Sturzo, to officially resign (although in fact he still continues to guide party policy). Arising from this there has been a kind of split. A right-wing group, the popolari nazionali, have now left the party and support the fascist list. The main mass of the party follow Don Sturzo as before. The extreme left, headed by Migliori, has also left the party. The agitation he has been conducting in the countryside has been at times closely convergent with the actions of the revolutionary organisations. Inside the party, the influence of the big landowners still predominates in the form of Don Sturzo's mediatory centrism. The popolari movement has undoubtedly suffered a severe blow.

The peasant party is another small party which is worthy of note. In a couple of districts it put forward its own list of candidates up for election. It is a party composed of discontented small farmers not prepared to entrust the representation of their interests to any of the existing parties, and preferring to form their own party. This movement might well have a future. It could achieve national prominence. The small republican party, which may be considered a semi-proletarian party, is rather confused in its attitude, but it has conducted a very vigourous campaign against the fascist government. It has won two parliamentary seats (in the old house it had five, now it has seven seats).

Then there are the three parties which emerged from the old socialist party: the Unitarian Socialist Party, the Maximalist Socialist Party, and the Communist Party. These parties famously had 150 seats between them when united in one party. Today the unitarians (reformists) have 24 seats, the maximalists, 22, and the communists 19. The communists presented a joint list with the third-internationalist fraction of the maximalist party under the banner of proletarian unity. We can say that the Communist Party was the only one of the opposition parties to return to parliament not only with its former strength intact, but having won new seats. In 1921 we had 15 seats, now we have 19. True, one of the seats is being contested and the final total may be 18 but that is a minor detail.

In addition to the small lists of the German and Slav irredentists, there is a Sardinian party, founded a few years ago in Sardinia, which doesn't actually go so far as to call for total separation from Italy, but does want increased regional autonomy. We are talking about a movement which wants the State to be decentralised and to be less tied to the Italian State and the Italian nation, and it might prompt parallel

movements in other regions which are in an even worse situation. Apparently in Basilicata a similar party is being formed. This movement also has certain links with the purely intellectual one in Turin which publishes Rivoluzione Liberale and advocates liberal and federalist theories. This group is putting up an energetic resistance to fascism, and it has attracted a certain number of sympathisers from amongst intellectuals and the professional classes. As you can see, the opposition is divided up into a lot of small groups. We shall also mention here some of the political currents which don't take part in elections.

There is, for example, the movement led by D'Annunzio, i.e. a small elite gathered around D'Annunzio, ready to go into battle when its leader gives the signal. However, D'Annunzio's attitude has been rather contradictory of late. He has been quiet for quite a while. His was a movement born out of the previous middle class and servicemen's movement which opposed the official mobilisation of the big bourgeoisie and which – since fascism was reneging on its program and pursuing a purely conservative course – set itself apart. Then there is the Italia Libera movement, that is, the anti-fascist opposition within the servicemen' organisation, who are also seeing their influence grow quite substantially at the moment. Another anti-fascist movement which is quite active is masonry. Fascism has caused a profound crisis in masonry. There has even been a split, although it is not a very significant one: a small group of pro-fascist masons who wanted to leave.

The fascists have carried out a campaign against the masons. Mussolini, as a fascist, got the same decision approved about the incompatibility of masonry and party membership as he did when he was fighting for the socialists back in 1914. Masonry has lost no time in replying vigorously to these attacks. In bourgeois circles abroad it has carried out energetic propaganda campaign against the fascist terror. In Italy too it is conducting educational work amongst the petty bourgeoisie and intellectuals, amongst whom masonry is very influential; and this has not been without a certain effect.

The anarchist movement doesn't play a very significant role in Italian politics at present. As you can see, the various currents opposed to the powerful fascist majority present a very complicated picture.

But even if this opposition has quite a powerful press, what does it count for in terms of its military and political organisation, that is with regard to the practical possibility of mounting an attack on fascism in the near future? Practically nothing is the answer. It is true that certain groups such as the republicans and the masons would have us believe that they have illegal anti-fascist organisations, but such claims are not to be taken seriously. The only thing that can be taken seriously is the strong opposition current which exists in public opinion and the press. The bourgeois opposition controls a large section of the press. These include some newspapers distributed throughout Italy and which, whilst not declaredly of the opposition, take up a stance which is clearly against fascism. Thus do Milan's Corriere della Sera and Turin's La Stampa steer public opinion, above all amongst the average bourgeois, towards a tenacious, albeit mainly vocal, opposition. All this goes to show that dissatisfaction with fascism has grown since the latter took power.

Although accurately defining and classifying the different opposition groups is quite difficult, between the mood of the proletariat and that of the middle classes it is nevertheless possible to draw a very clear line of demarcation.

The proletariat is anti-fascist on the basis of its class consciousness; its sees the struggle against fascism as a mighty battle destined to make radical changes and substitute the revolutionary dictatorship to the

fascist dictatorship. The proletariat is seeking revenge, but not in the banal and sentimental sense of the word; it is seeking revenge in a historical sense.

The revolutionary proletariat instinctively understands that the real growth and predomination of the forces of reaction must be opposed by a real counter-offensive of the forces of opposition; the proletariat senses that only after a new period of hard struggles and – if victorious – by means of the proletarian dictatorship, can current reality be radically changed. The proletariat awaits this moment ; the moment when, with redoubled zeal born of hard-won experience, it can pay back its class enemy in spades for the pummelling it is having to put up with at the moment.

The anti-fascism of the middle classes is of a less active character. Certainly we have before us an opposition which is strong and sincere, but it is basically pacifist. What they want with all their hearts is to re-establish normal political life in Italy, and complete freedom of speech and debate… but without the use of the cudgel, without having to use violence. Everything should return to normal, both communists and fascists should have the right to profess their beliefs. Aspiring to a certain equilibrium of forces and democratic freedom, this is the illusion of the middle-classes.

These two attitudes, both arising from dissatisfaction with fascism, must be clearly distinguished from each other. The second attitude presents difficulties for our activity which mustn't be underestimated.

Even amongst the bourgeoisie understood in the strict sense of the word there are doubts about the expediency of the fascist movement. These worries they can express, to a certain extent, in the two newspapers referred to earlier, which are effectively their mouthpiece. They ask themselves: is this the right method? Is it not too drastic? Whilst it is in our class interest to have a machinery in place which can respond to certain requirements, might it not going beyond the functions and aims originally intended? Might it not overstep the mark? The more intelligent strata of the Italian bourgeoisie are for a revision of fascism and its reactionary excesses because they fear these are bound to prompt a revolutionary explosion. Naturally it is in the express interest of the bourgeoisie that these strata of the dominant class are conducting a press campaign against fascism, with the aim of bringing it back onto legal terrain and turning it into a safer and more flexible weapon of class exploitation. They are in favour of the astute policy of making apparent concessions to the proletariat at the same time as they express their enthusiasm for what fascism has done, for the reestablishment of the bourgeois order and for saving its underlying basis, private property. These are views which are nevertheless very influential.

For example, Senator Agnelli, director of the biggest Italian car manufacturing firm and the most powerful of Italian capitalists, is a liberal. But when, as has happened to some of our comrades, too much is made of this fact, the FIAT workers have immediately set us straight, assuring us that reaction rules in the FIAT works exactly the same as in other factories run by capitalists who belong to the fascist party. Agnelli is, after all, a tycoon who is very clever businessman. He knows it would be dangerous to provoke the working masses; he remembers the difficult moments he went through when the workers occupied his factories and hoisted up the red flag; he therefore gives benevolent advice to fascism on how to conduct the battle against the proletariat in a more astute way. And fascism is evidently not deaf to such advice.

Before the Matteotti affair, fascism had taken a turn to the left. On the eve of Matteotti's assassination, Mussolini gave a speech in which he addressed the opposition. He said: "You form the new parliament. We have never needed elections; we could have exercised dictatorial power, but we still preferred to

address the people, and you should recognise that the people have responded today by fully supporting us with an overwhelming majority". And actually it was Matteotti who challenged this by declaring that from a democratic and constitutional point of view fascism had been defeated, the government had been placed in the minority, and that its majority was contrived and misleading. Fascism of course refused to recognise this. Mussolini argued: "Based on the official figures, we have the majority. I will now address the opposition. Opposition can be expressed in two ways. First; the communist way. To these gentlemen we have nothing to say. They are completely logical. Their objective is to overthrow us one day through the use of revolutionary violence and install the dictatorship of the proletariat. To them we respond: we will only succumb to a superior force. You want to risk taking us on? Go ahead! To the other opposition groups we say: the employment of revolutionary violence is not contemplated in your programme: you aren't preparing an insurrection against us; what do you want then? How do you propose to take power? The law has given us five years as the legislature of this House. And new elections would produce the same result. Surely the best thing, then, is to come to an agreement. Maybe we have overdone it, maybe we have overstepped the mark. We have used illegal methods which I am trying to prevent happening again. I am inviting you to collaborate! Make your proposals! Expound your thoughts! We will find a middle way". It was a call for collaboration with all the non-revolutionary opposition groups. Only the communists were excluded from Mussolini's offer. He has declared that an agreement with the CGIL might be possible because the latter isn't on the terrain of the demagogic theory of revolution, because bolshevism would by now be liquidated, etc.

That's how things stood, the attitude taken by Mussolini showing what a force the anti-fascist opposition had become. The government could see that it needed to take a left turn. Then came the bombshell. The Matteotti affair caused the situation in Italy to completely change. The facts are well-known: one day, Matteotti the parliamentary deputy disappears. For two days his family await his return in vain. Then they turn to the police. The latter allege they know nothing. After the newspapers publish reports about Matteotti's disappearance, eye witnesses describe seeing him being attacked in the street by five individuals and bundled into a car, which then shoots off at great speed.

Public opinion was in an uproar. Maybe Matteotti was being kept prisoner, maybe it was the terrorist act of a lone individual. Just that, or something worse? Maybe an assassination?

The government was urged to respond. Mussolini declared immediately: we will track down the guilty. A few arrest were made; but before long it became common knowledge that Matteotti had been killed by members of a fascist squad linked to the party's terroristic organisation. The fascists immediately took this line: it's a case of a regrettable gesture on the part of the illegal current we are fighting against, and against which Mussolini has always fought. It is an individual act, a common crime. We will take action against the guilty. But public opinion wasn't too happy about it. The entire press hastened to show that the motive for the crime couldn't be purely personal, that the assassins were actually part of a secret league, a type of black band, that had already on other occasions committed similar crimes; crimes which had remained unpunished because they hadn't had the same repercussions as the murder of Matteotti. More and more people were accused. Key figures in the regime started to be attacked. It has been proved that the car in question was provided by the extremist-fascist mouthpieceCorriere Italiano. A member of the 'Directory of Four' Cesare Rossi, was accused; Aldo Finzi, the deputy minister of internal affairs was accused. Various well-known fascists were arrested. The anti-fascists conducted a violent press campaign.

So the question is: who is responsible for the murder? Because it is undoubtedly a murder we are talking about, even if the body still hasn't been found. Is it a crime of political fanaticism, a political crime, the result of a vendetta against Matteotti because of his speeches against fascism in the Chamber of Deputies? Or is it just a case of an Executive organ's mistake? The latter hypothesis, I would say, isn't ruled out. It is possible that Matteotti had to be held prisoner for a few days, and then, when he put up resistance, he was killed by the bandits who kidnapped him. Or are we dealing with something even more suspicious? It is said that Matteotti had in his possession certain documents relating to the corruption of several members of the fascist government, and he wanted to publish them. Maybe that was the reason they wanted to eliminate him? The latter hypothesis isn't very likely. Matteotti wouldn't have been so imprudent as to carry such documents around with him, and even if he had, there certainly would have been copies. Nevertheless, in the course of the press campaign, it has been established that the Ministry of Internal Affairs has become a business centre in which Italian and foreign capitalists can purchase a range of concessions from the government. There has been talk of large sums of money being salted away by senior officials. One example is the Sinclair case, that is, the oil treaty which awarded a foreign company a monopoly of oil extraction in Italy. It is even said that the casino in Monte Carlo dispensed an enormous sum in order to push through the law restricting licenses for gaming houses in Italy. Following these allegations the fascists even forced Finzi to immediately hand in his resignation. The question remains open: are we dealing with a political crime in the strict sense or a crime prompted by the need to silence witnesses to the moral corruption of the fascist government? Whatever is the case, the approaches of the bourgeois opposition and the communist opposition to the two possibilities are very different.

What does the bourgeois opposition say? For them it is just a judicial case. It wants the government to punish the guilty. Its perspective is that the government shouldn't just restrict itself to establishing who was directly involved in the murder; the judiciary must cast light on the entire affair, calling the highly placed persons implicated in the affair, and maybe even members of the government, to account. For example, General de Bono, supreme chief of police, has been accused of being involved in the murder, and has been forced to resign. This shows to what level of the fascist hierarchy the responsibility reaches. After all, De Bono is one of the main leaders of the 'National Militia'.

Thus the bourgeois opposition considers the entire question as a legal matter, as a question of political morality, of the reestablishment in the country of social peace and tranquillity, and it asserts that the terror and other similar acts of violence must stop. For us, on the other hand, it is a political and historical question, a question of class struggle, a crude but necessary consequence of the capitalist offensive to defend the Italian bourgeoisie. The responsibility for the fact that such horrors are possible lies with the entire fascist party. With the entire government, the entire Italian bourgeois class and its regime. It needs to be openly proclaimed that only the revolutionary activity of the proletariat can liquidate such a situation; a situation which shows that such symptoms cannot be cured by purely legal means, with the philistine reestablishment of law and order. In pursuance of such an aim the urgent matter becomes instead the destruction of the existing order, a complete overthrow which only the proletariat can see through to the end. Initially the communists would unite in protest with the parliamentary opposition in the Chamber of Deputies. However very soon it was necessary to draw a line of demarcation between our opposition and theirs, and communists haven't participated in the latest declarations of the other parties.

Even the maximalists are represented in the committee of the parliamentary opposition; apropos which we need to point out a very characteristic event. The CP, as a protest action against the Matteotti murder, had immediately proposed a countrywide general strike in Italy. Spontaneous strikes had already broken out in a number of cities which show that the proposal was serious and practical.

The other parties, with the approval of the maximalists, instead proposed a ten minute strike as a protest action in honour of Matteotti. But the reformists, maximalists, CGIL and other opposition groups would suffer the great misfortune of having the industrial confederations and fascist trade unions immediately accepting the proposal, and officially joining with the opposition! Thus, of course, did the protest lose any trace of class significance. Today it is as clear as daylight that the communists were the only ones to make a proposal which would have allowed the proletariat to influence events in a decisive way.

What is the outlook for the Mussolini Government in the present situation? Before the latest events occurred, we had been forced to recognise, despite striking evidence of a growing discontent with fascism, that its military and State organisation was nevertheless powerful enough to prevent the appearance of a force capable of working practically for the overthrow of fascism in the near future. Discontent was growing, but we were still a long way from a crisis situation.

Recent events provide a striking example of how small causes determine great effects. The Matteotti murder sped up the developing situation to an extraordinary degree, even if, of course, social conditions already meant the premises of this development existed in latent form. The rhythm of the fascist crisis has been greatly accelerated. The fascist government has suffered a damaging defeat from the moral, psychological, and, in a certain sense, also from the political point of view. This defeat hasn't yet had repercussions at the level of the political, military and administrative organisation, but it is clear that a moral and political defeat such as this is the first step towards a further unravelling of the crisis and the struggle for power. The government has had to make notable concessions, such as surrendering the internal affairs portfolio to the old nationalist chief, now a fascist, Federzoni. Other concessions have also been made too, but fascism still keeps power firmly in its hands. In his speeches to the Senate, Mussolini has openly declared that he will hold on to his post and deploy all the means of power at his disposal against anyone who attacks him.

According to the latest news the wave of public indignation has still not abated. However the situation has become objectively more stable. The National Militia which was mobilised two days after the Matteotti murder has already been demobilised, and its members have returned to their usual occupations. This indicates that the government perceives the immediate danger as having passed. But that major upheavals could happen in the very near future looks far more of a possibility than it did before the Matteotti crisis.

What is nevertheless clear is that in future fascism will be in much more difficult position and that the practical possibilities for future anti-fascist action, depending on what happens in the intervening period, are now different than before.

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How should we respond to this new situation which has so unexpectedly arisen? I will give a systematic outline of my view.

The CP must emphasise the independent role which the situation in Italy has assigned to it, and issue watchwords with the following content: liquidation of the anti-fascist opposition groups and their substitution with the direct and open action of the communist movement. Today we are faced with events which are causing the spotlight of public interest to focus on the CP. For a while after the taking of power by the fascists there were mass arrests of our comrades. It was said then that the communist and Bolshevik forces had been annihilated, dispersed; that the revolutionary movement had been completely liquidated. But for quite a while after the elections and other events, the party has been giving signs of life which are far too strong to support these assertions. In all his speeches Mussolini is compelled to refer to the communists. In the controversy over the Matteotti case the fascist press has to defend itself every day and take up a position against the communists.

This causes attention to be focussed on our party, and on its particular duty of retaining its independence from all the other closely linked opposition groups. Our party, having taken up its particular standpoint, draws a clear line of demarcation between itself and these other groups. Besides, thanks to its experience of class struggle in Italy during and after the war and thanks also to the bitter disillusionment it has suffered, the Italian proletariat knows that there needs to be a complete liquidation of all the social-democratic currents, from the bourgeois left to the proleterian right, and this awareness is firmly entrenched. All these currents have had the practical possibility of taking action and proving themselves. Experience has shown that none of them are up to the task. The vanguard of the revolutionary proletariat, the communist party, is the only one which is has refused to give up.

But in order to be able to follow an independent political line, it is absolutely indispensable that defeatism be expunged from the party. We cannot tell Italian proletarians, who have faith in the party and in its strength, that the actions attempted by communists up to now add up to failure and lack of success!

If our practice shows that the party can organise the struggle and implement an autonomous tactic of its own; if our practice shows that the party lives on as the unique opposition party; if we can issue appropriate watchwords which indicate a practical way of going on the offensive, it is then that we will achieve our aim of liquidating the opposition groups, and primarily the socialists and the maximalists. That is the direction we should go in, in my opinion, in order to take advantage of the present situation.

In order to work toward that we shouldn't however restrict ourselves to polemics; practical work needs to be done to conquer the masses. The purpose of this work is the unitary joining together of the masses for revolutionary action, the united front of the proletariat of city and country under the leadership of the communist party. Only with this unitary joining together will we have achieved the condition which allows us to engage in the direct struggle with fascism. This is a major task which can and must be carried out whilst retaining the party's independence.

It is possible, following the Matteotti affair, that fascism will unleash a "second wave" of terror, a new offensive against the opposition. But this will just be another episode in the escalating situation. We might see the opposition retreating and a decline in the public expression of discontent as a result of this new terror. In time, however, discontent will start to build up again and so will the opposition. Fascism cannot hold on to power by means of continuous, incessant pressure. Another possibility however exists: the working masses being brought together on the initiative of the CP under the banner of the reconstitution of the red trade unions. Maybe it will soon be possible to begin this task.

The opportunists don't dare undertake this task. There are cities in Italy where we could be assured of success if we invited the workers to rejoin the red unions. But since this return would at the same time be a sign of struggle, because we would have to be ready at the same time to fight the fascists, the opportunist parties have been in no hurry to reconstitute the proletariat's mass organisations. If the CP were the first to take advantage of the favourable moment and issue this watchword, there would be the possibility of the Italian labour movement reorganising around the CP at its centre.

Even before the situation created by the Matteotti affair, our independent stance was the best manoeuvre we could have performed. For example, during the elections even non-communist elements voted for communist candidates because they saw in communism what they would refer to as the clearest and most radical form of anti-fascism, the clearest rejection of what they hated. Our independent position is therefore a means to exercise a political influence even on those strata which aren't directly linked to us. It is precisely to the fact that we have presented ourselves with a univocal programme that we owe the CP's major success in the elections, despite the government offensive unleashed primarily against our candidates and our electoral campaign. We officially campaigned under the slogan " Proletarian Unity", but the masses gave us their votes because we were communists, because we openly declared war on fascism, because the our adversaries defined us as irreconcilable. This stance has ensured us notable successes.

The same goes for the Matteotti incident. All eyes are turned on the Communist Party, which speaks a language which is completely different to any other opposition party. From which it follows that only an entirely independent and radical stance towards not only fascism but also the opposition will allow us to take advantage of current developments in order to overthrow the monstrous power of fascism.

A similar work must be carried out to win over the peasant masses. We need to elaborate a form of organisation of the peasantry which will allow us to work not only amongst waged farm labourers, who essentially take the same line as industrial wage earners, but also amongst tenant farmers, small-holders, etc., within the organisations which defend their interests. The economic situation is such that no amount of pressure will be able to prevent the formation of such organisations. We need to try and raise this issue with the small peasant proprietors, and put forward a clear programme which addresses their oppression and expropriation. We need to represent a clean break with the ambiguous stance taken by the Socialist party in this field. We need to utilise the existing currents in order to form peasant organisations, and direct them onto the road of the defence of the economic interests of the rural population. Indeed if these organisations are transformed into electoral machines, they will fall into the hands of bourgeois agitators, politicians and advocates of the small towns and villages. If we manage instead to breathe life into an organisation for the defence of the economic interests of the peasantry (not a trade union, because in theory the idea of a trade union of small proprietors encounters serious objections), we would have an association at our disposal within which we could carry out group work, which would be influenced by us, and within which we could find a point of support for the coalition of the rural and urban proletariat under the sole direction of the Communist Party.

This is not a terrorist programme which is being presented. Legends have been created around us. It has been said that we actually want to be a minority party, to be a small elite and so on and so forth. We have never supported such notions. If there is one movement, both through its critique and tactics, which has worked relentlessly to destroy any illusions about terrorist minorities spread about by ultra-anarchists and syndicalists, that movement is our party. We have always been opposed to that

tendency, and it really is turning things on their head to portray us as terrorists and supporters of actions by armed, heroic minorities and all that goes with it!

We do however take the view that as regards the problem of the disarmament of the white guards and the arming of the proletariat, a topic of much concern to the party today, it is necessary to take a clear and principled stand.

Certainly a struggle is possible if the masses take part in it. The majority of the proletariat knows full well that an attack by a heroic vanguard will not resolve matters. The latter is an ingenuous solution, and should be rejected by all Marxist parties. However, if we go to the masses with the watchword of disarmament of the white guards and arming of the proletariat, these same working masses have to be presented in an active role. We must dispel the illusion that a "transitional government" would ever be so naïve as to allow the bourgeois positions to be outflanked by legal means, by parliamentary manoeuvring and by clever expedients, in other words, would allow a legal taking possession of the entire technical and military machinery of the bourgeoisie and the peaceful distribution of arms to the proletariat; and with that done, have us quietly give the signal to revolt. This really is a silly and childish idea! Launching a revolution isn't that easy!

We are absolutely convinced of the impossibility of embarking on the struggle with a few hundred or so, or even a few thousand armed communists. The CP of Italy is the last one to succumb to such illusions. We are firmly convinced of the absolute necessity of drawing the great masses into the struggle; but getting armed is a problem that can only be resolved by revolutionary means. We can take advantage of the slowing down of fascism's development by creating revolutionary proletarian formations. But we have to destroy the illusion that manoeuvres of any kind may one day put us in such a position that we could take over the bourgeoisie's technical and military machinery, in other words, tie our enemies' hands in order to later go on and attack them.

To fight an illusion which induces in the proletariat a sense of revolutionary apathy isn't terrorism; on the contrary it is a stance which is genuinely Marxist and revolutionary. We are not saying that we are the communist "élite", and that we want to overturn the social equilibrium with the action of a small minority. Not at all, we want to conquer the leadership of proletarian masses, we want unity in proletarian action; but we also do want to utilise the experiences of the Italian proletariat, and these have taught us that struggles which are led by a non-consolidated party – even if it is a mass party, or one composed of an improvised coalition of parties – leads necessarily to defeat. We want a joint struggle of the working masses of the city and country, but we want this struggle to be led by a general staff with a clear political line, i.e., the communist party.

This is the problem we are confronting.

The situation will unfold in a way which is more or less complicated, but there already exists the premises for the issuing of watchwords and agitation around the CP initiating and guiding the revolution and declaring openly that it is necessary to march forward over the ruins of the existing anti-fascist opposition groups. The proletariat must be warned that when the taking of power by the working class in Italy presents itself as a real danger to the capitalist class, all the bourgeois and social-democratic forces will align around fascism. These are the prospects for the battle which we must prepare for in advance.

To conclude, I want to add a few words on fascism as an international phenomenon, based on the experiences we have had in Italy.

We believe that fascism wants to spread beyond Italy as well. Similar movements in other countries, such as Bulgaria, Hungary, and maybe also in Germany, have probably been supported by Italian fascism. But if it is certainly true that the proletariat of the entire world need to understand and utilise the lessons learnt about fascism in Italy, in case similar movements are formed in other countries as means of fighting the workers, one shouldn't however forget that in Italy there existed some particular presuppositions which allowed the fascist movement to become such a gigantic force. First and foremost amongst these presuppositions I will recall national and religious unity.

To get the middle classes to mobilise around fascism I now believe that both presuppositions are indispensable. A sentimentalist mobilisation has to be based both on national and religious unity. Evidently the formation of a large fascist party in Germany would come up against the presence of two different religious confessions, and different nationalities with tendencies which are in part separatist. In Italy, Fascism found exceptionally favourable premises. Italy was among the victorious States, and whilst an overcharged state of chauvinism and patriotism existed there, at the same time the material advantages of victory were less in evidence. Strictly connected to this factor is the defeat of the proletariat. The middle classes bided their time for a while to see whether or not the proletariat would be powerful enough to win. When the revolutionary parties of the proletariat showed their impotence, the middle classes then believed they could act independently and take the government into their own hands. In the meantime, the big bourgeoisie took the opportunity to subjugate these forces and to yoke them to the cart of its own interests.

Based on these facts, I don't believe we should yet expect to appear in other countries a fascism as open and blatant as the one in Italy; a fascism in the sense of a unitary movement of the upper strata of the exploiters and of a mobilisation of a large majority of the middle classes and the petty bourgeoisie in the interest of those strata. Fascism in other countries is different than in Italy. In these countries it is just a petty-bourgeois movement, with a reactionary ideology which is purely petty bourgeois and with some armed formations; a movement which however isn't completely identified with big business and particularly the State machine. This State machine can rather enter into coalition with the parties of big business, the major banks and large landed property, but towards the middle class and the petty bourgeoisie, it more or less retains its independence. Clearly this kind of fascism is an enemy of the proletariat as well. But it is a much less dangerous enemy than Italian fascism.

The question of relations with such a movement is, as far as I'm concerned, fully resolved: it is madness to think of having any kind of link with it. Such a movement in fact offers the basis for a counter-revolutionary political mobilisation of the semi-proletarian masses. If the actual proletariat were to be brought to act on the same basis it would present grave dangers.

In general terms we can expect abroad a copy of Italian fascism which will hybridise with the various manifestations of the "democratic and pacifist wave". But fascism will take different forms to that in Italy. The reaction and capitalist offensive of the various strata in conflict with the proletariat will not submit to such a unitary direction.

Much has been said about the foreign organisations of Italian anti-fascism. These organisations have been created by bourgeois Italian émigrés. How Italian fascism is viewed by international public opinion,

and the propaganda campaign conducted against it by civilised countries, is also on the order of the day. This moral indignation by the bourgeoisie of other countries is even seen as a means of liquidating the fascist movement.

Communists and revolutionaries mustn't give in to this illusion of the democratic and moral sensitivity of the bourgeoisie of other countries. Even where pacifist and left-wing tendencies still exist today, tomorrow there will have no scruples about using fascism as a weapon in the class struggle. We know that the exploits of fascism in Italy and the campaign of terror it has conducted there against the workers can only give cause for rejoicing to international capital.

In the fight against fascism it is only the revolutionary proletarian International which can be depended upon. It is a question of class struggle. We don't turn for help to the democratic parties of other countries, or to associations of idiots and hypocrites like the League of the Rights of Man, because we don't want to give succour to the illusion that they differ in some substantial way from fascism, or that the bourgeoisie in other countries isn't just as capable of preparing for its own working class the same persecutions, and carrying out the same atrocities, as fascism in Italy.

If there is to be an uprising against Italian fascism and a campaign against the terror in our country, there is only one force to be counted on: the revolutionary forces in Italy and abroad. It needs the workers of every land to boycott the Italian fascists. Those of our comrades who have been persecuted and exiled abroad in the course of the struggle will not be indifferent to this battle, nor to the creation amongst the proletariat of an international anti-fascist state of mind. The reaction and terror in Italy should arouse a class hatred, a proletarian counter-offensive which will give rise to an international convergence of the revolutionary forces on a world scale against international fascism, and against all the other forms of bourgeois oppression.

The Trotsky Question (1925)

The discussion, which was recently concluded with the measures adopted by the EC and the Control Commission of the Communist Party of Russia against Comrade Trotsky (1), was based exclusively on the preface written by Trotsky to the third volume of his book «Writings from 1917» (published in Russian a few months ago), dated 15 September, 1924.

The discussion on the economic policy and the internal life of the party in Russia which had previously put Trotsky in opposition to the CC, was completed by the decisions of XIIIth Congress of the party and Vth Congress of the International; Trotsky did not reopen it. In the present polemic, other texts are referred to, like the speech to the Congress of veterinary surgeons and the brochure “On Lenin”; but the first dates from July 28 and had not raised any polemic at that time, when the delegations of the Vth Congress were still present in Moscow; the second, written well before, had been widely quoted in the communist press of all the countries without meeting the least objection from any party organs.

The text of the preface around which the discussion is raging is not known to the Italian comrades. The international communist press did not receive it, and consequently, not having this text nor any other by Trotsky to support these theses, it published only articles against this preface. The article by the editorial

board of Pravda which at the end of October opened the polemic against Trotsky was published in appendix by L´Unità. As for the preface itself, a summary of it appeared in Italian in Critica Fascista , n° 2 and 3 of January 15 and February 1 of this year, and the beginning was reproduced by L' Avanti! of January 30. The complete preface was published in French in the Cahiers du bolchevisme , the review of the French Communist party , n° 5 and 6 of 19 and December 26, 1924.

The preface of "1917" deals with the lessons of the Russian October from the point of view of the role of the revolutionary party relative to its historical task in the final struggle for the conquest of power. Recent events in international politics posed the following problem: objective historical conditions for the conquest of power by the proletariat being realized, namely the instability of the regime and apparatus of the bourgeois State, the élan of the masses towards struggle, the orientation of broad proletarian layers towards the Communist party, how can we ensure ourselves that this answers the necessities of the battle, just as the Russian party responded in October 1917, under Lenin's leadership?

Trotsky presents the question in the following manner: experience teaches us that at the moment of the supreme struggle two currents tend to be formed in the Communist party; one which understands the possibility of armed insurrection or the need for not delaying it; and another which, at the last moment, under the pretext that the situation is not ripe; that the relationship of forces is not favorable, propose the suspension of the action and assume a non-revolutionary and menschevik position in practice.

In 1923 the latter tendency was on top in Bulgaria at the time of Tsankov's coup d'etat, and in October in Germany, where it determined the abandonment of the struggle which could have brought us success. In 1917, this tendency appeared within the Bolshevik party itself, and if it was beaten it was thanks to Lenin, whose formidable energy imposed on the hesitant the recognition that the situation was revolutionary; and their submission to the supreme order to start the insurrection. We should study the conduct, in 1917, of the right opposition against Lenin in the Bolshevik party and compare it with that of the adversaries of struggle which appeared in our ranks in Germany in 1923 and in other similar cases. The language of those who advocate the suspension of the struggle and their political positions are in both cases so similar that it raises the question as to measures to be taken in the International to make the truly Leninist method prevail in decisive moments, so as not to abort the historic occassions of the revolution.

The most important conclusion which arises, in our opinion, from the efficatious analysis to which Trotsky subjects the preparation and conduct of the October struggle in Russia, is that the hesitations of the right do not arise solely from an error in the evaluation of forces and in the choice of the moment for action, but especially from a true incomprehension of the principle of the revolutionary process in history: it believes that it can use another way than that of the dictatorship of the proletariat for the construction of socialism, which is contrary to the vital content of revolutionary Marxism supported and historically realized by Lenin's titanic effort.

Indeed, the group of leading comrades of the Bolshevik party which was opposed to Lenin not only sustained that it was still necessary to wait; but it opposed to the Leninist watchwords – Socialist dictatorship of the proletariat, All power to the Soviets, Dissolution of the Constituent Assembly – other formulas, such as a combination of Soviets and a democratic Parliament, a government of "all the socialist parties", i.e. of a coalition of Communists and Social-democrats, and these, not as transitory tactical expedients, but as the permanent forms of the Russian revolution. Thus two principle conceptions were in opposition: on the one hand, the Soviet dictatorship lead by the communist party,

i.e. the proletarian revolution in all its powerful originality and which is in historical dialectical opposition to the bourgeois democratic revolution of Kerensky, which is the Leninist conception; and on the other hand to push leftwards, to deepen and defend against the foreigner the revolution of the people against tsarism, i.e. the success of the bourgeoisie and petit-bourgeoisie.

Trotsky, splendid and without equal among those alive in the synthesis of experiences and of revolutionary truths, remarks with finesse that during revolutionary periods the reformists leave the terrain of purely formal socialism, i.e. the perspective of victory for the proletarian class by bourgeois democratic and legal means, for the pure and simple ground of bourgeois democracy while becoming defenders and direct agents of capitalism. In parallel to this a right wing of the revolutionary party will take its place in the vacuum left by the reformists, limiting itself in practice to call for a "true proletarian democracy" or something similar, even though the time has come to proclaim the bankruptcy of all democracies and go over to armed struggle.

This evaluation of the attitude of those Bolsheviks who, thus, abandoned Lenin is undoubtedly very serious, but it follows from Trotsky's account through quotations, which have not been refuted, of the declarations of the rightists themselves and those of Lenin in response. It is necessary to raise this problem, since we do not have Lenin with us any longer, and since without him, we have lost our October revolution in Berlin, a fact of such international historical significance that it obviates any concern for the tranquility of internal life. Trotsky considers this problem in an identical way to that which the left of the Italian delegation maintained at the 5th Congress: one cannot liquidate the German error by allotting it to the right-wing which lead the German party; it shows us the need for revising the international tactic of the International and to re-examine its mode of internal organization, its way of working and of preparing for the tasks of the revolution.

The divergences in the Bolshevik Party on the eve of the revolution can be understood on the basis of a series of vigorous interventions of Lenin to rectify the line and to eliminate the hesitations. In his letter from Switzerland, Lenin had already undertaken this work. From the moment of his arrival he places himself resolutely against defensism, i.e. against the attitude supported by «Pravda», among others, which pressed the workers to continue the war against Germany, to save the revolution. Lenin affirmed that we will only have to defend the revolution when the party of the proletariat, and not the opportunists agents of the bourgeoisie, have come to power.

It is known that the watchword of the Bolshevik party had hitherto been that of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry". Trotsky does not claim in his text that this formula is false, that it has failed historically and that Lenin substituted for it a formula equivalent to that of "Permanent revolution", which has been argued at other times by Trotsky and his friends.

Quite to the contrary, Trotsky asserts the accuracy of this formula which the revolutionary genius of Lenin conceived and applied, i.e. as a tactical and agitational slogan to be used before the fall of tsarism. And this is what actually occurred, since after tsarism, we do not have a pure bourgeois parliamentary democracy, but a duality between a weak bourgeois parliamentary State and the Soviets, nascent organs of power of the proletariat and the peasantry.

But from the opening of this phase, where history confirmed the accuracy of the Leninist conception of the revolution, Lenin passes immediately – in the political orientation of party, if not in the external succession of propagandistic formulations – to a more advanced position in preparation for the second

and veritable revolution, of the march towards the soviet and socialist dictatorship of the proletariat through armed insurrection, of course always guiding the peasant masses in their struggle for emancipation from the feudal agrarian regime.

Trotsky was insistent on the problem of the incomprehension of the true strategic genius of Lenin by even those who, like so many of our Italian maximalists, are constantly invoking his theory and his practice of the «compromise» and of elastic manoeuvres. Lenin manoeuvred, but the manoeuvre never lost sight of the supreme objective. For others, the operation too often becomes the aim in itself and paralyses the possibility of revolutionary action, while in Lenin we see this suppleness giving way to the most implacable rigidity in his desire for the revolution and to destroy its enemies and saboteurs..

Lenin himself, in passages quoted by Trotsky, stigmatizes this incapacity to adapt to new revolutionary situations, and the fact of taking a polemical formulation, essential to the Bolsheviks at the previous time, as the ultimate word in their later policy. It is the grand question of the communist tactic and of its dangers, which we have discussed for years, even outside of the sphere of the conclusions necessary to draw to prevent all dangerous sleight-of-hand corruption of the real revolutionary contents of Lenin's instructions.

Trotsky explains why for Lenin it has always been clear that after having passed through the transitional stage of the democratic dictatorship, i.e. by a petit-bourgeois phase, the Russian revolution would arrive at the phase of integral communist dictatorship, even before the advent of socialism in the Occident. When they recommended a coalition workers' government and condemned the insurrectionary struggle, the rightists showed that they had adopted the menshevik position according to which, even after having been liberated from tsarism, Russia had to await the victory of the socialist revolution in other countries before going beyond the forms of bourgeois democracy. In his preface Trotsky vigorously condemns this very characteristic error of anti-Leninism.

These questions were heatedly discussed by the party at the time of the April 1917 conference. From this moment on Lenin never ceases to forcefully reaffirm the perspective of the seizure of power. He denounces parliamentary deceit, later he castigates as «shameful» the decision of the party to take part in the "pre Parliament"– the provisional democratic assembly convened while waiting for the elections to the Constituent Assembly. After July, while following the evolution of the orientation of the masses with the greatest attention, and while understanding the need for a self imposed waiting period after the "test" and reconnaissance of the failure of the insurrection missed in the same month, he warns his comrades against the trap of Soviet legalism.

In other words, he says that one should not bind ones hands by pushing back the fight, not only to the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, but also to that of the second Congress of Soviets and to the the decisions of its majority which could continue to be in opportunist hands after the hour had sounded for the armed overthrow of the democratic government. It is known that at a certain time he declared that he would lead the party to power even without the Soviets, the reason for which certain rightists accused him of being «Blanquist».

And Trotsky (upon whom the imbecilic champions of democracy would like to base themselves against the dictatorial theses of the Bolsheviks) once again instructs the European comrades not to make a fetish of majority, including within the Soviets: our Great Elector is the rifle in the hands of the insurgent worker, who does not dream of depositing a paper ballot but of striking the enemy.

That is not opposed to the Leninist conception of the need for having the masses on our side and the impossibility of substituting their revolutionary action by that of a handful of resolute men. But, when we have the masses with us, it is necessary, and this is the argument under discussion here, that a party or a military leadership does not prevent their struggle by diversions or hesitations. We can await the masses, and this is our duty, but the party cannot make the masses wait, under penalty of causing defeat. Here is the method of formulating the terrible problem which weighs upon us, since the bourgeoisie, in full crisis, still remains untoppled.

On October 10, 1917 the Central committee of the Bolshevik party decides on the insurrection. Lenin has won.

But the decision is not unanimous. The following day the dissidents send a letter to the principal party organizations on “the actual situation” which denounces the decisions of the majority, declares the insurrection impossible and defeat certain. On October 18 they write a new letter against the decision of the party. But on October 25 the insurrection is victorious and the Soviet government installed in Petrograd. On November 4, after the victory, the opponents of Lenin resign from the Central Committee to have the freedom to appeal to the party to support their theses: that one should not, as Lenin sustains, constitute a government of the party, but to make use of the power conquered to form a government of all the Soviet parties, i.e. with the right Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries represented in the Soviets. It is also necessary to convene the Constituent Assembly and to let it function; these positions are defended including in the Central Committee, until the line of Lenin prevailed which the Constituent Assembly is say dispersed by the red guards.

The history of these dissensions is quite short. The comrades in question “recognized their error”. This is as it should be and it is not a question of cuffing these comrades around a bit. But it was inevitable that they would recognize their error, faced with the victory of the revolution and its consolidation – unless they were to pass directly into the camp of the counter-revolution. There remains the problem in all its gravity which flows from this simple observation: if Lenin had been in a minority in the Central Committee, if the insurrection had failed because mistrust towards it became widespread on account of of the initial distrust of a section of its leaders, those would have held exactly the same discourse which the comrades in charge of the leadership of the German Party had at the time of the crisis of October 1923. What Lenin managed to conjure up through entreaty in Russia, the International could not conjure in Germany. In these conditions, if the International wants to really live in the tradition of Lenin, it must make certain that it doesn’t find itself in this situation again: history is not generous with revolutionary occasions, and to allow them to pass by involves painful consequences which we all know about and all suffer from.

The comrades should take into account that the contents of the debate are not to be found entirely in the reasons advanced in the public motion which blames Trotsky, nor in the polemical arguments repeated and summarized by the author of articles signed A.P. Concerning comrade Trotsky, the problems which were raised come back to what I have set forth; but it is true that the other side has responded by putting the political activity undertaken by the comrade Trotsky throughout his life on trial. There is talk of a “Trotskyism” which has existed continuously against Leninism from 1903 until today, and which always existed in the form of a rightist struggle against the positions of the Bolshevik party. This is how disagreements are poisoned, but worse, this diverted the discussion by eluding the vital problem posed by Trotsky in the passages on which we have reported.

I will say only a few words on the charges hurled against Trotsky coming out of the questions raised in his foreword.

There was a Trotskyism between 1903 and 1917; it was in fact an attitude of centrism halfway between the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, rather confused and theoretically doubtful, oscillating in practice from right to left, and which was duly fought by Lenin without too much discomfiture, as was his habit vis-a-vis his opponents. In none of his writings from 1917 onwards, that is to say since his adhesion to the Bolshevik party, did Trotsky return to assert or defend his positions of that epoch. He recognizes them as erroneous: in his last letter to the Central committee he says that he "regards Trotskyism as a tendency which disappeared a long time ago". There are only accusations of him having spoken of "errors in organization".

But one should not seek the rupture of Trotsky with his anti-Leninist past in a legal act of abjuration, but in his efforts and his writings from 1917 on. In his preface, Trotsky makes a point of showing his complete agreement with Lenin before and during October; but he refers explicitly to the period which followed the February revolution, and he observes that before even returning to Russia, in articles written in America he had expressed opinions comparable with those of Lenin in his letters from Switzerland. He never though of trying to hide that it is he, who, faced with the lesson of history, moved on to Lenin's terrain, whereas previously he had wrongly combated him

Trotsky discusses with all the right and position as member of the Bolshevik party who reproaches the right-wing of his party for having an attitude which repeats the same Menshevik errors of the revolutionary period. The fact of having been, in the period previous to the revolution and the supreme struggle, unscathed by such errors and at Lenin's side, of his school, gave only greater responsibilities to Lenin's lieutenants to genuinely support the action and not to fall into rightist errors.

It is thus to completely reverse the terms of the debate, based on partial information, to allot to Trotsky's thesis in the foreword of "1917", the position according to which the proletarian revolution was impossible in Russia before it took place in other countries, since it is on the contrary a critique which states that this position was at the root of the errors of the right.

If we admit that there is a new Trotskyism, which is not the case, no link could attach it to old. In any event the new Trotskyism would be left, while the old one was from the right. And between the two ranges the magnificent communist activity of Trotsky against the opportunist social-democrats, besides this was recognized without hesitation as rigorously Bolshevik by all other collaborators of Lenin .

Where is the polemic of Lenin against opportunist better assisted than in the writings of Trotsky, and it is enough to cite only one of them: "Terrorism and Communism"? In all the congresses of the Russian party, of the Soviets, of the International, Trotsky has submitted reports and speeches which trace in a fundamental manner the policy of Communism in recent years; and they were never opposed to those of Lenin on the key questions: never, absolutely, if we speak about the International Congresses , for which Trotsky always prepared the official proclamations, in which he divided, step by step, with Lenin, the polemics and the body of work achieved to consolidate the new International in disencumbering it of opportunist residues.

During this period of time no other interpreters of Lenin have reached the surety of conception of Trotsky on the fundamental questions of doctrine and of revolutionary policy, whereas he had had risen

to the level of the Master in the effectiveness, the precision of the presentation, and the explanation of these questions, in discussion and propaganda.

I do not want to even speak about the role taken on by Trotsky as a leader in the revolutionary struggle and in political and military defence of the revolution, because I do not have either the need or the intention to make his apology; but I believe that this past must be called upon to underline the injustice that there is in exhuming the old judgement of Lenin on Trotsky's love of the"left revolutionary phrase", an insinuation that it is best to reserve for those who showed that they can only see revolutions from afar, and perhaps most Western "ultra-Bolsheviks'.

It is said that Trotsky represented the petit-bourgeois elements during the preceding discussion in the party. We can't take up all the contents of this discussion, but it should not be forgotten: firstly, that with regard to the economic policy of the republic, the majority of the party and of the Central Committee took up the proposals of Trotsky and the opposition; secondly, that the opposition had a heterogeneous composition and that in the same way that one cannot allot to Trotsky the opinions of Radek on the German question, similarly it is inaccurate to allot to him those of Krassin and others in favour of more wide-ranging concessions to foreign capital; thirdly, that in the question of the internal organization of the party, Trotsky did not support systematic splitting and decentralization, but a Marxist conception of discipline, neither mechanical, nor stifling. The need for examining this important matter more clearly becomes more urgent with each passing day and besides would require a separate exposé. But the insinuation that Trotsky was made the spokesperson of petit-bourgeois tendencies is destroyed by the charge according to which he underestimated the role of peasants in the revolution compared to that industrial proletariat - another free axis of the polemic, whereas Lenin's agrarian theses found a disciple and a faithful partisan in Trotsky (on this subject Lenin wasn't at all defensive in saying that he had stolen the program of the Socialist-revolutionists). All these attempts to lend anti-Bolshevik features to Trotsky do not persuade us at all.

After the revolution Trotsky was opposed to Lenin, on the question of the of the Brest Litovsk peace and about State trade unionism. They are undoubtedly important questions, but they are not sufficient to qualify other leaders who had the same positions as Trotsky at the time as anti-Leninists. It is not on partial errors of this kind on which one can build a complex assembly to make of Trotsky our Antichrist with flurries of quotations and anecdotes where the chronology as well as the logic are upside down.

It is also said that Trotsky is in dissension with the International on the analysis of the world situation, that he considers it with pessimism, and that the facts have contradicted his forecast of a democratico-pacifist phase. It is a fact that he was entrusted with the mandate to write the Manifesto of the Vth Congress on precisely this subject, and that this was adopted with unimportant modifications. Trotsky speaks about the pacifist phase as a "danger" against which Communists must react by underlining, during these democratic periods, the inevitability of the civil war and the alternative between two opposite dictatorships. As regards pessimism, it is precisely he who denounces and fights the pessimism in others, in affirming, as Lenin said of October, that if one lets pass the opportune moment for the insurrectionary struggle, there follows an unfavourable period: the situation in Germany has confirmed this analysis only too well.

Trotsky's schema on the world situation does not merely restrict itself to seeing the installation of left bourgeois governments everywhere; it is on the contrary a profound analysis of the forces at play in the

capitalist world, which no declaration of the International currently actually calls into question, based on the fundamental thesis of the insurmountability of the current capitalist crisis.

Anti-Bolshevik elements are ready to support Trotsky. Obviously, they must be delighted at the official assertion according to which one of our major leaders is supposed to have rejected our fundamental political positions, that he is against the dictatorship and for the return to petit-bourgeois forms, etc. But already the bourgeois press have recognized that there was nothing there to hope for, that Trotsky more than any other is against democracy and for the relentless violence of the revolution against its enemies.

If bourgeois and social-traitors really hope that Trotsky undertakes a revision Leninism or Communism in their direction, it will be at their expense. Only the silence and the inaction of Trotsky could give some probability to these lies, to these speculations of our enemies. For example, the foreword which is in question was published, undoubtedly, by a fascist review; but the editors were forced of to announce at the end of the text that, unfortunately, no one on earth could think that the opinion of the review could be further away from that of Trotsky. And “Avanti!” simply makes everyone laugh when it speaks in praise of Trotsky, while at the same time it publishes the passage where, to support his theses, it cites the Italian case as a demonstration of the failure of the revolution because of the inadequacy of the parties, while thus referring precisely to the socialist party!

The German rightists accused of Trotskyism object that this is not true, because they support exactly the opposite of what Trotsky wrote: the impossibility of revolution in Germany in October 1923. Moreover the alleged solidarity of the other side can never be used as an argument in order to establish our positions. This is what this experience has taught us.

Trotsky must be judged on what he says and what he writes. Communists should not make questions of people; if some day Trotsky betrayed, he would have to be unmasked and scorched without regard. But one should not be convinced of treason by the excesses of his contradictors or their privileged position in the debate. All the accusations about his past are bowled over by the simple observation that they have all been provoked by his forward to «1917» which does not refer to this question at all, whereas previously these attacks were not considered to be necessary.

The polemic against Trotsky left the workers with a feeling of sorrow and produced a smile of triumph on the lips of our enemies. So good, we want friends and enemies to know that even without and against Trotsky the proletarian party could live and overcome. But as long as the conclusions are those to which the debate leads today, Trotsky is not the man to have passed over to the enemy.

In his declarations he did not disavow a line of what he wrote, and that is not contrary to Bolshevik discipline; but he also declared that he had never wanted to constitute a faction on a political and personal basis and that he was more than ever disciplined to the party. One could not want anything more of a man who is among the worthiest of being the head of the revolutionary party.

But beyond the sensational question of his personality, problems that he raised remain: they should not be eluded, but faced.

February 8, 1925

(1) Plenum of the Central committee of the Russian CP, at the end of January 1925, accept the resignation of Trotsky of its function of “Commissar of War” defined the “present Trotskyism” as a “falsification of Communism” and accuses Trotsky of continuing of defending an “anti-Bolshevik platform”.

Intervention at the 6th ECCI of the Third International (1926)

Comrade Ferdi, Chairman, declared the session open and called upon Comrade

Bordiga to speak.

Comrade Bordiga (Italy):

«Comrades, I think it is absolutely impossible to limit our discussion to the scope of the draft theses and of the report.

We have a situation in the International which cannot be considered satisfactory.

In a certain sense we are in a state of crisis. A summary review of the history of the C.I. will show that there is a consensus concerning the existence of a crisis.

After the disaster of the Second International the formation of the Communist International was accomplished on the strength of the slogan: Formation of Communist Parties. Everyone agreed that there existed objective conditions for struggle, but we were minus the organ of this struggle.

At the Third Congress, after the experience of many events and especially of the March Action in Germany in 1921, the International was compelled to admit that the formation of Communist Parties alone was not sufficient. Fairly strong sections of the Communist International had been formed in all the most important countries, but the problem of. revolutionary action had not been solved.

The Third Congress had to discuss this problem and had to place on record that it was not enough to have Communist Parties, even if all the objective conditions for struggle are there, that it is essential that our Parties be able to exercise influence over the masses.

I am not at all against the conception of the Third Congress of the necessity for mass solidarity, as a premise to the final offensive, but I would like to say that such a conception, namely as expressed by the Third Congress, does not by any means include the idea of united front tactics: the latter corresponds to a defensive position created by a capitalist offensive against which endeavours are made to bring out all the workers on the basis of immediate demands.

The application of the United Front led to errors after the Third Congress and especially after the Fourth Congress. In our opinion, these tactics were adopted without making their real meaning perfectly clear. We were all in agreement when it was a question of making the economic and immediate demands the basis of these tactics, demands which sprang up owing to the offensive of the enemy. But when there was an intention of making the new formulae of a Workers' Government the basis of a United Front, we opposed this, declaring that this slogan made us exceed the limits of effective revolutionary tactics.

After the October defeat in Germany in 1923, the International recognised that the mistake had been made.

But instead of introducing a thorough change into the decisions of the Fourth Congress, all that was done was to hit out against certain comrades. Scapegoats had to be found. And they were found in the German Party. There was an absolute failure to recognise that the entire International was responsible. Nevertheless, the theses were revised at the Fifth Congress and a new formula of the Workers' Government was issued.

Why did we disagree, with the theses of the Fifth Congress? In our opinion, the revisions were not adequate. The theses and speeches were very Left, but this was not enough for us: we foresaw what would happen after the Fifth Congress and that is why we are not satisfied.

I will now deal with Bolshevisation, and I assert that its balance sheet is unsatisfactory from all viewpoints. It was said: We have only one Party which has accomplished a revolutionary victory - the Russian Bolshevik Party. Hence we must follow the path pursued by the Russian Party in order to achieve victory. This is quite true, but it isn't enough. The Russian Party carried on its struggle under special conditions, that is to say, in a country where the feudal autocracy had not yet been beaten by the capitalist bourgeoisie. For us it is essential to know how to attack a modern, democratic bourgeois State which on the one hand has all the resources to corrupt and mislead the proletariat and which on the other hand is even more efficient on the field of armed struggle than the Tsarist autocracy. This problem will not be found in this history of the Russian Communist Party and if one interprets Bolshevisation in the sense that the revolution of the Russian Party provided the solution for all strategic problems of the revolutionary struggle, the conception of Boishevisation is inadequate. The glorious experience of the Russian Party is precious to us from the viewpoint of the revolution, of tactical problems, but apart from this we must have something else. It is only in the domain that the lesson of the Russian Revolution and of the restoration of Marxism by Lenin are conclusive.

Much of the problem of Bolshevisation will be found in the question of the reorganisation of the Parties. In 1925 it was said that the entire organisation of the Sections of the International was wrong, that one had not yet applied even the ABC of organisation. Very strange that one should not have noticed this before. Eight years after the victory in Russia we are told: The other Parties are impotent because they are not organised on the basis of factory nuclei. Well, Marx and Lenin are there to show us that organisation is not everything in the revolutionary struggle. To solve the problem of revolution, it is not enough to issue an organisational formula. These are problems of forces and not of forms.

I contest that the Communist Party must be necessarily organised on a factory nucleus basis. In the organisation theses brought forward by Lenin at the Third Congress, it is repeatedly stated that in questions of organisation there can be no solution which is equally good for all countries. We do not contest that the situation in Tsarist Russia was such as to justify the Russian Communist Party to organise itself on a factory nucleus basis.

But we believe that nuclei present certain disadvantages in other countries. Why?

Above all, because a group of workers organised as a nucleus cannot have the opportunity for discussing all political questions.

You will probably say that we demand what is demanded by all Right elements, that is to say, the organisation of workers into sections where the intellectuals lead in all discussions. But this danger will always exist and one must bear in mind that the working class cannot do without intellectuals, which, whatever one may say, are necessary to it.

The movement needs organisers and agitators who must be recruited among the deserters of the other classes or else among advanced workers. But the danger of corruption and demagogy inherent to these elements once they become leaders is as great with them as with the intellectuals. In certain cases, ex-workers have played the most ignominious role in the labour movement. Moreover, does organisation on a factory nucleus basis put an end to the role of the intellectuals? They constitute at present, together with ex-workers, the entire apparatus of the Party and their role has become more dangerous. Then you cannot be ignorant of the fact that there is a complete technical solidarity between the state apparatus and the employers, and when a workman endeavours to organise the others, the employer calls in the police. This makes the activity of the Party in the factories much more dangerous. It is an easy matter for the bourgeoisie to find out what work is done in the factory and that is why we propose to have the basic organisation of the Party outside the factories.

In Russia the relations between the capitalist employers and the state were different. Moreover, the problem was bound to arise and the danger of non-political «labourism» which we see in the nuclei was not so great.

Does this attitude of ours mean that we will neglect Party work in the factories? Certainly not, one must have the Party organisation in the factories, but it must not form the basis of the Party. It is essential to have Party organisation in the factories to carry on the policy of the Party. It is impossible to be in contact with the working class without a factory organisation.

Therefore, we are for a network of Communist organisations in the factories but political discussions must take place in the territorial sections.

I will deal now with another point of view: that of the internal regime of the Party and of the Communist International.

Another discovery has just been made: what we hitherto lacked in all sections is iron Bolshevik discipline, of which the Russian Party is setting us an example. It must be forbidden to form fractions, and all Party members, regardless of their opinion, are compelled, to participate in the common work even in the Central Committee.

It is a fact that we must have a Communist Party which is absolutely united, a Party without divergencies of opinions and different groups within it. But how is this to be achieved? How are we to arrive at an effective and vital unity and not at the paralysation of the Party? At the first signs of crisis within the Party one must first find out its causes. Our view is that they cannot be found by means of a kind of criminal code of the Party. Lately a certain kind of sport has been indulged in the Parties, a pastime which consists in hitting out, intervening, breaking up, illtreating, and it very frequently happens that very good revolutionaries get hit. I think, that this terrorist sport within the Party has nothing in common with our work. We must hit and break up capitalism, it is on this field that our Party can show its prowess and I believe that on this field we will witness the defeat of many of our internal terrorists within the iron fist!

The real merit does not consist in crushing rebellion but in preventing it. The best proof of unity is its results and not a regime of threats and terror. Those elements who deviate in a decisive manner from the common path must be hit hard. But if the application of the criminal code becomes the order of the day in a society this means that this society is far from perfect.

Sanctions must be applied in exceptional cases, they must not be the rule, a pastime and an ideal of the leaders of a Party. It is all this which needs changing if we are to form a solid block.

By the by, there are very good paragraphs on this subject in the theses before us. A little more freedom will be given. But will this be put into practice? The fact is that we need a healthier regime in the Party, it is absolutely necessary that the Party should be able to form an opinion of its own. One must pursue this aim in order that the rank and file of the Party should have a common political conscience.

I will deal now with the fractions. I take the view that to raise the problem of fractions as a moral problem, as a problem of criminality is utterly wrong. Is there a historic example showing that any comrade has formed a fraction for his own amusement? Such a thing has never happened. Experience has shown that opportunism makes its appearance among us always in the guise of unity. Moreover, the history of fractions goes to show that if fractions do no honour to the Parties in which they have been formed, they do honour to those who have formed them. The history of fractions is the history of Lenin.

The formation of a fraction is an indication that something is wrong, and to remedy the evil one must not strike but one must rather investigate what was the historic cause of the disease which necessitated the formation of the fraction. Fractions are not the disease, they are only the symptom, and if you want to cure a disease, you must first of all discover it and understand it.

Let us take for example, the crisis of the French Party. What was the procedure in this Party against the fractions? A very bad procedure, for instance, with respect to a syndicalist fraction which is on the point of formation. Certain comrades, expelled from the Party, have returned to their former affections and are publishing a periodical to explain their ideas. They are, of course, wrong, but what has caused them to do so. The naughty boys, Rosmer and Monatte, did not act on the impulse of a caprice. The causes for their action are to seek in the errors of the French Party and of the entire International.

These fundamental errors threaten to reappear within the proletariat because the International and the Communist Parties have not been able to demonstrate by deeds the enormous difference which exists between a policy conceived in a revolutionary and Leninist spirit and that of the old Social Democratic Parties.

It is the fault of the erroneous policy of the International if the idea still prevails among us (so completely eschewed by us in theory and on the field of action) that the Party and political work are things not fit for the working class and that the latter must follow the saner and safer path of purely economic action through the trade unions. It is a fact that our policy lends itself to being confused with the vulgar art or technique common to all who come into touch with politics.

The Right Fraction in France, I do not hesitate saying so, is a healthy fraction, it does not in itself represent the permeation of petty bourgeois elements.

It is the reflex of the healthy discontent of the proletariat with the unsatisfactory internal regime of the Party and with the contradictions in its policy, in spite of the utterly false rectifications which it proposes on the tactical field.

To correct errors it is not sufficient to chop off heads, one should rather find out and eliminate the initial errors which cause the discontent and determine the formation of fractions.

It is said to us that the system of bolshevising is based upon the fact that the action of every central committee is directed by the Communist International, by which the minorities in the Party are offered a security. On this occasion it is sufficient to repeat the criticism which already has been made several times to the kind of connection between the International Executive Committee and the sections; It is artificial enough and is based upon consideration of an inner diplomatic character as well as on the necessity of parliamentary manoeuvres inside our international meetings. The intervention of the International Executive Committee comes nearly always unexpectedly and hits those elements with which a general solidarity of the International has been brought about, in a thoroughly compromising manner. It was not different with the Open Letter to the German Party which was published in a moment when the Left leadership of the C.P.G. was regarded everywhere as the authentic representative of the Comintern, of Leninism, of the Vth World Congress and of the victory of the bolshevisation.

Yet we are told: even if there are some shortcomings in the kind of the international connections, the leading role of the Russian Party offers us a good way out. Yet here also we must make some reservations. I shall in my later exposition return to the question of the Russian Party and its problems. In passing, it is observed that one must ask where the leading factor of the Russian Party is to be found. Is it the old Leninist guard? But after the last events it is clear that this can split and that both sides can with the same energy claim the right to speak in the name of bolshevism and accuse each other of deviating from true Leninism.

I draw the conclusion from it that this search for a point of support of the system of bolshevising leads to no fixed, undisputed result. The correct solution is to be found elsewhere. We must base ourselves upon the entire International, on the entire advance guard of the world proletariat. Our organisation can be compared to a pyramid. For all its sides are striving to a common summit. Yet this pyramid places itself upon its top and its centre of gravity is therefore too unsteady. It must be turned upside down, the top must be the other way up in order that it must stand on a firm basis.

Having thus summed up the past action of the International, it is essential to give an appreciation of the present situation and of the future tasks. The general statement concerning stabilisation has been accepted by everyone. There have been certain vacillations with respect to the development of the general crisis of capitalism.

We have before us the perspective of the definite decay of capitalism, but in my opinion certain errors of appreciation have crept in with respect to the perspective.

If we proceed like a scientific society for the study of social events, we can arrive at objective conclusions of a more or less optimistic or of a more or less pessimistic character, and this is a manner which does not take events into account. But such a purely scientific perspective will not do for a revolutionary Party which participates in all events, which is in itself a factor. It is essential to have

always in readiness a second perspective in accordance with Lenin's formula which Zinoviev mentioned here (examples of Marxist forecasts regarding the revolution of 1846 and Lenin's forecasts regarding . the Russian Revolution after 1905). The Party cannot renounce its final task, its revolutionary will, even if the cold, scientific perspective is unfavourable. I cannot accept the formula: «The situation is now unfavourable, we no longer have with us the situation of 1920, and this justifies the internal crisis in certain Sections and in the International».

A changed situation can produce a quantitative but not qualitative change in the Party. If the Party enters upon the stage of crisis this means that its tactics have been guilty of opportunism. Otherwise, the struggle against opportunism in 1914 would be devoid of meaning.

The epoch of capitalism which had reached its full development before the war has objectively contributed to the explanation of social-patriotism, but from the viewpoint of the revolutionaries of that epoch it could not and should not lead to its justification or even its toleration as something inevitable. If we consider the state of crisis in capitalism to be favourable, not to a revolutionary attack but also to an inadequate preparation of our Party, this means that in order to be able to accomplish our task we expect from history a development particularly adapted to exigencies which originate in a wrong scheme of perspective which must be rejected and fought against. This will be the sum in the case of the bad solution of the problem of leaders as criticised by Trotsky in his preface to «1917», in an analysis with which I agree completely and which does not appertain to the unfavourable situation, but to the general political and tactical errors which have impeded the process of the selection of the revolutionary General Staff.

There is another scheme of perspective which must be fought against and which confronts us when we turn our attention from the purely economic analysis of the social and political forces. It is generally accepted that we must consider the fact that a Left Bourgeois Party is in power as a political situation favourable to our preparation and to our struggle. This wrong perspective is first of all a contradiction of the first because it most frequently happens in the state of economic crisis favourable to us that the bourgeoisie organises a Right Government for a reactionary offensive, which means that objective conditions become unfavourable to us for a Marxist solution of the problem.

Generally speaking, it is not true that the fact of a Left bourgeois Government will be favourable to us: the contrary may be the case. Historical examples have shown us how absurd it would be to imagine that in order to lighten our task a so-called middle class government with a liberal programme would make its appearance, a government which would enable us to organise an effective and united struggle against a weakened State apparatus.

In 1919 we witnessed in Germany the access of a Left bourgeois bloc to power. We witnessed the management of affairs in the hands of the Social Democrats. In spite of the military defeat from which Germany had just emerged, the State machine had not been shaken to its foundations.

After we shall have promoted by our tactics the access to power of a Left Government, we will have obtained more favourable conditions for ourselves? No, this is not at all the case. It is a Menshevik conception to imagine that the State machine will be different in the hands of the lower middle classes to what it is in the hands of the big bourgeoisie, and to consider such a period as a transition period leading to the epoch of the seizure of power. Certain parties of the bourgeoisie have an appropriate programme and bring forward appropriate demands with the object of attracting the lower middle

classes. Generally speaking, this is not a process in which power passes from one social group to another, it is only a new defensive method of the bourgeoisie against us, and when this takes place we cannot say that this is the most propitious moment for our intervention. This change can be utilised but only provided our preceding position has been perfectly clear and has not coincided with the demands of the Left Bloc element.

For instance, in Italy, can it be said that Fascism is the triumph of the Right bourgeoisie over the Left bourgeoisie? Certainly not, fascism is something more than that, it is the synthesis of two methods of defence of the bourgeois class. The recent acts of the Fascist Government have clearly shown that the semi-bourgeois and petty-bourgeois composition of fascism does not prevent the latter being a direct agent of capitalism. As a mass organisation (the fascist organisation has a million members) it is endeavouring not only to strike down ruthlessly its opponents, especially the adversaries who dare attack the State machine but also to mobilise the masses by means of Social Democratic permeation methods.

On this field fascism has suffered evident defeats. This bears out our point of view on the class struggle but what is moist forcibly shown by all this is the absolute impotence of the middle classes. During the last few years they have accomplished three complete evolutions: in 1919-20 they crowded our revolutionary meetings; In 1921-22 they formed cadres of «black shirts»; in 1923 they went over to the Opposition after Matteotti's assassination; today they are coming back to Fascism. Always with the strongest is their motto.

The wrong conception of the advantages which we could derive from the access to power of a Left Bloc Government consists in imagining the middle classes capable of an independent solution of the problem of power. In my opinion, there is a very serious error in the so-called new tactic which has been applied in Germany and in France and with which the proposal made by the Italian Party to the Aventino anti-fascist opposition is connected. I cannot understand how a Party, so rich in revolutionary traditions as our German Party in the face of the accusation of the Social Democrats that it was playing Hindenburg's game by bringing forward an independent candidature. Generally speaking, the strong point of the bourgeoisie with regard to the ideological counter-revolutionary organisation of the masses in offering a political and historical dualism between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, supported by the Communist Party not as the only dualism possible in the social perspective and in connection with the changes of parliamentary power, but as the only dualism historically capable of bringing about the revolutionary rupture of a class State machine and the establishment of a new State.

But we cannot bring home this dualism to the consciousness of the masses merely by ideological declarations and abstract propaganda. We can only do so by our actions and by the evidence and the clarity of our political position. When it was proposed to the anti-fascist bourgeoisie in Italy to constitute itself as an anti-parliament in which Communists would have participated - even if it was stated in our press that no confidence should be placed in these Parties, even if the pretence was made to expose them by this means - in reality we contributed to encouraging the masses to expect the overthrow of fascism by the Aventino, to make them believe in the possibility of a revolutionary struggle and the formation of anti-State not on a class basis of collaboration with the petty bourgeois elements and even with entirely capitalist groupings. In view of the failure of the Aventino this manoeuvre did not result in bringing the masses into a class front. This new tactic was not only alien to the resolution of the Fifth Congress, it was in my opinion even alien to the principles and the programme of Communism.

Under what aspect can we view our future tasks? This assembly could not consider the problem in all seriousness without considering the fundamental question of the historic connection between Soviet Russia and the capitalist world. The most important problem for us apart from the problem of the revolutionary strategy of the proletariat, of the world movement, of the peasants and the oppressed colonial peoples, is the problem of the State policy of the Communist Party in Russia. This policy will have to solve the problem of class relations in Russia, it will have to adopt the necessary measures with regard to the influence of the peasant class and that of the budding semi-bourgeois sections of the population, it will have to contend with the pressure from outside, a pressure which today is purely economic and diplomatic but might be military tomorrow. In view of the fact that world revolution has not yet developed in the other countries the entire Russian policy will have to be carried on in close contact with the general revolutionary policy of the proletariat.

I do not propose to enter into details concerning these questions but I assert that the main base for this struggle is certainly the working class of Russia and its Communist Party, and that it is also of the utmost importance to have the support of the proletariat of the capitalist States whose class consciousness and the fact that it is in constant contact with the capitalist adversary are indispensable to our movement. The problem of Russian policy cannot be solved within the narrow precincts of the Russian movement, the entire proletarian Communist International would have to do its share in this.

Without such effective collaboration there are dangers ahead not only for revolutionary strategy in Russia but also for our policy in the capitalist States. There is every possibility for tendencies to spring up which would mean an attenuation of the character and the role of the Communist Parties. Already we are attacked on these lines. The attacks certainly do not come from our ranks but from the ranks of the Social Democrats and opportunists. This is connected with the manoeuvre for International Union Unity and with the attitude towards the Second International. All of us here agree that it is absolutely necessary to preserve the revolutionary independence of the Communist Parties. But it is necessary to point out the possibility of a tendency to replace Communist Parties by organisations of a less pronounced character with semi-class aims and neutralised any attenuated political functions. In the present situation it is the bounden duty of us all to defend the strictly Communist organisation of our International against any liquidatory tendencies.

After our criticism of the general lines of policy, can we consider the International, such as it is, sufficiently prepared for this double task of strategy in Russia and strategy in the other countries? Can we expect from this assembly the Immediate discussion of all the Russian problems? Unfortunately, the answer must be in the negative.

What we need at once is a serious revision of our internal regime and discussion in our Parties on the problem of tactics throughout the world and of the problems of State policy of Russia. But such an undertaking requires a new course and utterly different methods.

Neither the report nor the theses give us a sufficiently strong basis for all this. What we want is not official optimism, we must realise that we cannot prepare ourselves for the accomplishment of the formidable tasks which await the General Staff of the World Revolution by having recourse to such inadequate means as those which we can only too frequently see applied in the internal process of the life of our parties».

Correspondence Between Bordiga and Trotsky (1926)

Moscow, 2 March 1926

Dear comrade Trotsky,

At the current enlarged Executive, during a meeting of the delegation of the Italian section with comrade Stalin, certain questions were posed about your preface to the book The Lessons of October and about your criticisms of the October 1923 events in Germany. Comrade Stalin argued that there was a contradiction in your attitude to this point.

To avoid the risk of quoting comrade Stalin's words with the slightest inaccuracy, I will refer to the formulation of this same observation which is contained in a written text, i.e. the article by comrade Kusinen published in the French edition of International Correspondence, no 82, 17 December 1924. This article was published in Italian during the discussion for our IIIrd Congress (Unita, 31 August 1925). Here it is argued that:

before October 1923 you supported the Brandler group and you accepted the line decided on by the leading organs of the CI for the action in Germany;

in January 1924, in the theses drawn up with comrade Radek, you affirmed that the German party should not have launched the struggle in October;

it was only in September 1924 that you formulated your criticism of the errors of the KPD and the CI, which resulted in a failure to seize the most favourable moment for the struggle in Germany.

With regard to these supposed contradictions, I polemicised with comrade Kusinen in an article which appeared in Unita in October, basing myself on the elements that were known to me. But you alone can throw full light on the question, and I ask you to do this through a brief note of information that I will use for personal instruction. It would only be with the authorisation of the party organs that I would in the future use this to examine the problem in the press.

With communist greetings,

Amadeo Bordiga

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Trotsky's reply to Bordiga

Moscow, 2 March 1926

Dear comrade Bordiga

The exposition of the facts that you have provided is no doubt based on some obvious misunderstandings, which, once we have the documents to hand, can be dissipated without difficulty.

During the course of autumn 1923, I openly criticised the Central Committee led by comrade Brandler. On several occasions I had to officially express my concern that the CC would be unable to lead the German proletariat to the conquest of power. This affirmation was noted in an official document of the party. Several times, I had the occasion – in speaking with or about Brandler – to say that he had not understood the specific character of the revolutionary situation, to say that he was mixing up the revolution with an armed insurrection, that he was waiting fatalistically for the development of events rather than going to meet them, etc etc…

It is true that I opposed being mandated to work together with Brandler and Ruth Fischer because in such a period of struggle within the Central Committee this could have led to a complete defeat, all the more so because, in the essentials, i.e. with regard to the revolution and its stages, Ruth Fischer's position was full of the same social democratic fatalism. She had not understood that in such a period, a few weeks can be decisive for several years, and even for decades. I considered it necessary to support the existing Central Committee, to exert pressure on it, to insist that the comrades taking part in it act with the firmness demanded by their mandate, etc. No one at that time thought that it was necessary to replace Brandler and I did not make this proposal.

When in June 1924 Brandler came to Moscow and said that he was more optimistic about the development of the situation than during the events of the previous autumn, it became even clearer for me that Brandler had not understood this particular combination of conditions which creates a revolutionary situation. I said to him that he did not know how to distinguish the future of a revolution from its end. "Last autumn, the revolution was staring you in the face; you let the moment pass. Now, the revolution has turned its back on you, but you think that it's coming towards you". While I was fully convinced that in the autumn of 1923 the German party had let the decisive moment pass – as has been verified in reality – after June 1924, I was not in favour of the left carrying out a policy based on the assumption that the insurrection was still on the agenda. I explained this in a series of articles and speeches in which I tried to demonstrate that the revolutionary situation had already passed, that there would inevitably be a reflux in the revolution, that in the immediate future the Communist Party would inevitably lose influence, that the bourgeoisie would use the reflux to strengthen itself economically, that American capital would exploit this strengthening of the bourgeois regime through a wide-scale intervention in Europe around the slogans of 'normalisation', 'peace', etc. In such periods, I underlined, the general revolutionary perspective is a strategic and not a tactical one.

I gave my support to comrade Radek's June theses by telephone. I did not take part in drawing up these theses: I was ill. I gave my signature because they contained the affirmation that the German party had let the revolutionary situation pass it by, and that in Germany we were entering a phase not of immediate offensive but of defence and preparation. For me this was the decisive element.

The affirmation that I claimed that the German party would not lead the proletariat to the insurrection is false from start to finish. My main accusation against Brandler's CC was that he was unable to keep up with events by placing the party at the head of the popular masses for the armed insurrection in the period August-October.

I said and wrote that since the party had, through its fatalism, lost the rhythm of the events, it was too late to give the signal for the armed insurrection: the military had used the time lost to the revolution to occupy the important positions, and, above all, it was clear that the mass movement was in retreat. It is here that we see the specific and original character of the revolutionary situation, which can change radically in the space of one or two months. Lenin did not say in vain in September/October 1917 that it was "now or never", i.e. "the same revolutionary situation never repeats itself".

If in January 1924, for reasons of illness, I did not take part in the work of the Comintern, it's quite true that I did oppose what was put forward by Brandler in the Central Committee. It was my opinion that Brandler had paid dearly for the practical experience so necessary for a revolutionary leader. In this sense, I would certainly have defended the opinion that Brandler should stay in the CC had I not been outside Moscow at the time. Furthermore, I had little confidence in Maslow. On the basis of discussions I had with him, I considered that he shared all the faults of Brandler's positions with regard to the problems of the revolution, without having Brandler's good qualities, i.e. his serious and conscientious spirit. Independently of whether or not I was mistaken in this evaluation of Maslow, in indirect relation with the evaluation of the revolutionary situation in autumn 1923…..(translator's note: my version of the French text has a series of question marks here and the sentence ends with the phrase du mouvement advenu en novembre-decembre de la meme annee, but this doesn't seem to make sense. Is the text incomplete?).

One of the main experiences of the German insurrection was the fact that at the decisive moment, upon which, as I have said, the long-term outcome of the revolution depended, and in all the Communist Parties, a social democratic regression was, to a greater or lesser extent, inevitable. In our revolution, thanks to the whole past of the party and to the exemplary role played by Lenin, this regression was kept to a minimum; and this despite the fact that at certain moments the success of the party in the struggle was put into danger. It seemed to me, and seems all the more so now, that these social democratic regressions are unavoidable at decisive moments in the European Communist Parties, which are younger and less tempered. This point of view should enable us to evaluate the work of the party, its experience, its offensive, its retreats in all stages of the preparation for the seizure of power. By basing ourselves on this experience the leading cadres of the party can be selected.

L Trotsky

Letter from Amadeo Bordiga to Karl Korsch (1926)

Dear Comrade Korsch

The problems we face today are so important that we should really be discussing them face to face in detail. This unfortunately is not a possibility at the moment. Also I won't be covering all the points in your platform in this letter, some of which could give rise to useful discussions between us.

For example I don't think «the way you express yourself» about Russia is correct. We can't say that «the Russian revolution was a bourgeois revolution». The 1917 revolution was a proletarian revolution, even If generalising about the «tactical» lessons which can be derived from it is a mistake. The problem we are presented with now is this: What will become of the proletarian dictatorship in one country if revolutions don't follow elsewhere. There may be a counterrevolution, there may be an external intervention, or there may be a degenerative process in which case it would be a matter of uncovering the symptoms and reflexes within the communist party.

We can't simply say that Russia is a country where capitalism is expanding. The matter is much more complex; it is a question of new forms of class struggle, which have no historical precedents; it is a question of showing how the entire conception of the relations with the middle classes supported by the Stalinists is a renunciation of the communist programme. It would appear that you rule out the possibility of the Russian Communist Party engaging in any other politics than that which equates with the restoration of capitalism. This is tantamount to a justification of Stalin, or to support for the inadmissible politics of «giving up power». Rather it is necessary to say that a correct and classist policy for Russia would have been possible if the whole of the «Leninist old guard» hadn't made a series of serious mistakes in international policy.

And then I have the impression - I restrict myself to vague impressions -that in your tactical formulations, even when they are acceptable, you place too much value on influences arising from the objective circumstances which may today appear to have swung to the left. You are aware that we, the Italian lefts, are accused of not taking the situation into account: this is not true. And yet we do aim to construct a left line which is truly of a general, rather than of an occasional, application; one which remains intact during the various phases and developments of situations into the distant future.

I'm of course approaching the subject of your tactics. Whilst aiming to express myself in precise terms rather than with ... official formulas, I would say that they still seem to me, as regards the party's international relations, too elastic and too ... bolshevik. All the reasoning with which you justify your attitude toward the Fischer group, that is that you counted on pushing it to the left, or if it refused, to devalue it in the eyes of the workers, leaves me unconvinced, and it seems to me that de facto good results have not come of it. In general I think that the priority today is not so much in the realm of organisation and manoeuvres, but in the elaboration of a political ideology; one which is left-wing and international and based on the revealing experiences undergone by the Comintern. Weakness in this respect will mean that any international initiative will be very difficult.

I am also enclosing some notes regarding our position on questions pertaining to the Russian left. It is interesting that we see things differently: you who used to be highly suspicious of Trotsky have immediately subscribed to the programme of unconditional solidarity with the Russian opposition, betting on Trotsky rather than on Zinoviev (a preference I share).

Now that the Russian opposition has had to «submit», you talk of us having to make a declaration attacking it for having lowered the flag, something I wouldn't agree to do since we didn't believe in the first place that we should «merge» under the international flag unfurled by the Russian opposition.

Zinoviev and Trotsky are eminently realistic men, they understand that they will have to take a lot of punches before passing openly onto the offensive. We haven't yet arrived at the moment of definitive clarification, neither about the situation inside Russia or about its foreign policy.

1. We share the Russian left's positions on the state political directives of the Russian communist party. We don't agree with the direction taken by the Central Committee, which has been backed by a majority within it. It will lead to the degeneration of the Russian party and the proletarian dictatorship, and away from the programme of revolutionary Marxism and Leninism. In the past we didn't contest the Russian communist party's state policy as long as it remained on terrain corresponding to the two documents, Lenin's speech on the Tax in Kind and Trotsky's report to the 4th World Congress. We agree with Lenin's theses at the 2nd Congress.
2. The Russian Left's stance on the Comintern's tactics and politics, leaving aside the question of the past responsibility of many of its members, is inadequate. It is far removed from what we have been saying since the formation of the Communist International on the relationship between parties and masses, tactics and situation, between communist parties and other parties which allegedly represent the workers, on the evaluation of the alternating trends in bourgeois politics. They are closer to us, but not completely, on the question of the International's method of working and on the interpretation and functioning of international discipline and fractionism. Trotsky's positions on the German question of 1923 are satisfactory, as is his appraisal of the present world situation. The same cannot be said of the rectification made by Zinoviev on the questions of the united front and the International Red Union, or on other points, which have occasional and contingent value and place no trust in a tactic that avoids past error.
3. Given the politics of pressure and provocation from the leaders of the International and from its sections, any organisation of national and international groups, which are against the rightist deviation, involves the perils of secessionism. We needn't aspire to a splitting of the parties and the International. Before a split is possible, we need to allow the experience of an artificial and mechanical discipline, with the resulting absurd practices, to run their course, never renouncing however our political and ideological positions or expressing solidarity with the prevailing line. The groups which subscribe to a completely traditional left ideology aren't able to solidarise unconditionally with the Russian opposition but neither can they condemn its recent submission; which didn't indicate a reconciliation but rather conditions under which the only other alternative would have been a split. The objective situation both in Russia and elsewhere is such that to be hounded out of the Comintern would mean having still less chance of modifying the course of the working-class struggle than by being inside the part.
4. A solidarity and community of political declarations would not in any case be admissible with elements like Fischer and co. who, in other parties as well as the German one, have had recent involvement within party leaderships of the right and centre, and whose passage to the opposition coincided with the impossibility of preserving a party leadership in agreement with the international centre, and with criticisms made by the International of their work. This would be incompatible with the task of defending the new method and course of international communist work, which has to succeed to that of parliamentary-bureaucratic type manoeuvring.
5. All means which don't exclude the right to remain in the party must be used to denounce the prevailing trend as one leading to opportunism and in contrast with faithfulness to the programmatic principles of the International, principles which other groups apart from ourselves also have the right to defend provided they set themselves the problem of seeking out the initial deficiencies - not theoretical, but tactical, organisational and disciplinary ones which have rendered the Third International still more susceptible to degenerative dangers[...]

I will try and send you items on Italian matters. We haven't accepted the declaration of war, which consists in the suspension of some leading left-wingers; the matter hasn't led to measures of a

fractionist character. The batteries of discipline have fired into the wadding so far. It isn't a very satisfactory line and we aren't happy about it, but it is the least bad option possible. I'll send you a copy of our speech to the International.

In conclusion. I don't go along your view that we should make an international declaration and neither do I believe it to be a practical possibility. What I do believe on the other hand is that it would be useful to issue in various countries declarations which have an ideological and politically parallel content regarding the Russia and Comintern questions, without though going to the extreme lengths of offering up a fractionist «conspiracy», with each fraction freely elaborating their own thoughts and experiences.

As regards this internal question, I subscribe to the tactic that more often than not it is best to let matters take their course, which certainly as regards «foreign» affairs is very dangerous and opportunistic. I believe this to be the case especially with regard to the extraordinary play of the mechanism of internal power and the mechanical discipline which I persist in believing is destined to break down of its own accord. I'm aware this is inadequate and not very clear. I hope you'll excuse me and in any case I extend to you my cordial greetings.

A.Bordiga

The Lyons Theses (1926)

I. — General questions

1. — Principles of communism

The key doctrines of the communist party are founded on Marxism, which the struggle against opportunist deviations reinstated and set in place as the cornerstones of the 3rd International. These consist of: Dialectical Materialism as the method of conceiving of the world and human history; the fundamental doctrines contained in Marx’s Capital as method of interpretation of present-day capitalist economy; the programmatic formulations of The Communist Manifesto as the historical and political plan of emancipation of the world working class. The magnificent victorious experience of the Russian revolution, and the work of its leader Lenin, master of international communism, constitute the confirmation, the restoration and the consequent development of this system of principles and methods. It is not possible to be a communist or to militate in the ranks of the International if even one part of this is rejected.

Consequently, the communist party rejects and condemns the doctrines of the dominant class, which range from spiritualistic and religious theories — idealist in philosophy and reactionary in politics — to those which are positivist and of a free-thinking Voltairian variety — and anti-clerical and democratic in the realm of politics.

It likewise condemns certain political schools which have a following amongst the working-class: social-democratic reformism, which cherishes peaceful transition, without armed struggle, from capitalist to

workers' power, invoking class collaboration; syndicalism, which depreciates the political activity of the working class and the need for the party as supreme revolutionary organ; anarchism, which denies the historical necessity of the State and of the proletarian dictatorship as the means whereby the social order is transformed and class divisions suppressed. The communist party likewise opposes the many manifestations of spurious revolutionism which aim to resuscitate such tendencies by mingling them with communist theses — a danger that is designated by the now well-known term "centrism".

2. — Nature of the Party

The historical course of the proletariat's emancipation and the foundation of a new social order derives from the existence of the class struggle. Every class struggle is a political struggle; that is to say, it has the tendency to end up as a struggle for the conquest of political power and control of the new State organism. Consequently, the organ which leads the class struggle to its final victory is the class political party, which is the sole possible instrument firstly of revolutionary insurrection and then of government. From these simple but brilliant assertions of Marx, brought into maximum relief by Lenin, arises the definition of the party as an organisation of all those who are conscious of the system of opinions in which is summed up the historical task of the revolutionary class and who have decided to work for the victory of this class. Thanks to the party, the working class acquires the knowledge of the way forward and the will to take it.Historically, the party therefore represents the class in the successive stages of the struggle, even if only a greater or smaller part of the class is regrouped in its ranks. This equates with how Lenin defined the party at the 2nd World Congress.

Marx and Lenin's conception of the party stands in sharp contrast to the typically opportunist conception of the labourist or workerist party to whom all those individuals who are proletarian in terms of their social condition are admitted by right. Within such a party, even if exhibiting an apparent numerical strength, there may, and indeed in certain conditions there will, prevail the direct counter-revolutionary influence of the dominant class; a class represented by the dictatorship of the organisers and leaders who as individuals can derive just as well from the proletariat as from other classes. This is why Marx and Lenin fought against this fatal theoretical error, and never hesitated to break up false proletarian unity in practice in order to ensure, even during moments when the social activity of the proletariat was eclipsed, and even by way of small political groups of adherents of the revolutionary programme, that there would be continuity of the political function of the party in preparation for the subsequent tasks of the proletariat. This is the only possible way to achieve in the future the concentration of the greatest possible section of workers around the leadership and under the banner of a communist party capable of fighting and winning.

An immediate organisation of all workers on an economic basis cannot take on political — that is revolutionary — tasks since the separate and localised professional groups feel impelled to satisfy only the partial demands that arise as a direct consequence of capitalist exploitation. Only with the direct intervention at the head of the working-class of a political party, defined by thepolitical adherence of its members, do we find the progressive synthesis of these particular impulses into a common vision and activity, whereby individuals and groups are enabled to go beyond all particularism and accept difficulties and sacrifices for the final and general triumph of the working-class cause. The definition of the party as class party of the working class has a final and historical value for Marx and Lenin — not a vulgarly statistical and constitutional one.

Any conception of the problems of internal organisation that leads to the error of the labourist conception of the party reveals a serious theoretical deviation, inasmuch as it substitutes a democratic vision for a revolutionary one, and attributes more importance to utopian schemes for designing new organisations than to the dialectical reality of the collision of forces between the two opposed classes. In other words, it represents the danger of relapsing into opportunism. As regards the perils of degeneration of the revolutionary movement, and of the means to guarantee the required continuity of the political line in its leaders and members, these dangers can't be eradicated with organisational formulae. Less still is it possible to eliminate them with the formula which states that only authentic workers can be communist, a position contradicted in our own experience by the vast majority of examples, relating to both individuals and parties. The aforementioned guarantee must be sought elsewhere if we don't wish to contradict the fundamental marxist postulate; "the revolution isn't a question of forms of organisation"; a postulate in which are summed up all the conquests achieved by scientific socialism with respect to the first rantings of utopianism.

Our resolution to the current problems regarding the internal organisation of the International and the party set out from these conceptions on the nature of the class party.

3. — Party Tactics and Party Action

The way the party operates in response to specific situations, and relates to other groups, organisations, and institutions of the society in which it moves, constitute its' tactics. The general elements of this question must be defined in relation to our overall principles; it is then possible, on a secondary level, to establish concrete norms of action in relation to different types of practical problems and the successive phases of historical development.

By assigning to the revolutionary party its place and its role in the genesis of a new society, the marxist doctrine provides the most brilliant of resolutions to the question of freedom and determination in the activity of mankind. When extended to the abstract "individual" however, the question will continue to furnish material for the metaphysical lucubrations of the philosophers of the ruling and decadent class for years to come. Marxism on the other hand situates the problem in the correct light of a scientific and objective conception of society and history. The idea that the individual — and indeed one individual — can act on the outside world and shape it and mould it at will as though the power of initiative partook of some kind of divine inspiration is a million miles from our view. We equally condemn the voluntarist conception of the party according to which a small group of men, after having forged for themselves a profession of faith, proceed to spread and impose it by a gigantic effort of will, activity and heroism. It would, on the other hand, be a stupid and aberrant conception of marxism to believe that the course of history and revolution proceed according to fixed laws, with nothing remaining for us to do apart from discovering what these laws might be through objective research and attempting to formulate predictions about the future whilst attempting nothing in the domain of action; The upshot of this fatalist conception is to annul the function of the party and indeed its very existence. Marxist determinism doesn't attempt to find a solution halfway between these two solutions but in its powerful originality rises above them both. Because it is dialectical and historical, it rejects all apriorisms and doesn't claim to be able to apply, regardless of the historical epoch or the human groupings under consideration, one abstract solution to every problem. If the current development of the sciences does not allow for a complete investigation of what induces the individual to act, starting with physical and biological facts to arrive at a science of psychological activity, it is nevertheless possible to resolve the

problem in the field of sociology by applying to the problem, like Marx, the methods of investigation appropriate to experimental and positive science fully inherited by socialism and which are quite different from the self-styled materialistic and positivist philosophy adopted during the historical advance of the bourgeois class. By taking rational account of the reciprocal influences between individuals, through the critical study of economy and history, after having cleared the decks of every prejudice contained in the traditional ideologies, we can in a certain sense remove indeterminacy from the processes operating within each individual. With this as its point of departure, marxism has been able to establish an ideological system that isn't an immutable and fixed gospel, but a living instrument that enables the laws of the historical process to be followed and recognised. By means of the economic determinism discovered by Marx, which forms the basis of this system, the study of economic forms and relationships, and the development of the technical means of production, provides us with an objective platform on which to make soundly based enunciations about the laws of social life, and, to a certain degree, make predictions about its subsequent development. With this duly recorded, we must emphasise that the final solution doesn't mean we can say that having discovered the universal key, we may let economic phenomena follow their own immanent law and a predictable and established series of political facts will inevitably take place.

Undoubtedly our critique is tantamount as completely and definitely devoiding of any meaning the aims and perspectives individuals had in historical events, even when such individuals are considered protagonists of historical deeds, although this does not completely apply to their actions. This, however, does not imply that a collective organism, such as the class party, could not, and should not, express initiatives of its own or have its own will. The solution we get to is countless times expressed in our fundamental texts.

Humanity, and its most powerful groupings such as classes, parties and States, have moved almost as if they were playthings in the grip of economic laws, up to now almost entirely unknown to them. These groupings at the same time have lacked theoretical awareness of the economic process, and the possibility of managing and controlling it. However, the class that appears in the present historical epoch, the proletariat, and the political groupings, which inevitably emanate from it -the party and the State — for them the problem, is modified. This is because the proletariat is the first class that isn't driven to base its rise to power on the consolidation of social privileges and class divisions, the first not to subject and exploit another class anew, whilst at the same time, it is the first that manages to shape a doctrine of the social and historical development of the economy — in other words: Marxist Communism.

For the first time then, a class fights for the suppression of classes in general and the suppression of private property in the means of production in general, rather than fighting for the mere transformation of the social forms of property.

The proletariat's programme, together with its emancipation from the present dominant and privileged classes, is the emancipation of the human collectivity from bondage to the laws of economy, which once understood, can be dominated within an economy which is finally rational and scientific, and which is subject to the direct intervention of Man. This is what Engels meant when he wrote that the proletarian revolution marks the passage from the world of necessity to the world of freedom.

This does not mean that we resuscitate the illusory myth of individualism, which wishes to liberate the human "ego" from external influences, especially since these influences tend to become ever more

complex and the life of the individual ever more an indistinguishable part of a collective life. On the contrary, the parameters of the problem are changed, with will and freedom attributed to a class, a class destined to become the unitary human grouping itself, a grouping which one day will struggle against the adverse forces of the external physical world alone.

Whilst only proletarian humanity (still in the future for us) will be free and capable of a will isn't sentimental illusion but the capacity to organise and master the economy in the broadest sense of the word; and whilst it is true that the proletarian class today still has the extent of its activity determined by influences external to it (though less so than other classes), the organ in which, on the contrary, is summed up the full extent of volitional possibilities and initiative in all fields of activity is the political party. Not just any old party though, but the party of the proletarian class, the communist party, linked as though by an unbroken thread to the ultimate goals in the future. The party's power of volition, as well as its consciousness and theoretical knowledge are functions that are exquisitely collective. Marxism explains that the leaders in the party itself are given their job because they are considered as instruments and operators who best manifest the capacity to comprehend and explain facts and lead and will action, with such capacities nevertheless maintaining their origin in the existence and character of the collective organ. By way of these considerations, the marxist conception of the party and its activity, as we have stated, thus shuns fatalism, which would have us as passive spectators of phenomena into which no direct intervention is felt possible.

Likewise, it rejects every voluntarist conception, as regards individuals, according to which the qualities of theoretical preparation, force of will, and the spirit of sacrifice — in short, a special type of moral figure and a requisite level of "purity" — set the required standards for every single party militant without exception, reducing the latter to an elite, distinct and superior to the rest of the elements that compose the working class. The fatalist and passivistic error, though it might not necessarily lead to negating the function and the utility of the party, at the very least would certainly involve adapting the party to a proletarian class that is understood merely in a statistical and economic sense. We can sum up the conclusions touched on in the preceding theses as the condemnation of both the workerist conception, and that of an elite of an intellectual and moral character. Both these tendencies are aberrations from marxism which end up converging on the slippery slope to opportunism.

In resolving the general question of tactics on the same terrain as that of the nature of party, the marxist solution must be distinguished both from that doctrinal estrangement from the reality of the class struggle which contents itself with abstract lucubrations, whilst negating concrete activity, and from sentimental aestheticism; which aspires, with the noisy gestures and heroic posturing of tiny minorities, to bring about new situations and historical movements. Also, it must be distinguished from opportunism, which neglects the link with principles, i.e. with the general scope of the movement, and, keeping in view only an immediate and apparent success, is content to clamour for isolated and limited demands without bothering about whether these contradict the necessity of preparing for the supreme conquests of the working class. The mistake of Anarchist politics derives both from a doctrinal sterility, in its incapacity to comprehend the dialectical stages of real historical evolution, and from its voluntarist illusions, which cherish the fond hope of being able to speed up social processes by the force of example, and of sacrifices made by the one or the many. The mistake of social-democratic politics derives as much from a false conception of marxism in holding that the revolution will mature slowly of its own accord, without a revolutionary insurrection willed by the proletariat, as it does from a voluntarist pragmatism, which, unable to relinquish the immediate results of its day to day initiatives

and interventions, is happy to struggle for objectives which are of only superficial interest to proletarian groups. For once obtained, these objectives merely become parts of the game of conserving the dominant class rather than serving as preparation for the victory of the proletariat: such objectives are the partial reforms, concessions and advantages, both political and economic, obtained from the bosses and the bourgeois State.

The artificial introduction into the class movement of the theoretical dictates of “modern” voluntarist and pragmatist philosophy (Bergson, Gentile, Croce) based on idealism, can only but prepare the opportunist affirmation of new waves of reformism. It cannot be passed off as reaction to reformism just because it demonstrate a superficial liking for bourgeois positivism.

The party cannot and must not restrict its activity either to merely conserving the purity of theoretical principles and organisational structure, or to achieving immediate successes and a numerical popularity regardless of the cost. At all times and in all places, it must consolidate the following three points:

a) The defence and clarification of the fundamental programmatic postulates, that is, the theoretical knowledge of the working-class movement, in relation to new events as they arise;

b) The assurance of the continuity of the organisational unity and efficiency of the party, and its defence against contamination by extraneous influences opposed to the revolutionary interests of the proletariat;

c) The active participation in all the struggles of the working class, including those that arise out of partial and limited interests, in order to encourage their development. Emphasis however must constantly be placed on the factor of their links with the final revolutionary aims, and with the conquests of the class struggle presented as stepping-stones on the way to the indispensable combat to come. This means denouncing the perils of abandoning ourselves to partial accomplishments as though they were points of arrival, and the danger of bartering these for the conditions of class activity and combativity of the proletariat which are the autonomy and independence of its ideology and its organisations, most important of which is the party.

The supreme purpose of this complex party activity is the creation of the subjective conditions for the proletariat’s preparation, so that it is in a position to profit from revolutionary possibilities as soon as history presents them, and emerge from the struggle victor rather than vanquished.

All this is the point of departure for responding to the questions of the relations between the party and the proletarian masses, the party and other political parties, and the proletariat and other social classes. We must consider the following tactical formulation wrong: all true communist parties should in all situations strive to be mass parties, that is to say, always be organisations with huge memberships and a very widespread influence over the proletariat such as to at least exceed that of the other self-styled workers’ parties. Such a proposal is a caricature of Lenin’s practical, relevant and eminently appropriate watchword of 1921, namely: in order to conquer power, it isn’t sufficient to form “genuine” communist parties and launch them into the insurrectionary offensive because what is needed are numerically powerful parties with a predominating influence over the proletariat. In other words, before the conquest of power, and in the period leading up to it, the party must have the masses with it; must first of all conquer the masses. Such a formulation only becomes rather dangerous when used in conjunction with the notion of the majority of the masses, since it lends itself amongst “chapter and verse” leninists,

now as in the past, to the danger of a social-democratic interpretation of theory and tactics; for although expressing the perfectly correct idea that the dangerous practice of engaging in reckless actions with insufficient forces, or when the moment isn't ripe, must be avoided, the unspecificness about how the majority is to be measured i.e. whether in the parties, the unions or other organs, gives rise to the opposite danger of being diverted from action when it is both possible and appropriate; that is, at times when truly "leninist" resolution and initiative is required.

The formula which states that the party must have the masses with it on the eve of the struggle has now become a typically opportunist formula in the facile interpretation of today's pseudo-leninists when they assert that the party must in "all situations" be a mass party. There are objective situations when the balance of forces are unfavourable to revolution (although perhaps closer to the revolution in time than others — marxism teaches us that historical evolution takes place at very different rates), in these situations, the wish to be the majority party of the masses and enjoy an overriding political influence at all costs, can only at such times be achieved by renouncing communist principles and methods and engaging in social-democratic and petty-bourgeois politics instead. It must be emphatically stated that in certain situations, past, present and future, the proletariat has, does, and inevitably will adopt a non-revolutionary stance — either a position of inertia, or collaboration with the enemy as the case may be — but despite everything, the proletariat everywhere and always remains the potentially revolutionary class entrusted with the revolutionary counter-attack; but this is only insofar as within it there exists the communist party and where, without ever renouncing coherent interventions when appropriate, this party avoids taking paths, which although apparently the easiest routes to instant popularity, would divert it from its task and thereby remove the essential point of support for ensuring the proletariat's recovery. On dialectical and marxist grounds such as these (and never on aesthetic and sentimental grounds) we reject the bestial expression of opportunism that maintains that a communist party is free to adopt all means and all methods. By some it is said that precisely because the party is truly communist, sound in principles and organisation, it can indulge in the most acrobatic of political manoeuvrings, but what this assertion forgets is that the party itself is both factor and product of historical development, and the even more malleable proletariat is yet more so. The proletariat will not be influenced by the contorted justifications for such "manoeuvres" offered by party leaders but by actual results, and the party must know how to anticipate these results mainly by using the experience of past mistakes. It is not just by theoretical credos and organisational sanctions that the party will be guaranteed against degeneration, but by acting correctly in the field of tactics, and by making a determined effort to block off false paths with precise and respected norms of action.

Within the tactical sphere there is another error which clearly leads back to the classical opportunist positions dismantled by Marx and Lenin. This consists in asserting that in the case of struggles between classes and political organisations which take place outside the party's specific terrain, the party must choose the side which represents the development of the situation most favourable to general historical evolution, and should more or less openly support and coalesce with it. The pretext for this is that the conditions for a complete proletarian revolution (to be set in motion by the party when the time comes) will have arrived solely when there has been a sufficient maturation and evolution of political and social forms.

For a start, the very presuppositions that lie behind such politics are at fault: the typical scheme of a social and political evolution, fixed down to the smallest detail, as allegedly providing the best preparation for the final advent of communism belongs to the opportunist brand of "marxism", and is

the basis on which the various Kautskys set about defaming the Russian Revolution and the present Communist movement. It isn't even possible to establish in a general way that the most propitious conditions for communist party work to bear fruit are to be found under certain types of bourgeois regime, e.g. the most democratic. For whilst it is true that the reactionary and "right-wing" measures of bourgeois governments have often obstructed the proletariat, it is no less true, and in fact occurs far more often, that the liberal and left-wing politics of bourgeois governments have also stifled the class struggle and diverted the working-class from taking decisive action. A more accurate evaluation, truly conforming with Marxism's breaking of the democratic, evolutionist and progressive spell, maintains that the bourgeoisie attempts, and often succeeds, in alternating its methods and parties in government according to its counter-revolutionary interests. All our experience shows us that whenever the proletariat gets enthusiastic about the vicissitudes of bourgeois politics, opportunism triumphs.

Secondly, even if it were true that certain changes of government within the present regime made the further development of proletarian action easier, there is clear evidence that this would depend on one express condition: the existence of a party which had issued timely warnings to the masses about the disappointment which would inevitably follow what had appeared to be an immediate success; indeed not just the existence of the party, but its capacity to take action, even before the struggle to which we refer, in a manner which is clearly perceived as autonomous by proletarians, who follow the party not on the basis of schemes which it might be convenient to adopt at an official level but because of the party's down-to-earth attitude. When faced with struggles unable to culminate in the definitive proletarian victory, the party doesn't turn itself into a manager of transitional demands and accomplishments which are not of direct interest to the class it represents, and neither does it barter away its specific character and autonomous activity in order to become a kind of insurance society for all the political "renewal" movements or political systems and governments under threat from an allegedly "worse government".

The requirements of this line of action are often falsified by invoking both Marx's formulation that "communists support any movement directed against existing social conditions", and the whole of Lenin's doctrine directed against "the infantile disorder of Communism". The speculations attempted on these declarations of Marx and Lenin within our movement are substantially similar to analogous speculations continually indulged in by the revisionists and centrists of the Bernstein and Nenni stamp, who in the name of Marx and Lenin have mocked revolutionary marxism.

We must make two observations; first of all, Marx's and Lenin's positions have a contingent historical value since they refer in Marx's case to a pre-bourgeois Germany, and in Lenin's case, as illustrated in Left-wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder, to the Bolshevik experience in Tsarist Russia. We shouldn't base our resolution of tactical questions under classical conditions, i.e. the proletariat in conflict with a fully developed capitalist bourgeoisie, on these foundations alone. Secondly, the support to which Marx refers, and Lenin's "compromises" (Lenin as a great marxist dialectician and champion of real, non-formal intransigence, aimed and directed at an immutable goal, liked to "flirt" with such terms) are support and compromises with movements still forced to clear the way forward with their insurrection against past social formations, even if this does contradict their ideology and the long-term aims of their leaders.

The intervention of the Communist party therefore occurs as an intervention in the setting of a civil war, and this explains Lenin's positions on the peasant and the national question, during the Kornilov affair

and in a hundred other cases. These two key observations aside, neither Lenin's criticism of infantilism, nor any marxist text on the suppleness of revolutionary politics, was ever meant to undermine the barrier deliberately erected against opportunism; defined by Engels, and later by Lenin, as "absence of principles", or obliviousness of the final goal.

Constructing Communist tactics with a formalist rather than a dialectical method is a repudiation of Marx and Lenin. It is, therefore, a major error to assert that means should correspond to the ends not by way of their historical and dialectical succession in the process of development, but depending on similarities and analogous aspects that means and ends may assume in a certain immediate sense, and which we might call ethical, psychological and aesthetic. We don't need to make in the field of tactics the mistake made in the realm of principle by anarchists and reformists; to whom it seems absurd both that suppression of classes and State power is prepared by way of the predominance of the proletarian class and its dictatorship, and that abolition of all social violence is realised by employing both offensive and defensive revolutionary violence; revolutionary towards the existing power and conservative towards the proletarian power.

And it would be just as mistaken to make the following assertions: that a revolutionary party must support every struggle without taking into account the strengths of friends and foes; that communists must inevitably champion a strike to the bitter end; and that communists must shun certain means of dissimulation, trickery, espionage etc, because they aren't particularly noble or pleasant. Marxism and Lenin's critique of the superficial pseudo-revolutionism that fouls the path of the proletariat consists of attempts to eliminate these stupid and sentimental criteria as ways of resolving the problem of tactics, and their critique is now a definitively acquired experience of the communist movement.

One tactical error that this critique allows us to avoid is the following: that since communists aim for a political split with the opportunists, we should therefore support splitting off from trade unions led by supporters of the yellow Amsterdam union. It is merely polemical trickery that has misrepresented the Italian left as basing its conclusions on notions like "it is undignified to meet the opportunist leaders in person", and so on.

The critique of "infantilism" doesn't however mean that indeterminacy, chaos and arbitrariness must govern tactics, or that "all means" are appropriate for achieving our aims. To say that harmony between the means employed, and the ultimate objective, is guaranteed by the revolutionary nature of the party, and by the contributions that eminent men or groups backed up by a brilliant tradition will bring to its decision-making is just a non-marxist playing with words, because it doesn't take into account the repercussions on the party which its actions will have in the dialectical play of cause and effect. It also ignores the fact that marxism ascribes no value whatsoever to the "intentions" that dictate the initiatives of individuals or groups; and the bloody experience of the past means we cannot avoid being "suspicious" about what lies behind these intentions, though we don't mean that in an insulting way.

In his pamphlet on the infantile disorder of communism, Lenin wrote that the tactical means must be chosen in advance in order to fulfil the final revolutionary objective and governed by a clear historical vision of the proletarian struggle and its final goal. He showed it would be absurd to reject some tactical expedient just because it seemed "nasty" or was deserving of the definition "compromise" and that it was, on the contrary, necessary to decide whether or not each tactic fitted in with achieving this final goal. The collective activity of the party and the Communist International poses and will continue to pose this formidable task. In matters of theoretical principle we can say that Marx and Lenin have

bequeathed us a sound heritage, although that isn't to say that there aren't any new tasks of theoretical research for communism to accomplish. In tactical matters, on the other hand, we can't say the same, even after the Russian revolution and the experience of the first years of the life of the new International which was deprived of Lenin all too soon. The question of tactics is much too complex to be resolved by the simplistic and sentimental answers of communist "infantiles", and it requires in-depth contributions from the whole of the International communist movement in the light of its experience, old and new. Marx and Lenin aren't being contradicted if we state that in order to resolve this question, rules of conduct must be followed which, whilst not as vital and fundamental as principles, are nevertheless binding both on party members and the leading organs of the movement, who should forecast the different ways in which situations may develop so as to plan with the greatest possible degree of accuracy how the party should act when one of these hypothetical scenarios assumes specific dimensions.

Comprehending and weighing up the situation has to be the key requirement for making tactical decisions because this allows us to signal to the movement that the time has come for an action which has already been anticipated as far as possible; it doesn't however allow arbitrary "improvisations" and "surprises" on the part of the leaders. We can't predict with absolute certainty how objective situations will turn out, but we can predict what we should do in certain hypothetical situations, that is to say, we can predict tactics in their broad outlines. To deny this possibility and necessity would be to deny both a fundamental party duty, and to reject the only assurance we can give that in all circumstances party militants and the masses will agree to take orders from the leading centre. In this sense the party is not like an army or any other State mechanism, for in these organs hierarchical authority prevails and voluntary adhesion counts for nothing. We perhaps state the obvious when we say that there will always be a way left open, incurring no penalties, for party members not to obey orders i.e., simply leaving the party. Good tactics are as follows: in a given situation, even when the leading centre doesn't have time to consult the party — still less the masses — the tactics are such that they don't lead to unexpected repercussions inside the party itself and within the proletariat, and they don't go in a sense opposed to the success of the revolutionary campaign. The art of predicting how the party will react to orders, and which orders will be well received, is the art of revolutionary tactics. These tactics can only be relied upon if they collectively utilise the experiences of the past summed up in clear rules of action and if the membership, having entrusted the fulfilment of this latter task to the leaders, is convinced that these will not betray their mandate and are genuinely and decisively, and not just apparently, engaged in the work of carrying out the movement's orders. We have no hesitation in saying that since the party itself is something perfectible but not perfect, much has to be sacrificed for clarity's sake to the persuasive capacity of the tactical norms, even if this does entail a certain schematisation: for even when tactical schemes prepared by us collapse under the weight of circumstances, the matter is never remedied by relapsing into opportunism and eclecticism but rather by renewed efforts to bring tactics back into line with the duties of the party. It isn't only the good party that makes good tactics, but good tactics that makes the good party and good tactics have to be amongst those that everybody has chosen, and everybody has understood in their main outlines.

Basically, what we are rejecting is that the difficult work of the party in collectively defining its tactical norms should be stifled by demands for unconditional obedience to one man, one committee, or one particular party of the International, and its traditional apparatus of leadership.

The activity of the party takes on strategic aspects in the culminating moments of the struggle for power, at which point it assumes an essentially military character. Even in the preceding phase, the party's activity is not restricted merely to ideological, propagandist and organisational functions but consists, as we've already mentioned, of active participation in the various proletarian struggles. This being so, the system of tactical norms must therefore be constructed with the precise aim of establishing under what conditions the intervention and the activity of the party in such movements — its agitation in the life of proletarian struggles — harmonises with the final revolutionary objective whilst simultaneously guaranteeing useful progress in the spheres of ideological, organisational and tactical preparation.

In the next part, we will take particular problems and examine how our elaboration of the particular norms of communist activity relates to the present stage of development of the revolutionary movement.

II. — International questions

1. — The constitution of the Third International

The crisis in the 2nd International caused by the war was resolved, completely and definitively, by the constitution of the Communist International, but whilst the formation of the Comintern certainly constituted an immense historical conquest from the organisational and tactical point of view, and from the point of view of the restoration of revolutionary doctrine, it did not however completely resolve the crisis in the proletarian movement.

The Russian Revolution, the first glorious victory of the world proletariat, was a fundamental factor in the formation of the new International. However, owing to the social conditions in Russia, the Russian revolution didn't provide the general historical model for revolutions in other countries in a tactical sense. This is because in the passage from feudal autocratic power to the proletarian dictatorship, there had been no epoch of political dominion by the bourgeois class, organised in its own exclusive and stable State apparatus.

It is precisely for this reason that the historical confirmation of the conceptions of the Marxist programme in the Russian revolution has been of such enormous significance and of such great use in routing social democratic revisionism in the realm of principles. In the organisational field however, the struggle against the 2nd International — an integral part of the struggle against global capitalism — hasn't met with the same success, and a lot of errors have been committed which have resulted in the Communist parties not being as effective as objective conditions would have allowed.

We are obliged to say the same when it comes to tactical matters, since many of the problems linked to the present line up of forces: the bourgeoisie, modern parliamentary bourgeois State with a historically stable apparatus, and the proletariat, have not been resolved adequately and this continues to be the case today. The communist parties haven't always obtained all they could have done from the proletarian offensive against capitalism, and from the liquidation of the social democratic parties, i.e. the political organs of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie.

2. — World economic and political situation (1926)

The international situation today appears less favourable to the proletariat than in the immediate post-war years. From the economic point of view, we witness a partial restabilisation of capitalism. However, we understand this stabilisation only to mean only that certain parts of the economic structure have been contained, and not that a state of affairs has arisen which excludes the possibility, even in the immediate future, of new disturbances.

There is still a marked capitalist crisis and its definitive worsening is inevitable. In the political sphere, we witness a weakening of the revolutionary movement in almost every advanced country, counter-balanced, happily, by the consolidation of soviet Russia and by the struggles of the colonial peoples against the capitalist powers.

Such a situation presents a double danger however. In the first place, by pursuing the erroneous method of situationism, a certain tendency towards Menshevism arises in the way the problems of proletarian action are evaluated. Secondly, if the pressure from genuine classist actions diminishes, the conditions which Lenin saw as necessary for a correct application of tactics in the national and peasant question risk being misapplied within the overall politics of the Comintern.

The post-war proletarian offensive was followed by an employers' offensive against proletarian positions, to which the Comintern replied with the watchword of the United Front. There then arose the problem of the rise in various countries of democratic-pacifist situations, which comrade Trotsky correctly denounced as representing a danger of degeneration for our movement. We must avoid all interpretations of situations which present as a vital question for the proletariat the struggle between two parts of the bourgeoisie, the right and the left, and the too strict identification of these with socially distinct groups.

The correct interpretation is that the dominant class possesses several governmental methods that are in essence reduced to two: the reactionary fascist method, and the liberal democratic method.

Setting out from an analysis of economy, Lenin's theses have already reliably proved that the most modern strata of the bourgeoisie tend to unify not only the productive mechanism, but also their political defences into the most decisive forms.

It is therefore false to state that as a general rule the road to communism must pass through a stage of left-wing bourgeois government. If nevertheless such a case arose, the condition for proletarian victory would reside in a party tactic of marshalling against the illusions generated by the accession of such a left-wing government and continuous opposition, even during periods of reaction, to political democratic formations.

3. — The International's Method of Work

One of the Communist International's most important tasks has been dispelling the proletariat's mistrust of political action, which arose as a result of the parliamentary degeneracies of opportunism.

Marxism doesn't interpret politics as the art of using cunning techniques in parliamentary and diplomatic intrigues, to be used by all parties in pursuit of their special ends. Proletarian politics rejects the bourgeois method of politics and anticipates higher forms of relations culminating in the art of revolutionary insurrection. This rejection, which we will not present in greater theoretical detail here, is

the vital condition both for the effective linking up of the revolutionary proletariat with its communist leadership, and for ensuring effective selection of personnel for the latter.

The working methods of the International fly in the face of this revolutionary necessity. In the relations between the different organs of the communist movement a two-faced politics frequently gains the upper hand, and a subordination of theoretical rationale to fortuitous motives, and a system of treaties and pacts between persons which fails to faithfully convey the relations between the parties and the masses, has led to bitter disappointments.

Improvisation, surprises, and theatrical scene changes, are factors that are entering all too easily into the major and fundamental decisions of the International, disorientating both comrades and the proletariat alike.

For example, the majority of internal party questions are resolved in international organs and congresses by a series of unwieldy arrangements which make them acceptable to the various leadership groups but add nothing useful to the real process of party growth.

4. — Organisational Questions

The consideration that it was urgent to establish a vast concentration of revolutionary forces carried a lot of weight when the Comintern was founded because at the time it was anticipated that there would be a far more rapid development of objective conditions. Nevertheless, we can now see that it would have been preferable to establish more rigorous organisational criteria. The formation of parties and the conquest of the masses has been favoured neither by concessions to anarchist and syndicalist groups, nor by the small compromises with the centrists allowed for by the 21 conditions; neither has it been favoured by organic fusions with parties or fractions of parties as a result of political “infiltration”, nor by tolerating a dual communist organisation in some countries with sympathiser parties. The watchword, launched after the 5th congress, of organising the party on the basis of factory cells, hasn’t achieved its objective, which was to remedy the glaring defects that exist in the various sections of the International.

Once applied as a general rule, especially in the way the Italian leadership has interpreted it, this watchword lends itself to serious errors and to deviation both from the marxist postulate that revolution isn’t a question of forms of organisation, and from the Leninist thesis that an organic solution can never be valid for all times and all places.

For parties operating in bourgeois countries with a stable parliamentary regime, organisation on a factory cell basis is less suitable than territorial units. It is also a theoretical error to assert that whilst parties organised on a territorial basis are social-democratic parties, those based on cells are genuine communist parties. In practice, the cell type of organisation makes it even more difficult to carry out the party’s task of unification amongst proletarians in trade and industry groups; a task that is all the more important the more unfavourable the situation is and the more the possibilities of proletarian organisation are reduced. Various drawbacks of a practical nature are connected with the proposal to organise the party on the exclusive basis of factory cells. In tsarist Russia, the issue appeared in a different context: relations between the owners of industry and the State were different and the obligation of posing the central question of power rendered the corporatist danger less acute.

The factory cell system does not increase workers' influence in the party since the key links in the network all consist of the non-worker and ex-worker elements which constitute the official party apparatus. Given the faulty working methods of the International, the watchword "bolshevisation", from the organisational point of view, manifests as a pedestrian and inadequate application of the Russian experience, which has in many countries already prompted a paralysis, albeit unintentional, of spontaneous initiatives and proletarian and classist energies by means of an apparatus whose selection and functions are for the most part artificial.

Keeping the organisation of the party on a territorial basis doesn't mean having to relinquish party organs in the factories: indeed there must be communist groups there, linked to the party and subject to party discipline, in order to form its trade-union framework. This method establishes a much better connection with the masses and keeps the party's main organisation less visible.

5. — Discipline and fractions

Another aspect of the call for "Bolshevisation" is that complete centralisation of discipline and the strict prohibition of fractionism are considered the secure guarantee of the party's effectiveness.

The final court of appeal for all controversial questions is the central international organ, within which at least political (if not hierarchical) hegemony, is attributed to the Russian Communist Party.

Actually this guarantee is non-existent, and the whole approach to the problem is inadequate. In fact, rather than preventing the spread of fractionism within the International, it has been encouraged to assume masked and hypocritical forms instead. From a historical point of view, the overcoming of fractions in the Russian party wasn't an expedient, nor a magical recipe, applied on statutory grounds, but was both the result and the expression of a faithful delineation of the problems of doctrine and political action.

Disciplinary sanctions are one of the elements that ensure against degeneration, but only on condition that their application remains within the limits of exceptional cases, and doesn't become the norm and virtually the ideal of the party's functioning.

The solution doesn't reside in a useless increase in hierarchical authoritarianism, whose initial investiture is lacking both because of the incompleteness of the historical experiences in Russia, impressive though they are, and because even within the Old Guard, the custodian of the Bolshevik traditions, disagreements have been resolved in ways which cannot be considered as a priori the best ones. But neither does the solution lie in the systematic application of the principles of formal democracy, which for marxism have no other function than as organisational practices which can be occasionally convenient.

The communist parties must achieve an organic centralism which, whilst including maximum possible consultation with the base, ensures a spontaneous elimination of any grouping which aims to differentiate itself. This cannot be achieved with, as Lenin put it, the formal and mechanical prescriptions of a hierarchy, but through correct revolutionary politics.

The repression of fractionism isn't a fundamental aspect of the evolution of the party, though preventing it is.

To claim that the party and the International are mysteriously ensured against a relapse, or the tendency to relapse, into opportunism is not only fruitless and absurd but extremely dangerous, because such a relapse could indeed occur either due to changing circumstances, or to the playing out of residual social-democratic traditions. We have to admit that every differentiation of opinion not reducible to cases of conscience, or personal defeatism, may develop a useful function in the resolution of our problems and protect the party, and the proletariat in general, from grave dangers.

If such dangers become accentuated then differentiation will inevitably, but usefully, take on the fractionist form, and this might lead to schisms. However this won't happen because of childish reasons, because the leaders haven't put enough energy into repressing everybody, but only given the terrible hypothesis of a failure of the party and its becoming subservient to counter-revolutionary influences.

We have an example of the wrong method in the artificial solutions applied to the plight of the German party after the opportunist crisis in 1923, when whilst these artifices failed to eliminate fractionism they at the same time hindered the spontaneous determination within the ranks of the highly advanced German proletariat of the correct classist and revolutionary response to the degeneration of the party.

The danger of bourgeois influences acting on the class party doesn't appear historically as the organisation of fractions, but rather as a shrewd penetration stoking up unitary demagoguery and operating as a dictatorship from above, and immobilising initiatives by the proletarian vanguard.

This defeatist factor cannot be identified and eliminated by posing the question of discipline in order to prevent fractionist initiatives, but rather by successfully managing to orientated the party and the proletariat against such a peril at the moment when it manifests itself not just as a doctrinal revision, but as an express proposal for an important political manoeuvre with anticlassist consequences.

One negative effect of so-called bolshevisation has been the replacing of conscious and thoroughgoing political elaboration inside the party, corresponding to significant progress towards a really compact centralism, with superficial and noisy agitation for mechanical formulas of unity for unity's sake, and discipline for discipline's sake.

This method causes damage to both the party and the proletariat in that it holds back the realisation of the "true" communist party. Once applied to several sections of the International it becomes itself a serious indication of latent opportunism. At the moment, there doesn't appear to be any international left opposition within the Comintern, but if the unfavourable factors we have mentioned worsen, the formation of such an opposition will be at the same time both a revolutionary necessity and a spontaneous reflex to the situation.

6. — Tactical Questions up to the 5th Congress

Mistaken decisions have been made in the way the tactical problems posed by the previously mentioned international situations were settled. Like analogous mistakes made in the organisational sphere, they derive from the claim that everything can be deduced from problems previously faced by the Russian Communist party.

The united front tactic shouldn't be interpreted as a political coalition with other so-called workers' parties, but as a utilisation of immediate demands in particular situations to increase the communist party's influence over the masses without compromising its autonomous position.

The basis for the United Front must therefore be sought in the proletarian organisations which workers join because of their social position and independently of their political faith or affiliation to an organised party. The reason is two-fold: firstly, communists aren't prevented from criticising other parties, or gradually recruiting new members who used to be dependant on these other parties into the ranks of the communist party, and secondly, it ensures that the masses will understand the party when it eventually calls on them to mobilise behind its programme and under its exclusive leadership.

Experience has shown us countless times that the only way of ensuring a revolutionary application of the united front lies in rejecting political coalitions, whether permanent or temporary, along with committees which include representatives of different political parties as means of directing the struggle; also there should be no negotiations, proposals for common action and open letters to other parties from the communist party.

Practical experience has proved how fruitless these methods are, and even any initial effect has been discredited by the abuses to which they have been put.

The political united front based on the central demand of the seizure of the State becomes the "workers' government" tactic. Here we have not only an erroneous tactic, but also a blatant contradiction of the principles of communism. Once the party issues the call for the assumption of power by the proletariat through the representative organisms of the bourgeois State apparatus, or even merely refrains from explicitly condemning such an eventuality, then it has abandoned and rejected the communist programme not only vis-à-vis proletarian ideology, with all the inevitable damaging consequences, but because the party itself would be establishing and accrediting this ideological formulation. The revision to this tactic made at the 5th Congress, after the defeat in Germany, hasn't proved satisfactory and the latest developments in the realm of tactical experimentation justify calls for the abandonment of even the expression: "workers' government".

As far as the central problem of the State is concerned, the party should issue the call for the dictatorship of the proletariat and that alone. There is no other "Workers' Government".

The slogan "Workers' Government" leads to opportunism, and to opportunism alone, i.e. support for, or participation in, self-styled "pro-worker" governments of the bourgeois class.

None of this contradicts the slogan: "All Power to the Soviets" and to soviet type organisms (representative bodies elected by workers), even when opportunist parties predominate in them. The opportunist parties oppose the assumption of power by proletarian organisations since this is precisely the proletarian dictatorship (exclusion of non-workers from the elective organs and power) which the communist party alone will be able to accomplish.

Suffice to say the formula of the dictatorship of the proletariat has one synonym and one alone: "the government of the communist party".

7. — The Question of the "new tactics"

The united front and the workers' government used to be justified on the following grounds: that just having communist parties wasn't enough to achieve victory since it was necessary to conquer the masses, and in order to conquer the masses, the influence of the social-democrats had to be fought on the terrain of those demands which are understood by all workers.

Today, a second step has been taken, and a perilous question is posed: to ensure our victory, they say, we must first ensure that the bourgeoisie is governing in a tolerant and compliant way, or, that classes intermediate between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat should govern, allowing us to make preparations. This latter position, by admitting the possibility of a government originating from the middle classes, sinks to the total revision of Marx's doctrine and is equivalent to the counter revolutionary platform of reformism.

The first position aims to refer solely to the objective utility of conditions insofar as they allow propaganda, agitation and organisation to be better carried out. But as we have already pointed out with regard to particular situations, both are equally dangerous.

Everything leads us to predict that liberalism and bourgeois democracy, whether in antithesis or in synthesis with the "fascist" method, will evolve in such a way as to exclude the communist party from their juridical guarantees — for what little they're worth — since it places itself outside them by negating such guarantees in its program. Such an evolution in no way contradicts the principles of bourgeois democracy, and in any case, it has real precedents in the work of all the so-called left-wing governments, and, for example, in the programme of the Italian Aventine Parliament. Any "freedom" given to the proletariat will just mean substantially greater freedom for counter-revolutionary agents to agitate and organise within its ranks. The only freedom for the proletariat lies in its dictatorship.

We have already mentioned that even if a left-wing government created conditions that we found useful, they could only be exploited if the party had consistently held to clearly autonomous positions. It isn't a matter of attributing diabolical cleverness to the bourgeoisie, but of holding on to the certainty — without which it is possible to call oneself a communist! — that during the final struggle the conquests of the proletariat will come up against a united front of the bourgeois forces, be they personified by Hindenburg, Macdonald, Mussolini or Noske.

To habituate the proletariat to picking out voluntary or involuntary supporters from within this bourgeois front would be to introduce a factor of defeat, even if any intrinsic weakness of any part of this front will clearly be a factor of victory.

In Germany after the election of Hindenburg, an electoral alliance with social-democracy and with other "republican" parties, i.e. bourgeois parties, such as the parliamentary alliance in the Prussian Landtag, was proclaimed in order to avoid a right-wing government; in France, support was given to the Cartel des gauchesin the last municipal elections (the Clichy tactic). For the reasons given above such tactical methods must be declared unacceptable. Even the theses of the 2nd Congress of the C.I. on revolutionary parliamentarism impose on the communist party the duty of only operating on electoral terrain on the basis of rigorously independent positions.

The examples of recent tactics indicated above show a clear, though not complete, historical affinity with the traditional methods of the 2nd International: electoral blocs and collaborationism which were also justified by laying claim to a marxist interpretation.

Such methods represent a real danger to the principles and organisation of the International. Incidentally, no international congresses have passed resolutions which authorise them, and that includes the tactical theses presented at the 5th Congress.

8. — The Union Question

On the global level, the International has successively modified its conception of the relationship between political and economic organisms. Herein lies a remarkable example of the method which, rather than having particular actions derive from principles, prefers to improvise various new theories to justify actions chosen because of their apparent ease of execution and their likelihood of producing quick results.

The International originally supported the admission of unions to the Communist International, then it formed a Red International Labour Union. It was held that, since the unions were the best point of contact with the masses, each communist party should struggle for trade-union unity and therefore not create its own unions through scissions from unions led by the yellows, nevertheless on the International level the Bureau of the Amsterdam International was to be considered and treated not as an organisation of the proletarian masses, but as a counter-revolutionary political organ of the League of Nations.

At a certain point, based on considerations which were certainly very important, but limited mainly to a project for using the left-wing of the English union movement, it was announced that the Red International Labour Union should be abandoned in order to effect an organic unity, on an international scale, with the Amsterdam Bureau.

No amount of conjecture about changing circumstances can justify such a major policy shift since the question of the relations between international political organisations and trade unions is one of principle, inasmuch as it boils down to that of the relations between party and class for the revolutionary mobilisation.

Internal statutory guarantees weren't respected either since this decision was presented to the relevant international organs as a fait accompli.

The retention of "Moscow against Amsterdam" as our watchword hasn't prevented the struggle for trade-union unity in each nation and nor will it: in fact the liquidation of separatist tendencies in the unions (Germany and Italy) was only made possible by addressing the separatists' argument that the proletariat was being prevented from freeing itself from the influence of the Amsterdam International.

On the other hand, the apparent enthusiasm with which our party in France adhered to the proposition of world trade-union unity didn't prevent it from demonstrating an absolute incapacity to deal de facto with the problem of trade-union unity at a national level in a non-scissionist way.

The utility of a united front tactic on a world basis isn't however ruled out, even with union organisations that belong to the Amsterdam International.

The left wing of the Italian party has always supported and struggled for proletarian unity in the trade-unions, and this serves to distinguish it from the profoundly syndicalist and voluntarist pseudo-lefts which were fought by Lenin. Furthermore, the Left in Italy has a thoroughly Leninist conception of the problem of the relations between trade unions and factory councils. On the basis of the Russian experience and of the relevant theses of the 2nd Congress, the Left rejects the serious deviation from principle which consists of depriving the trade unions, based on voluntary membership, of any revolutionary importance in order to substitute the utopian and reactionary concept of a constitutional apparatus with obligatory membership which extends organically over the entire area of the system of

capitalist production. In practice, this error is expressed by an overestimation of the role of the factory councils to the extent of effectively boycotting the trade union.

9. — The Agrarian Question

The agrarian question has been defined by Lenin's theses at the 2nd Congress of the International. The main aim of these theses was to restore the problem of agricultural production to its historic place in the marxist system, and show that in an epoch where the premises for the socialisation of enterprises had already matured in the industrial economy, they were still lacking in the agricultural economy.

Far from delaying the proletarian revolution (which alone will create these premises), this state of affairs renders the problems of the poor peasants insoluble within the framework of industrial economy and bourgeois power. This allows the proletariat to link up its own struggle with freeing the poor peasant from a system of exploitation by the landed proprietors and the bourgeoisie, even if freeing the peasants doesn't coincide with a general change in the rural productive economy.

Large-scale landed property, deemed as such in law, is technically speaking composed of tiny productive enterprises. When the legal superstructure that holds it together is destroyed, we witness a redivision of land amongst the peasants. In reality, this is nothing other than the freeing of these small productive enterprises already separated from a collective exploitation. This can only happen if the property relations are broken up in a revolutionary way, but the protagonist of this rupture can only be the industrial proletariat. The reason for this is that the proletariat, as distinct from the peasant, isn't merely a victim of the relations of bourgeois production but is the historical product of its maturity, condemning it to clear the path to a new, different system of production. The proletariat will therefore find precious reinforcements in the revolt of the poor peasant. The essential elements in Lenin's tactical conclusions are, firstly, that there is a fundamental distinction to be made between the proletariat's relations with the peasant class, and its relations with the reactionary middle strata of the urban economy (mainly represented by the social-democratic parties); and secondly, there is the definitive principle of the pre-eminence and hegemony of the working class as leader of the revolution.

The peasant therefore appears at the moment of the conquest of power as a revolutionary factor, but if during the revolution his ideology is modified as regards the old forms of authority and legality, it doesn't change much with regard to the relations of production which remain the traditional ones of isolated family farms in mutual competition with one another. Thus the peasant still represents a threat to the construction of the Socialist economy, and only the large-scale development of productive capacity and agricultural technology is likely to interest him.

On the tactical and organisational plane the landless agricultural proletariat (day-labourers)) must be considered, in Lenin's view, the same as the rest of the proletariat, and be incorporated into the same framework; the policy of proletarian alliance with the poor peasants — working alone on their plots of land on whatever level of sufficiency — becomes a policy of mere neutralisation with regard to the middle peasant, who is characterised as being both a victim of certain capitalist relations and an exploiter of labour. Finally, there is the wealthy peasant who is generally an exploiter of labour and the direct enemy of the revolution.

In the field of agrarian tactics, the International must avoid those mistaken applications already discernible for instance in the policies of the French party, which is drawn to the idea of a new type of

peasant revolution to be considered on the same level as the worker's revolution, or to the belief that the revolutionary movement of the workers may be determined by an insurrection in the countryside, whilst in fact the actual relationship is the other way around.

The peasant, once won over to the communist programme, and therefore accessible to political organisation, should become a member of the communist party; this is the only way to combat the rise of parties composed solely of peasants inevitably prey to counter-revolutionary influences.

The Krestintern (Peasants' International) must incorporate the peasant organisations of all countries characterised, like workers' trade-unions, by the fact of accepting as members all those who have the same immediate economic interests. Also the tactics of political negotiations, the united front, or constitution of fractions within the peasant parties — even with the intention of breaking them up — must be rejected.

This tactical norm is not at odds with the relations established between the Bolsheviks and the social-revolutionaries during the civil war period when the new representative organisations of the proletariat and the peasants already existed.

10. — The National Question

Lenin has also produced a fundamental clarification of the theory of the popular movements in colonial countries and in certain exceptionally backward countries. Even though internal economic development and the expansion of foreign capital hasn't provided a mature basis for modern class struggle in these countries, demands are being made which can only be resolved by insurrectional struggle and the defeat of world imperialism.

In the epoch of struggle for proletarian revolution in the metropolises, the complete realisation of these two conditions will allow the launching of a struggle which, nevertheless, will take on locally the aspects of a conflict not of class but of races and nationalities.

The fundamental tenets of the Leninist conception nevertheless still remain that the world struggle will be directed by organs of the revolutionary proletariat, and that the indigenous class struggle, and the independent development of local communist parties, must be encouraged, and never held back or stifled.

The extension, however, of these considerations to countries in which the capitalist regime and the bourgeois State apparatus has been established for a long time constitutes a danger, insofar as here the national question and patriotic ideology become counter-revolutionary devices, and serve only to disarm the proletariat as a class. Such deviations appear, for example, in the concessions made by Radek with regard to the German nationalists fighting against the inter-allied occupation.

The International must also call for the stamping out in Czechoslovakia of any nationalist and dualist reaction within the proletarian organisations since the two races are at the same historical level and their common economic environment is completely evolved.

To elevate the struggle of the national minorities, per se to the level of a matter of principle is therefore to distort the communist conception, since altogether different criteria are required to discern whether such struggles offer revolutionary possibilities or reactionary developments.

11. — Russian Questions

The new political economy of the Russian State, based mainly on Lenin's 1921 speech on the tax in kind and Trotsky's report to the 4th World Congress, is evidently an important matter for the Communist International. Given the condition of the Russian economy, and the fact that the bourgeoisie remains in power in the other countries, marxists couldn't have presented otherwise the prospects for the development of the world revolution, and the construction of the Socialist economy.

The serious political difficulties that the internal relations of social forces, and the problems of productive technology and foreign relations have caused the Russian State, have led to a series of divergences within the Russian Communist Party; and it is really deplorable that the international communist movement hasn't found a way of making more soundly based and authoritative pronouncements on the matter.

In the first discussion with Trotsky, his considerations on the internal life of the party and its new course were undoubtedly correct, and his observations on the development of the State's political economy were also, on the whole, clearly revolutionary and proletarian. In the second discussion he was no less justified when he remarked on the International's mistakes, and demonstrated that the best traditions of the Bolsheviks did not militate in favour of the way the Comintern was being led.

The way the party reacted to this internal debate was inadequate and contrived, due to the well-known method of relying on anti-fractionist, and even worse, anti-bonapartist intimidation based on absolutely nothing of substance. As to the latest discussion, it must above all be realised that it revolves around problems of an international nature, and just because the majority of the Russian Communist Party has pronounced on the issue, there is no reason why the International cannot discuss and pronounce on it in its turn; the question still stands even if has ceased to be asked by the defeated Opposition.

As has often happened, questions of procedure and discipline have stifled really essential questions. What is at issue here is not the defence of the rights of a minority, whose leaders at least are co-responsible for numerous errors committed on the international level, but rather questions of vital importance for the world movement.

The Russian question must be brought before the International for an in-depth study. The following features must be taken into account: today the Russian economy is composed, according to Lenin, of elements that are pre-bourgeois, bourgeois, State-capitalist and socialist. State-controlled large-scale industry is socialist insofar as it is production organised by, and in the hands of a politically proletarian State. The distribution of the products derived from this industry operates however under a capitalist form, namely, through a competitive free-market mechanism.

One cannot deny in principle that workers will not only be kept in less than brilliant economic circumstances by this system (in fact that is the case) even if they do accept it because of the revolutionary consciousness they have acquired, but that it will also evolve in the direction of an increased extraction of surplus value by means of the price paid by the worker for foodstuffs, and the prices paid by the State for its purchases, as well as the conditions it obtains in concessions, commerce and in all its relations with foreign capitalism. It is therefore necessary to ask whether the socialist elements in the Russian economy are increasing or decreasing, a problem that also means taking into account the degree of technical efficiency and how well the State industries are organised.

The building of full socialism extended to production and distribution, to industry and agriculture, is impossible in just one country, but the progressive development of the socialist elements in the Russian economy can nevertheless be achieved by thwarting the plans of the counter-revolutionaries; supported inside Russia by the rich peasants, new bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeoisie, and outside the country by the imperialist powers. Whether such counter-revolutionary plotting takes the form of internal or external aggression, or of a progressive sabotage and influencing of Russian social and State life such as to force a progressive involution and deproletarianisation of its main features, it is a fundamental condition for success that all parties belonging to the International collaborate with each other and are able to make their contribution.

Above all, it is a matter of assuring the Russian proletariat and the Russian Communist Party of the active support of the proletarian vanguard, especially in the imperialist countries. Not only must aggression be prevented and pressure is exerted against the bourgeois States as regards their relations with Russia, but most importantly of all, the Russian party needs to be helped by its brother parties to resolve its problems. Whilst these other parties, it is true, do not possess direct experience of governmental problems, nonetheless they can help resolve them by acting as a classist and revolutionary coefficient, with experience derived directly from the real class struggles taking place in their respective countries.

As we have shown above, the internal relationships of the International do not lend themselves to this task. Urgent changes therefore need to be made in order to redress the problems in the realm of politics and in the tactical and organisational spheres that have been exacerbated by “bolshevisation”.

III. — Italian Questions

1. — The Italian Situation (1926)

Evaluations of the Italian situation that attribute decisive value to the insufficient development of industrial capitalism are wrong.

The weak expansion of industry in a quantitative sense, along with its relatively late historical appearance, were counterbalanced by a set of other circumstances which allowed the bourgeoisie to completely entrench itself politically during the period of the Risorgimento and develop an extremely rich and complex tradition of government.

The political polarities that historically characterise conflicting parties — such as the old Left and Right division, clericalism and masonry, and democracy and fascism — cannot be automatically identified with the social differences which exist between landed proprietors and capitalists, and the big and petty bourgeoisie.

The fascist movement must be understood as the attempt to politically unify the conflicting interests of various bourgeois groups under the banner of counter-revolution. Fascism, created and directly fostered by the entire upper classes (landowners, industrialists, commercial sectors, bankers, supported by the traditional State apparatus, the monarchy, the Church, and masonry) pursued this aim by mobilising elements within the disintegrating middle classes which, in close alliance with the bourgeoisie as a whole, it has managed to deploy against the proletariat.

What has taken place in Italy shouldn't be interpreted as the arrival in power of a new social strata, as the formation of a new State apparatus with a new programme and ideology, nor as the defeat of part of the bourgeoisie, whose interests would be better served by the adoption of liberal and parliamentary methods. The Democrats and the Liberals, the Nittis and the Giolittis, are the protagonists of a phase of counter-revolutionary struggle which is dialectically linked to the fascist phase and just as decisive in effecting the proletarian defeat. In fact it was precisely their concessionary politics, with the complicity of reformists and maximalists, which allowed the bourgeoisie to resist the pressure from the proletariat and head it off during the post-war period of demobilisation, at precisely a time when every component of the dominant class was unprepared for a frontal attack.

Directly favoured in this period by governments, the bureaucracy, the police, judiciary, army etc., Fascism has since gone on to completely replace the bourgeoisie's old political personnel. However, we shouldn't be fooled by this and neither should it serve as a reason for rehabilitating parties and groups who were removed not because they achieved better conditions for the working class, but because for the time being they had completed their anti-proletarian task.

2. — Political Positions of the Communist Left

As the above situation was taking shape, the group which formed the Communist Party set out with these criteria: a break from the illusory dualisms of the bourgeois and parliamentary political scene and an affirmation of the revolutionary antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie; propaganda amongst the proletariat aimed at destroying the illusion that the middle classes were capable of producing a political general staff, of taking power and clearing the way for proletarian victories; instilling confidence in the proletariat in its own historic task through propaganda based on a series of critical, political and tactical positions which were original and autonomous, and solidly linked through successive situations.

The tradition of this political current goes back to the left wing of the Socialist party before the war. Whilst a majority capable of struggling both against the errors of the reformists and the syndicalists (the latter having personified the proletarian left until then) was formed at the congresses of Reggio Emilia (1912) and Ancona (1914), an extreme left aspiring to even more radical classist solutions also emerged within this majority. Important problems for the working class were correctly resolved during this period, namely with regard to the questions of electoral tactics, links with the trades-unions, colonial war and freemasonry.

During the World War, virtually the entire party opposed the union sacré politics, and at successive meetings and Congresses (Bologna, May 1915; Rome, February 1917; Florence, November 1917; Rome, 1918), its extreme Left-wing, now clearly differentiated, defended the following Leninist positions: the rejection of national defence and defeatism; exploitation of military defeat to pose the question of power; and unceasing struggle against the opportunist trade-union and parliamentary leaders along with the call for their expulsion from the party.

Immediately after the war, Il Soviet became the mouthpiece of the Extreme Left, and the first newspaper to support the policies of the Russian revolution and to confront anti-marxist, opportunist, syndicalist, and anarchistic misinterpretations. It correctly set out the essential problems of the proletarian dictatorship and the party's tasks, and from the very start defended the necessity of a split in the Socialist Party.

This same group supported electoral abstentionism but the 2nd Congress of the International would dismiss its conclusions. It's abstentionism however didn't derive from the anti-marxist theoretical errors of the anarcho-syndicalist type, as its' resolute polemics against the anarchist press have shown. The application of the abstentionist tactic was recommended above all for fully developed parliamentary democracies, because this political environment creates particular obstacles to the winning over of the masses to an accurate understanding of the word "dictatorship"; difficulties which, in our opinion, continue to be underestimated by the International.

In the second place, abstentionism was proposed at a time when huge struggles were setting even hugger mass movements into motion (unfortunately not the case today), and not as a tactic applicable for all times and all places.

With the 1919 elections, the bourgeois Nitti government opened up an immense safety valve to the revolutionary pressure, and diverted the proletarian offensive and the attention of the party by exploiting its tradition of unbridled electoralism. "Il Soviet's" abstentionism was then entirely correct, in that it responded to the true causes of the proletarian disaster that ensued.

At the subsequent Bologna Conference (October 1919), only the abstentionist minority posed correctly the question of a split with the reformists, but it sought in vain to come to an agreement with a section of the maximalists on this point, even after abstentionism had been renounced in order to achieve it. The attempt having failed, the abstentionist fraction remained the only section of the party which, up until the 2nd World Congress, worked on a national scale for the formation of the communist party.

This was therefore the group which represented the spontaneous adherence, setting out from its own experiences and traditions, of the left of the Italian proletariat to the policies of Lenin and Bolshevism which had lately emerged victorious with the Russian revolution.

3. — The work of the Party's Left leadership

Within the new communist party, constituted at Leghorn in January 1921, the abstentionists made every effort to forge solid links with other groupings in the party. But whilst for some of these groups it was international relations alone which necessitated the split from the opportunists, for the abstentionists (who for discipline's sake had expressly renounced their positions on elections) and indeed for many other elements besides, it was because the theses of the International and the lessons of recent political struggles were completely consistent with each other.

In its work, the interpretation of the Italian situation and the tasks of the proletariat mentioned earlier inspired the party leadership. With hindsight it is clear that the delay in the formation of the revolutionary Party (for which the other groups were responsible) made the subsequent proletarian retreat inevitable.

In order to place the proletariat in the best position during the ensuing battles, the leadership took the stance that although the greatest efforts should be made to use the traditional apparatus of the Red organisations, it was also necessary to warn the proletariat not to count on anything from the maximalists and reformists, who would even go so far as accepting a peace treaty with fascism.

From its very inception, the party defended the principle of trade-union unity, going on to propose the central postulate of a united front which culminated in the formation of the Labour Alliance. Whatever

opinions one might have about the political united front, the fact is that the situation in Italy in 1921-22 made it impossibility; in fact the party never received any invitation to attend any meetings aimed at founding an alliance of parties. The party didn't intervene at the meeting to constitute the trade-union alliance called by the railway workers because it didn't want to lend itself to manoeuvres which might have compromised the alliance itself, and which might have been blamed on the party; it had already shown beforehand though that it approved of the initiative by stating that all communist workers within the new organisation would observe discipline towards it.

Certain contacts between political groups would eventually take place; the communist party wouldn't refuse to take part but they would come to nothing, demonstrating both the impossibility of arriving at an understanding on the terrain of political action, and the defeatism of every other group. During the retreat, the leadership was able to preserve the confidence of the workers in their own class, and raise the political consciousness of the vanguard, by heading off the traditional manoeuvrings of pseudo-revolutionary groups and parties within the proletariat. Despite the efforts of the party, it was not until later, August 1922, that a generalised mobilisation took place; but proletarian defeat was inevitable and from then on fascism, openly supported in their violent campaigns by the forces of a declaredly liberal democratic State, became master of the country. The "March on Rome" which happened afterwards merely legitimised fascism's predomination in a formal sense.

Even now, despite reduced proletarian activity, the party's influence still predominated over the maximalists and reformists, its progress having already been demonstrated by the 1921 election results and the extensive consultations that took place within the Confederation of Labour.

4. — Relations between the Italian Left and the Communist International

The Rome Congress, held in March 1922, brought to light a theoretical divergence between the Italian Left and most of the International; a divergence expressed before, rather badly, by our delegations at the 3rd World Congress and the Enlarged Executive of February 1922, where, especially on the first occasion, errors of a "leftist" nature were committed. Fortunately the Rome Theses constituted the theoretical and political liquidation of any peril of left-wing opportunism in the Italian Party.

The only difference in practice between the party and the international was about what tactics to follow with regard to the maximalists, but the unitarian victory at the socialist Congress in October 1921 appeared to have settled this.

The Rome Theses were adopted as the party's contribution to the International's decision-making not as an immediate line of action; this was confirmed by the party directorate at the Enlarged Executive of 1922, and if no theoretical discussion took place there, this was because of a decision by the International which for discipline's sake the party complied with.

In August 1922 however, the International wouldn't interpret the Italian situation in same way as the Party directorate, but concluded that the situation in Italy was unstable in terms of a weakening of State resistance. It therefore thought that a fusion with the maximalists would strengthen the party, considering the split between the maximalists and unitarians as decisive, as opposed to the party directorate that wished to apply the lessons learnt during the vast strike manoeuvre in August.

It is from this moment that the two political lines diverge in a definitive way. At the 4th World Congress in December 1922, the old leadership opposed the majority thesis, and on returning to Italy, the

delegates would pass the matter to a Commission, unanimously declining to take any responsibility for the decision, though of course retaining their own administrative functions.

Then came the arrests in February 1923 and the big offensive against the party. Finally the Enlarged Executive of June 1923 would depose the old executive and replace it with a completely different one. Several party leaders would simply resign as a logical consequence. In May 1924, a Party consultative conference still gave the Left an overwhelming majority over the Centre and the Right and thus it arrived at the 5th World Congress in 1924.

5. — The “Ordinovist” tradition of the present leadership

The “Ordine Nuovo” group was formed in Turin by a group of intellectuals, who established contacts with the proletarian masses in industry at a time when the abstentionist fraction in Turin already had a large following. The volatile ideology of this group is mainly derived from philosophical conceptions of a bourgeois and idealist nature partly inherited from Benedetto Croce. This group aligned itself with communist directives very late in the day, and would always display residual errors linked to its origins. It understood the significance of the Russian revolution too late to be able to apply it usefully to the proletarian struggle in Italy. In November 1917, comrade Gramsci published an article in Avanti! asserting that the Russian revolution had given the lie to Marx’s historical materialism and the theories in “Capital”, and gave an essentially idealist explanation. The extreme left current that the youth federation belonged to responded immediately to this article.

The subsequent ideological development of the “Ordinovist” group, as their publication Ordino Nuovo shows, has led to a non-marxist and non-Leninist interpretation of the workers’ movement. The questions of the role of the unions and the party, armed struggle and conquest of power, and the construction of socialism are not posed correctly in their theory, and they have evolved instead the conception of a systematic organisation of the labouring classes which was “necessary” rather than “voluntary”, and strictly bound up with the mechanism of capitalist industrial production.

Setting out from the internal commissions, this system was supposed to culminate simultaneously in the proletarian and Communist International, in the Soviets and in the workers’ State by way of the factory councils, which were held to embody the latter even before the collapse of capitalist power.

And what is more, even during the bourgeois epoch, this system was supposed to assume the function of constructing the new economy by calling for and exercising workers’ control over production.

Later on, all the non-marxist aspects of “Ordinovist” ideology — utopianism, Proudhon inspired syndicalism, and economic gradualism before the conquest of power, i.e., reformism — were apparently dropped in order to be gradually substituted with the entirely different theories of Leninism. However, the fact that this substitution took place on a superficial and fictitious level could only have been avoided if the “Ordinovists” hadn’t split from and opposed the Left; a group whose traditions, rather than converging with the Bolsheviks in an entirely impulsive way, represented a serious contribution, derived not from academic and bookish dissertations on bourgeois tomes but from proletarian class experience. Certainly the “Ordinovists” hadn’t been prevented from learning and improving within the strictly collaborative framework which was lacking later on. As it turned out, we greeted the announcements of the “Ordinovist” leaders with a certain tinge of irony when they announced that they

were bolshevising the very people who had actually set them on the road to Bolshevik positions by serious and marxist means, rather than by chattering about mechanistic and bureaucratic procedures.

Up until shortly before the 1920 World Congress, the “Ordinovists” were opposed to a split in the old party, and they posed all trade-union questions incorrectly. The International’s representative in Italy had to polemicise against them on the questions of the factory councils and the premature constitution of the Soviets.

In April 1920, the Turin Section approved the famous Ordine Nuovo theses, which were drawn up by comrade Gramsci and adopted by a committee composed of both “Ordinovists” and Abstentionists. These theses, cited in the 2nd Congress’s resolution, in fact expressed, despite disagreements about elections, the common thinking of the nascent communist fraction; they weren’t distinctly “Ordinovist” positions, but consisted of points already clarified and accepted by the party’s left-wing long before.

The “Ordinovists” would rally around the Left’s positions on the International for a while, but the thinking expressed in the Rome Theses was essentially different from theirs, even if they considered it opportune to vote for them.

The true precursor of “Ordinovism’s” present adherence to the tactics and general line of the International was really comrade Tasca and his opposition to the Left at the Rome Congress.

Given, on the one hand, the “Ordinovist” group’s characteristic particularism and its taste for the concrete inherited from idealistic bourgeois positions, and, on the other hand, the superficial and therefore incomplete adherences allowed for by the International’s leadership, we are forced to conclude, despite all their loud protestations of orthodoxy, that the theoretical adherence (of decisive importance in terms of providing a basis for actual policies) of the Ordinovists to Leninism is about as worthless as their adherence to the Rome Theses.

6. — The political work of the present Party leadership

From 1923 until now, the work of the Party leadership, which we must bear in mind took place in difficult circumstances, has led to mistakes which are essentially similar to those pointed out apropos the international question, but which have been severely aggravated at least partly by the initial Ordinovist deviations.

Participating in the 1924 elections was a very fortunate political act, but one cannot say the same about the proposal for joint action with the socialist parties nor of the way it was labelled “proletarian unity”. Just as deplorable was the excessive tolerance shown towards some of the “Terzini’s” electoral manoeuvres. But the most serious problems are posed apropos the open crisis that followed Matteotti’s assassination.

The leadership’s policies were based on the absurd view that the weakening of fascism would propel the middle classes into action first, and then the proletariat. This implied on the one hand a lack of faith in the capacity of the proletariat to act as a class, despite its continued alertness under the suffocating strictures of fascism, and on the other, an over-estimation of the initiative of the middle-class. In fact, even without referring to the clear marxist theoretical positions on this matter, the central lesson to draw from the Italian experience has been that the intermediary layers will passively tail along behind the strongest and may therefore back either side. Thus in 1919-1920 they backed the proletariat, then

between 1921-22-23 they went behind fascism, and now, after a significant period of major upheaval in 1924-25, they are backing fascism again.

The leadership were mistaken in abandoning parliament and participating in the first meetings of the Aventine when they should have remained in Parliament, launched a political attack on the government, and immediately taken up a position opposed to the moral and constitutional prejudices of the Aventine, which would determine the outcome of the crisis in fascism's favour. This wouldn't have prevented the communists from making the decision to abandon parliament, and would have allowed them to do so whilst keeping their specific identity intact, and allowed them to leave at the only appropriate time, i.e. when the situation was ripe to call on the masses to take direct action. It was one of those crucial moments which affect how future situations will turn out; the error was therefore a fundamental one, a decisive test of the leadership's capabilities, and it led to a highly unfavourable utilisation by the working class both of the weakening of fascism and the resounding failure of the Aventine.

The Return to Parliament in November 1924 and the statement issued by Repossi were beneficial, as the wave of proletarian consensus showed, but they came too late. The leadership wavered for a long time, and only finally made a decision under pressure from the party and the Left. The preparation of the Party was made on the basis of dreary directives and a fantastically erroneous assessment of the situation's latent possibilities (report by Gramsci to the Central Committee, August 1924). The preparation of the masses, which leant towards supporting the Aventine rather than wishing for its collapse, was in any case made worse when the party proposed to the opposition parties that they set up their own Anti-parliament. This tactic in any case conflicted with the decisions of the International, which never envisaged proposals being made to parties which were clearly bourgeois; worse still, it lay totally outside the domain of communist principles and tactics, and outside the marxist conception of history. Any possible explanation that the leadership might have had for this tactic aside — an explanation which was doomed to have very limited repercussions anyway — there is no doubt that it presented the masses with an illusory Anti-State, opposed to and warring against the traditional State apparatus, whilst in the historical perspective of our programme, there is no basis for an Anti-State other than the representation of the one productive class, namely, the Soviet.

To call for an Anti-parliament, relying in the country on the support of the workers' and peasants' committees, meant entrusting the leadership of the proletariat to representatives of groups that are socially capitalist, like Amendola, Agnelli, Albertini, etc.

Besides the certainty that such a situation won't arise, a situation which could only be described as a betrayal anyway, just putting it forward in the first place as a point of view derived from a communist proposal involves a betrayal of principles and a weakening of the revolutionary preparation of the proletariat.

Other aspects of the work of the leadership also lend themselves to criticism. There has been a welter of watchwords that correspond neither to any genuine possibility of realisation, nor to any visible signs of agitation outside the party machine. The core demand for workers and peasants committees, justified in a confusing and contradictory way, has been neither understood nor abided by.

7. — The party's trade-union activity

During the March 1925 metalworkers strike another serious mistake was made. The leadership should have predicted that the proletariat's disillusionment with the Aventine would propel it into class actions and a wave of strikes. If the leadership had foreseen this, it might have been possible to push the F.I.O.M. into a national strike (just as it had managed to get it to take part in the strike initiated by the fascists) by setting up a metalworkers agitation committee based on the local organisations, which throughout the country had been highly supportive of the strike.

The stance the leadership has taken on the trade unions hasn't corresponded clearly with the watchword of trade-union unification inside the Confederation; a watchword that should still be adhered to despite the organisational decomposition of the latter. The party's directives on the unions have shown evidence of Ordinovist errors as regards action in the factories: not only has it created, or is proposing to create, a multitude of conflicting organisms in the factories, but it has frequently issued watchwords which depreciate trade-unions and the idea of their necessity as organs of proletarian struggle.

A consequence of this error was the paltry settlement with FIAT in Turin; as was the confusion surrounding the factory elections, where the criteria for choosing between classist or party lists of candidates, that is on trade-union terrain, wasn't posed correctly.

8. — Party activity in agrarian and national matters

It is quite correct to have issued the call for the formation of peasant defence associations, but this work has been conducted too exclusively from on high by a party bureau.

Despite the situation's inherent difficulties, it is necessary to declare that viewing our tasks in this area in a bureaucratic way is dangerous, indeed the same goes for every other party activity.

A correct relationship between peasant associations and workers' unions must be clearly established along the following lines: whilst agricultural wage labourers must form a federation which adheres to the Confederazione del Lavoro, a strict alliance must exist between the latter and the peasant defence associations at both the central and local levels.

All regionalist, and particularly "southernist", conceptions (and there is already some evidence of this) must be avoided when dealing with the agrarian question. This is equally true with regard to the demands for regional autonomy which have been advanced by certain new parties; who we must fight openly as reactionaries, instead of sitting around the table with them engaging in pointless negotiations.

The tactic of seeking an alliance with the left wing of the Popular Party (Miglioli) and the peasant's party has not given favourable results.

Once again concessions have been made to politicians who are outside any classist tradition; without obtaining the expected shift in the masses this has, on the contrary, often disorientated parts of our organisation. It is equally wrong to overestimate the significance of the manoeuvres amongst the peasantry for a hypothetical political campaign against the influence of the Vatican; the problem certainly exists but it won't be resolved adequately by such means.

9. — The Leadership's organisational work

There is no doubt that the work of reorganising the party after the fascist storm has produced some excellent results. However, it has retained an overly technical character; instead of ensuring centralisation by means of clear and uniform statutory norms applicable to every comrade and local committee, the attempt was made to enforce it solely by means of interventions by the central apparatus. It would have been a major step forward to have allowed the base organisations to return to electing their own committees, especially during the periods when the circumstances most favoured it.

Regarding the increase, then the subsequent decrease, in the party's membership, not to mention the departure of elements recruited during the Matteotti crisis who are leaving with the same facility as they arrived, it goes to show how matters such as these depend on changing circumstances rather than on any hypothetical advantages that a general change of direction might have.

The effects and advantages of the month-long campaign of recruitment have been exaggerated. As for organisation at the level of the cell, evidently the leadership must put into effect the Comintern's general resolutions, a matter we have already referred to elsewhere. However, it has been done in an irregular and uneven fashion involving a host of contradictions, and only after much pressure from the rank-and-file has a certain accommodation been reached.

It would be better if the system of inter-regional secretaries was substituted with a Corp of inspectors, thereby establishing direct links which were political rather than technical between the leadership and the traditional rank-and-file organisations of the party i.e., the provincial federations. The principal duty of the inspectors should be to actively intervene when the fundamental party organisation needs to be rebuilt, and then look after and assist it until normal functioning is established.

10. — The leadership and the question of fractionism

The campaign which reached its climax during the preparation for our 3rd congress, and which was deliberately launched after the 5th World Congress, rather than aiming to propagandise and elaborate on the directives of the International throughout the party with the aim of creating a really collective and advanced consciousness, aimed instead to get comrades to renounce their adhesion to the opinions of the Left as quickly as possible and with minimum effort. No thought was given to whether this would be useful or damaging to the party with regard to its effectiveness toward the external enemy, the only objective was that of attaining by any means this internal objective.

We have spoken elsewhere, from a historical and theoretical perspective, about the delusion of repressing fractionism from above. The 5th Congress, in the case of Italy, accepted that the Left were refraining from working as an opposition although still participating in all aspects of party work, except within the political leadership, and it therefore agreed that pressure on them from above should be stopped. This agreement was however broken by the leadership in a campaign which consisted not of ideological postulates and tactics, but of disciplinary accusations towards individual comrades who were brought before federal congresses and focused on in a one-sided way.

On the announcement of the Congress, an "Entente Committee" was spontaneously constituted with the aim of preventing individuals and groups from reacting by leaving the party, and in order to channel the action of all the Left comrades into a common and responsible line, within the strict limits of discipline, with the proviso that the rights of all comrades to be involved in party consultations was guaranteed. This action was seized on by the leadership who launched a campaign which portrayed the

comrades of the Left as fractionists and scissionists, whose right to defend themselves was withdrawn and against whom votes were obtained from the federal committees by exerting pressure from above.

This campaign continued with a fractionist revision of the party apparatus and of the local cadres, through the way in which written contributions to the discussion were presented, and by the refusal to allow representatives of the Left to participate in the federal congresses. Crowning it all there was the unheard of system of automatically attributing the votes of all those absent from conference to the theses of the leadership.

Whatever the effect of such measures may be in terms of producing a simple numerical majority, in fact rather than enhancing the ideological consciousness of the party and its prestige amongst the masses they have damaged it. If the worst consequences have been avoided this is due to the moderation of the comrades of the Left; who have put up with such a hammering not because they believed it to be in the least bit justified, but solely because they are devoted to the party cause.

11. — Draft programme of party work

The premises from which, in the Left's view, the general and particular duties of the party should spring, are defined in the preceding theses. It is evident, however, that the question can only be tackled on the basis of international decisions. The Left can therefore only outline a draft programme of action as a proposal to the International about how the tasks of its Italian section might best is realised.

The party must prepare the proletariat for a revival of its classist activity and for the struggle against fascism by drawing on the harsh experiences of recent times. At the same time, we need to disenchant the proletariat of the notion that there is anything to be gained from a change in bourgeois politics, or that any help will be forthcoming from the urban middle classes. The experiences of the liberal-democratic period can be used to prevent the re-emergence of these pacifistic illusions.

The party will address no proposals for joint actions to the parties of the anti-fascist opposition, neither will it engage in politics aimed at detaching a left-wing from this opposition, and nor will it attempt to push so-called left-wing parties "further to the left".

In order to mobilise the masses around its programme, the party will subscribe to the tactic of the united front from below and will keep an attentive eye on the economic situation in order to formulate immediate demands. The party will refrain from advocating as a central political demand the accession of a government that concedes guarantees of liberty; it will not put forward "liberty for all" as an objective of class conquest, but will emphasise on the contrary that freedom for the workers will entail infringing the liberties of the exploiters and the bourgeoisie.

Faced today with the grave problem of a weakening of the class unions and of the other immediate organs of the proletariat, the party will call for the defence of the traditional red unions and for the necessity of their rebirth. In its work in the factories, it will avoid creating organs if they tend to undermine this rebuilding of the trade unions. Taking the present situation into account, the party will work towards getting the unions to operate within the framework of "union factory sections"; which representing a strong union tradition, are the appropriate bodies for leading workers' struggles insofar as today it is precisely in the factories where opportunities for struggle exist. We will attempt to get the illegal internal commissions elected through the union factory section, with the reservation that, as soon as it is possible (it isn't at present) the committees be elected by an assembly of the factory personnel.

As regards the question of organisation in the countryside, reference can be made to what we have said regarding the agrarian situation.

Once all the possibilities for proletarian groups to organise have been utilised to the maximum, we may resort to the watchword “workers’ and peasants’ committees” observing the following criteria:

a) The watchword of constituting workers’ and peasants’ committees must not be launched in a casual and intermittent way, but set forth in an energetic campaign when a changing situation has made the need for a new framework clear to the masses, that is: when the watchword can be identified not just as a call to organise, but as a definite call to action;

b) The nucleus of the committee s will have to be constituted by representatives from the traditional mass organisations, such as the unions and analogous organisms, despite these having been mutilated by reaction. It must not include convocations of political delegates;

c) At a later date we'll be able to call on the committees to have elections, but we will have to clarify beforehand that these are not Soviets i.e. organs of proletarian government, but expressions of a local and national alliance of all the exploited for their joint defence.

Regarding relations with fascist unions: inasmuch as today the latter don’t present themselves even in a formal sense as voluntary associations of the masses, there must be an overall rejection of the call to penetrate these unions in order to break them up. The watchword of the rebuilding the Red unions must be issued in conjunction with the denunciation of the fascist unions.

The organisational measures that should be adopted inside the party have been indicated in part. Under present conditions, it is necessary to co-ordinate such measures with requirements that we can’t go into here (clandestinity). It is nevertheless an urgent necessity that they are systematised and formulated as clear statutory norms binding on all in order to avoid confusing healthy centralism with blind obedience to arbitrary and conflicting instructions; a method which puts genuine party unity in jeopardy.

12. — Perspectives on the Party’s internal situation

The internal political and organisational problems which our party faces cannot be resolved in a definitive way within the national framework, as the solution depends on the working out of the internal situation and on the politics of the International as a whole. It would a serious and shameful mistake if the national and international leaders continue to deploy the stupid method of exerting pressure from above against the Left and the reduction of complex problems of Party politics and ideology to cases of personal conduct.

Since the Left is going to stick to its opinions, those comrades who have no intention of renouncing them should be allowed, in an atmosphere free of scheming and mutual recriminations, to carry out the loyal commitment they have given, that is; to abide by the decisions of the party organs and to renounce all oppositional work, whilst being exempted from the requirement of participating in the leadership. Evidently this proposal shows that the situation is far from perfect, but it would be dangerous to delude the party that these internal difficulties can be eliminated by simply applying mechanical measures to organisational problems, or by taking up personal positions. To spread such an illusion would be tantamount to making a severe attack on the party.

Only by abandoning this small-minded approach, appreciating the true magnitude of the problem, and placing it before the party and the international, will we truly achieve the aim of avoiding a poisoning of the party atmosphere and move on to tackle all the difficulties which the party is called on to face today.

The Fundamentals of a Marxist Orientation (1946)

1. Marxism is not a matter of choice between conflicting opinions, in the sense that Marxism is connected with a historic tradition.

2. Orientation of the dialectic method of Marxism; the contradiction between the productive forces and social forms; classes, class struggle, party-conformism, reformism, anti-formism.

3. Interpretation of the characteristics of the present historic period, dialectic evolution of historic forms.

Political example: monarchy and republic.

Economic example: mercantilism.

Social example: the family.

Ideological example: Christian religion.

4. The Capitalist cycle: revolutionary phase, evolutionary and democratic phase, fascist and imperialist phase.

5. Proletarian strategy in the democratic-pacifist stage: Proletarian tactics in the phase of Imperialism, and of fascism.

6. The Russian Revolution: errors and deviations of the Third International; retrogression of the proletarian regime in Russia.

7. Present status of the problem of proletarian strategy; historic rejection of all support to liberal-democratic demands; negative solution to the argument for support of forces which lead capitalism into its most modern phase, monopolist on the economic plane, totalitarian in the political domain.

Before convincing anybody, it is necessary that they understand well the positions which we present. Persuasion, propaganda, proselytising comes later.

According to our conceptions, these opinions are not the result of the work of prophets, apostles, or of thinkers who hold that the brain gives birth to new truths, permitting of many followers.

The process is the opposite. It is the objective, impersonal work of a social vanguard which concentrates on and makes clear the theoretical positions which their common conditions of life bring them to as individuals, well before consciousness of them.

The method of Marxism is therefore anti-scholastic, anti-cultural, anti-revelation (illuminist). In the existing theoretical vacuum, reflecting the practical disorganisation, one must not be astonished, nor complain if the presentation of our position results at first in alienation instead of drawing closer, of a possible adherent.

Every political movement which presents its programme, claims for itself historical precedent, tradition, either recent or in the distant past, national or international.

The movement of which this magazine claims for itself are well, clearly defined origins. But as against the other movements, it did not originate from a revealed word (revelation), or from super-human beginnings. It does not recognise the authority of unchangeable texts, nor as points of reference, each question of legal rules, nor in any manner whatsoever recognise anything innate or inborn in the thoughts and senses of man.

This orientation can only be traced in terms of Marxism: Socialism, Communism, the political movement of the working class. It is a pity that these terms are abused. In 1917, Lenin considered it a fundamental question to change the name of the party, returning to the name "Communist" from the "Communist Manifesto" of 1848. Today, the great abuse of the name, "Communist", by the parties which are far outside of any revolutionary class line, still creates immense confusion; movements that openly preserve bourgeois institutions, daring to say that they still are proletarian parties, like those of the Spanish anti-Franco parties.

Historic tradition

The historic line of which we claim to be part is the following:

The Communist Manifesto of 1848, the fundamental works of Marx and Engels, which in classic fashion, restored revolutionary marxism against the revisionists-opportunists, which accompanied the revolutionary victory in Russia, 1917; the fundamental works of Lenin: the declaration which established the Third International and up to the First and Second Congress; the positions held by the Left in the succeeding Congresses, presented from 1922 on.

Limited to Italy this historic line is connected with the Left current of the Socialist Party during the war of 1914-1918; with the founding of the Communist Party of Italy at Leghorn in January 1921, with its Congress of Rome in 1922, with the activity of its left-wing dominant until the Congress in 1926; since then organising outside of the "Communist" Party of the Comintern; alien to it.

This line does not coincide with the line of the Trotskyist movement of the Fourth International. Trotsky revolted late, and Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, and the other Russian groups of the Bolshevik tradition still later, against the wrong tactics supported up to 1924, finally recognising the deviation, aggravated up to the overthrow of the fundamental political principles of the movement. Today the Trotskyists claim to have restored these principles, but their tactic of false manoeuvring, and of their liquidationist line, is falsely defined as Bolshevik and Leninist.

Method

The basins of all investigation must be a consideration of the historic process as a whole; its development till now, and an objective examination of present social phenomena.

This method has been well stated often, but frequently as misleading in regard to its application. The fundamentals of the investigation of the material means by which human groupings satisfy their needs, that is, by an examination of productive technique, and inn connection with the development of which, economic relations arise. In the course of different epochs, these factors determine the superstructure composed of the legal institutions; political, military and the dominant ideologies.

The contradiction between the productive forces and the social forms manifests itself as a struggle between the classes who have antagonistic economic interests. In the final stages, this struggle becomes the armed struggle for the conquest of political power.

This method is denoted by the following expressions: historic materialism, dialectical materialism, economic determinism, scientific materialism and the communist critique.

The important thing is always to apply the results to the facts and not to a priori postulates, to clarify and explain human phenomena; not to myths or divinities; not to principles of "right" or natural "ethics", such as Justice, Equality, Fraternity and other abstractions similar to them devoid of any sense. Most important, one must not capitulate to the pressure of the dominant ideology, or take refuge in illusory postulates, without a clear perception or without acknowledging it, when action intervenes anew, just at the most burning moments and at the instant of decisive conclusions. The dialectic method is the only one which overcomes the current contradiction between continuity and rigorous theoretical coherence on one hand, and on the other hand, the capacity to face critically old established conclusions in formal terms.

Its acceptance hasn’t got the character of a faith, or a fanaticism of school or party.

The productive forces which consist in the main of the men adapted to production, in their groupings and in addition, the tools and mechanical means that are used, operate within the framework offorms of production.

We understand by forms, the disposition, and the relationships of interdependence within which is developed productive and social activity. We understand these forms to be all the established hierarchies (family, military, theocracy, politics). The state is all of these: the prerogatives and the tribunals connected with them; all the rules and dispositions of an economic and legal character which resist all transgression. Society assumes a given type as log as the productive forces maintain themselves within the framework of its forms of production. At a given moment in history, this equilibrium tends to be broken. From diverse causes, among them the progress of technique, the growth of population, expanding communication, increasing the productive forces. Those in contradiction with traditional forms, tending to break this framework in pieces, and when successful, one finds oneself in the presence of a revolution: the community organises itself into new economic, social and legal relationships. New forms take the place of old.

The dialectic method discovers, applies, and confirms its solutions on the grand scale of collective phenomena, and in a scientific and experimental manner, (methods that the thinkers of the bourgeois epoch applied to the natural world in the course of an ideological struggle which was the reflection of the revolutionary social struggle of their class against the theocratic and absolutist regimes, but which they were unable to extend into the social domain). They drew some conclusions acquired on this plane

concerning the solutions of the problem of individual conduct, in opposition to the method employed by the schools of their religious, legal, philosophic and economic adversaries.

These held the standards of collective conduct on the inconsistent basis of the myth of the individual, held that being is individual spirit, mind, soul, and immortal, existing as juridical and civil subjects, existing as unchangeable units of economic policy, etc... Science has endeavoured to go beyond the many hypotheses on the material indivisible individual, to the study of atoms and to reduce them to irreducible units; it has defined complex points of meeting of lines of force radiating from the external field of energy; thus today one can say the cosmos is not the function of units, but that every unit is the function of the cosmos.

Those who believe in the individual and speak of personality, dignity, liberty, of the duties of a citizen, do not employ marxist thinking. That which moves man is not opinions, or beliefs or faiths, nor any phenomena whatsoever of so-called thought, which inspires their will or action. They are moved to act by their needs which are the interests arising from the same material necessities beckoning groups all over simultaneously. They collide with the limitations imposed by the surrounding social structure opposed to the satisfaction of these needs. They react individually and collectively in a sense which for the general average is determined in advance of the play of stimuli and reactions that give birth in the brain to sentiments, thoughts and judgements.

This phenomena is naturally of great complexity and perhaps in some cases are the reverse of the general law that is verified, however. But that as it may, whoever holds that individual consciousness, moral principles, opinions and decisions of the individual or the citizen, intervenes as moving cause in place of social and historic facts, has no right to be called a Marxist.

The contradiction between the productive forces and the social forms is manifested as a struggle between classes who have antagonistic economic interests. In the final stages, this struggle becomes the armed struggle for the conquest of power.

Class and struggle of classes

From the Marxist point of view, the class is not a concealed statistical data, but an organic active force, and it manifests itself when the simple convergence of economic conditions and interests widens into action and common struggle.

In these situations the movement is guided by the regroupments and organs of the vanguard, of which the modern form evolved is the class political party. The collectivity, from which the action culminates in the action of a party, operates in history with an efficiency and a real dynamic unable to be attained on the limited scale of individual action. It is the party which arrives at a theoretical consciousness of the development of events, and as a result, an influence on their future, inn the sense determined by the productive forces and by the relations of factors determining them.

One cannot clarify principles and directives without simplification, in spite of the great difficulty and complexity of problems. With this inn mind, we recognise therefore three types of political movements which include all the characteristics.

Conformist: the movements which struggle to preserve the forms and institutions in power by prohibiting all change, claiming immutable principles. They are of a religious, philosophic and legal character.

Reformist: the movements which, in not desiring the sharp and violent overthrow of traditional institutions, profit from the very strong pressure of the productive forces on them and sanctions gradual and partial changes of the existing order.

Revolutionary: (we adopt the provisional term anti-formists); the movements which demand and put into practice the attack on the old forms, and which even before knowing how to theorise about the character of the new regime, tend to break from the old, provoking the irresistible birth of new forms.

Conformism, reformism, antiformism

All schematisation presents the danger of errors. One might ask himself if the marxist dialectic is unable likewise to construct or contrive a general picture of historic events, in reducing their whole development to a series in the domination of classes, which are born revolutionary, become reformist and end up conservative. The advent of the classless society with the revolutionary victory of the proletariat poses a term suggestive of this development (that which Marx called "the end of human pre-history").

But this term appears to be a metaphysical construction, like those false philosophies of the past. Hegel (as the epoch of Marx already proved) reduced his dialectic system to an absolute construction, falling, unconsciously, into a metaphysic that overshadowed the destructive part of his critique (i.e. philosophy reflecting the revolutionary struggle of the bourgeoisie). From this fact, Hegel continuing the classic philosophy of German idealism and of bourgeois thought, stated the absurd thesis that the history of action and thought must finally crystallise itself into a perfect system, in the conquest of the Absolute. The Marxist dialectic eliminates such a static conclusion.

Engels, in his classic exposition of scientific socialism, (as a theory opposed to Utopianism, which placed reliance on social reform through propaganda for the adoption of projects by the more comfortable classes of society, by a writer or a sect) seems perhaps to admit of a general rule or law of historic movement when he uses the expressions such as "progress forward", "world progress". These vigorous formulas of propaganda should not make one believe he has discovered a recipe in which is enclosed the infinite world of possible evolution of human society, a formula which is a substitute for the habitual bourgeois abstractions of evolution, civilisation, progress, etc.

The marvellous advantage of the dialectic method of investigation is essentially revolutionary. It manifests itself by the implacable destruction of innumerable theoretical systems which time after time, reveal the domination of privileged classes. For this cemetery of broken idols we must substitute, not a new myth, not a new sentiment, not a new credo, but the realistic expression of conditions of fact and of the most likely development that can be foreseen.

For example, the correct marxist formulation is not, "one day the proletariat will take political power and destroy the system of capitalist society and construct the communist economy"; but the opposite: only by its organisation as a class, and therefore in a political party, and the armed installation of its dictatorship, will the proletariat be able to destroy the power of the capitalist economy and render possible a non-capitalist, non-commercial economy. From the scientific point of view, one cannot

exclude a different end to capitalism, such as a return to barbarism; a world catastrophe caused by armies at war having the character, for example, of a pathological degeneration of the human race. (The blind and those condemned to the disintegration of radio-active tissue, at Hiroshima and Nagasaki are a warning of other forms of destruction that cannot be foreseen at present).

The revolutionary Communist movement of this period of convulsions, must be characterised not only by the theoretical destruction of all conformism and reformism of the present world, but also by its practical positions. Its tactics can have no common road with any movement whatsoever, conformist or reformist, in no sector, nor for any period of time. It must be based above all, on the historically acquired knowledge that capitalism has exhausted its initial anti-formism, that is to say, it is not its task any longer to destroy pre-capitalist forms, and of resistance to the restoration of these pre-capitalist forms.

This is not to deny that as log as powerful forces developed capitalism, there was an accelerated, unprecedented rhythm in the transformation of the world economy. Under these conditions the proletarian class was able and did, in a dialectic manner condemn it from a doctrinal viewpoint and supported it in action.

An essential difference between the metaphysical method and the dialectical method resides precisely in that.

A given type of institution, political and social organisation is not good or bad in itself, to accept or reject, after examining its characteristics according to general principles or rules.

In following the dialectical interpretation of history one finds that each institution has had successively, a role and influence, at first revolutionary, then progressive, and finally conservative.

The dialectical evolution of historical forms

The question is, to put in its proper relationship each aspect of the problem, the productive forces and the social factors:

A. It is a metaphysical position which declares in principle: Authority or liberty, royalist or republican, aristocrat or democrat, and refers in polemic to rules placed outside of the historic context. Plato had already in his first tentative system of political science, gone beyond the mystical absolutism of principles, and Aristotle followed it in distinguishing three types - the power of one, - the few, -the many, - the good forms and the bad: monarchy and tyranny - aristocracy and oligarchy - democracy and demagogy.

The modern analysis since Marx, goes much further. In the present historic phase, nearly all political formulas of propaganda use the worst traditional motifs of superstitious religions, legal forms, and philosophies of all sorts.

It is necessary to oppose this chaos of ideas - the reflection of the chaos of relations of interests of a society in decay.

In order to introduce this analysis, it is necessary to proceed to an analogous evaluation of the well-known relationships of preceding historic epochs.

B. Beginning with the economic forms, it is in no sense necessary to declare oneself a partisan in general of communist or private economy, liberal or monopolist, individual or collective, nor praise the merits of each system according to the general well-being: in following that method one falls into Utopianism, which is the exact opposite of the Marxist dialectic.

The classic example of Engels on Communism as the "negation of the negation" is well known. The first forms of human production were Communist. Private property next appeared; a system much more complex and efficient. From this, human society returns to Communism. This modern communism would be unrealisable, if primitive communism had not been superseded, conquered and destroyed by the system of private property. The marxist considers as an advantage, this initial transformation. What we say of communism applies as well to all other economic forms such as slavery, serfdom, manufacturing capitalism, industrial capitalism, and thus consequently.

The petty-trading (mercantile) economy, in which objects satisfying human needs cease to be directly acquired and consumed by the primitive producer, which is the end of barbarism, becoming objects of exchange, through barter at first, with money developing as a means of exchange later, represented a great social revolution.

It made possible the adaptation of different individuals to diverse productive work (division of labour), enlarging and differentiating enormously the character of social life. One can recognise at the same time the changes from one stage to the other in stating that after a series of types of economic organisation, based on the common principle of mercantilism (slavery, feudalism, capitalism) the trend today is to a non-mercantile economy, rejecting the thesis that production is impossible without monetary exchange of merchandise as a conformist and reactionary principle.

The abolition of mercantilism can succeed today, and only today because of the fact of collective labour and the concentration of productive forces. Capitalism, last of the mercantile economies, in realising this development and concentration, makes possible the breaking of the bonds within which all use-values circulate as merchandise and in which human work itself is treated as such.

A century before this stage, a critique of the mercantile system, based on the general reasoning at the base of its philosophy, legal or moral code would have been sheer folly.

C. The various types of social systems which have successively appeared and lived out their collective life, differentiating themselves from primitive individualism, going through an immense cycle, the relations within which the individual life and movement becomes more and more complex, cannot be individually judged as favourable or unfavourable. They must be considered in relation to their historic development which comprises a variable role in the diverse transformations and revolutions.

Each of these institutions surges up as a revolutionary conquest, develops and reforms in the long historic cycles, becoming finally a reactionary obstacle and conformist.

The institution of the family appears as the first social form at the time inn the human species when the bond between parents and offspring prolongs itself well beyond the period that is physiologically necessary.

The first form of authority as then born, exercised by the mother, afterwards by the father over their descendants, even when they are physically developed and vigorous. At that stage we are therefore in

the presence of a revolution since there appeared the first possibility of a collectively organised life which constitutes the base of development which leads ultimately to the first form of organised society and the State.

The new social system of a more vast nature, contains and disciplines the institution of the family, as inn the first cities, states, and aristocratic regimes, afterwards in the bourgeois regime. All are based on the institution of inherited taboos (conventions).

There then appears the necessity of an economy which supersedes the play of individual interests. The institution of the family, with its too narrow limits, becomes an obstacle and a reactionary element in society.

Without denying its historic role, the modern communists, after observing that the capitalist system has already deformed and dissolved the sanctity of the family institution, fights it openly and proposes to supplant it.

The different forms of the State, monarchy and republic alternate in the Course of history, in a complex manner and are represented in one or the other historic situations as revolutionary, progressive or conservative.

It can be admitted that before it disappears, capitalism attains the liquidation of dynastic regimes which today are few in number. But, on this question, one must not proceed to absolute judgements situated outside of time and space.

The first monarchies appeared as the political expression of the division of material tasks; such elements as the family unit, or the primitive tribe were assigned to defence or pillage, by armed attack against other groups and peoples. The others turned to the hunt, to fishing, to agriculture or the first beginnings of artisanship. The first warriors and kings attained therefore, the privilege of power at major risk. Yet social forms still appear there of a most developed and complex nature, previously impossible, representing the road toward a revolution in social relationships.

To successive epochs, the institution of monarchy made possible the establishment and development of vast national state organisations against the federations of principalities and small nobility. It had an innovating and reforming function. Dante is the monarchical reformist at the beginning of Modern Times.

More recently, the monarchy and republic has assumed in the wealthier countries a stricter form of power of the bourgeoisie.

It used to be possible for republican parties and movements, of a revolutionary. reformist, and conservative character to exist side by side.

As for the rest, some accessible and simplified examples were the revolutionary Brutus who hunted Tarquin; the reformist Gracchi who looked to give to the aristocratic republic a content conforming to the interests of the plebeians: the reactionary and conformist traditional republicans such as Cato and Cicero, who struggled against the grandiose historic evolution represented by the expansion of the Roman Empire with its legal and social forms, in the antique world.

Among modern examples it suffices to point out as respectively antiformist, reformist and conformist, the three republics of France; 1793, 1848, and 1871.

D. The crises arising in the economic forms are reflected not only in political and social institutions, but also in religious beliefs and philosophic opinions.

It is in relation to historic situations and social crisis that one must consider the legal norms, religious positions, or philosophies, since each appear successively under the revolutionary banner, reformist banner, or conformist banner.

The movement which bears the name of Christ was antiformist and revolutionary. To state that in every man there exists a soul of divine origin and destined to immortality, whatever his social position or caste, was equivalent to rise up in revolution against the oppressive forms, and the slavery, of the Orient. As long as the law permitted the human person to be an object of transactions; to be merchandise like an animal; to state the equality of believers meant a slogan of struggle which came up against the implacable resistance of the theocratic organisation of judges, aristocrats, and military, in the state of antiquity.

After long historic phases and the abolition of slavery, Christianity became official religion and pillar of the State.

We recognise its reformist cycle in the Europe of modern times in struggling against the excessive connection of the Church with layers of the most privileged and most oppressive.

Today there is no ideology more conformist than Christianity, which already in the period of the French revolution, made its doctrine and organisation the arms for the most powerful resistance by the old regimes.

Today the powerful network of the Church and religious confession on every hand reconciles and is officially in accord with the Capitalist Regime. It is employed as a fundamental means of defence against the danger of proletarian revolution.

In regard to the social relationships of today, which it acquired long before; that each particular individual represented an economic enterprise, theoretically susceptible of an active or passive commerce, the superstition which encloses each individual in the circle of a moral reckoning of his acts, and the illusion of a life after death determined by this reckoning, is nothing but the reflection in the brain of man of present bourgeois society founded on private economy.

It is therefore impossible to lead the struggle for breaking through the framework of an economy of private enterprise and individual moral reckoning, without taking a position openly anti-religious and Anti-Christian.

The capitalist cycle

In the principle countries, the modern bourgeoisie has already gone through three characteristic historic stages.

The bourgeoisie begins as an openly revolutionary class and leads an armed struggle to break the chains with which feudal and clerical absolutism tied the productive forces of peasants to the land and the artisans to medieval corporations (guilds).

The necessity of liberation from these chains presents itself at the same time as that of developing the productive forces, which with the resources of modern technique, tends to concentrate the workers into great masses.

In order to give a fee development to these new economic forms, it is necessary to batter down by force, the traditional regimes. The bourgeois class not only lead the insurrectionary struggle, but established after its first victory, an iron dictatorship, in order to put an end to the monarchies, the feudal lords, and the ecclesiastical dignitaries' attempts to return to power.

A. The capitalist class appears in history as an antiformist force, leading the process of breaking all material and ideological obstacles; its thinkers throw over the criteria of the antique world and its old beliefs in a most radical manner.

For the theories of the authority of divine right, they substitute those of popular sovereignty, of equality, and political liberty and proclaim the necessity of representative institutions. Pretending mercy, they claim the power will be the expression of a collective will, manifested freely, without restraint.

The liberal and democratic principle appears clearly revolutionary and antiformist in this phase, so much so that it is not applied by pacifist or legal methods, but goes over to violence and revolutionary terror, through which the victorious class defends itself against the attempts at reactionary restorations by its dictatorship.

B. In the second phase, the capitalist regime becomes stabilised. The bourgeoisie proclaims itself the representative of the higher development of the whole social collectivity of its welfare, and goes through a relatively tranquil development of productive forces; of submission of the whole world, adapted to its system; of intensification of the economic rhythm as a whole. This is the progressive and reformist phase of the capitalist cycle.

In this phase, parliamentary democracy functions parallel to the reformist orientation. The directing class is interested that its own organisation appear susceptible of representing and reflecting the interests and demands of the working class. Its government pretends to satisfy them with the economic measures and legislation designed to allow the legal norms of the bourgeois system to be maintained.

Parliamentarism and democracy are not revolutionary slogans any longer. They take on a reformist content which guarantees the development of the capitalist system in warding off the violent clashes and explosions of the class struggles.

C. The third phase is that of modern imperialism, characterised by the monopolist concentration of the economy, the formation of unions and capitalist trusts and the great State plans.

The bourgeois economy transforms itself and loses the characteristics of classic liberalism, in which each business enterprise was autonomous in making its economic decisions, and in its relations to exchange. A more and more strict discipline is imposed on production and distribution. The economic indices of production and distribution are no longer the result of the free play of forces, but the influence of associations of capitalists at first, of organs of banking and finance afterwards, and finally the direction of the State. The political state, which in the Marxist parlance, was the executive committee of the

bourgeoisie, and was as much government as police protector, asserted itself more and more as the organ of control and even of administration of the economy.

This concentration of economic powers in the hands of the state is not to be interpreted as a step from private economy to a collective economy. To do so, would be to ignore that the contemporary state expresses uniquely, the interests of a minority, and that all nationalisation realised in the framework of commodity exchange, leads to a concentration which strengthens the capitalist character of the economy at the very point of its weakening. The political development of the parties of the bourgeoisie in this contemporary phase (as Lenin clearly proved in his critique of modern imperialism) lends itself to the most narrow forms of oppression; the advent of totalitarianism and fascist regimes was this manifestation.

These regimes constitute the most modern political type of bourgeois society in its present evolution. This will become always more evident as the road to be travelled by the whole world. A parallel aspect of this political concentration resides in the absolute predominance of a few great states at the expense of the autonomy of impoverished and minor states.

The appearance of this third capitalist phase is not to be confused with the return of forms of pre-capitalist institutions, since this phase is accompanied by a growth to giddy heights of an industrial and financial dynamic, ignored in quality and quantity in the pre-bourgeois world.

Capitalism repudiates the democratic and representative apparatus and establishes centres of government absolutely despotic.

In some countries it has already theorised and proclaimed the formation of one totalitarian party, and hierarchical centralisation. In other countries it continues to employ democratic slogans which are henceforth without content. All are marching inexorably in the same direction.

For a correct evaluation of the contemporary historic process, the correct position is the following: the period of liberalism and democracy is closed. The democratic demands, which had formerly a revolutionary character, afterwards progressive and reformist, are today anachronisms and clearly conformist.

Proletarian strategy in the different phases of the capitalist cycle

The cycle of the proletarian movement corresponds to that of the capitalist world.

A. During the formation of the great industrial proletariat, the critique of the economic, juridical and political formulations of the bourgeoisie makes its appearance. One discovers that the bourgeois class neither liberates nor emancipates humanity. It substitutes its own class domination and its system of exploitation for that of the other class which preceded it, and this discovery is theorised.

The workers of all countries do not struggle at all times by the side of the bourgeoisie in order to overthrow feudal institutions, and they do not fall into the trap of reactionary socialism, which, brandishing the spectre of a new, merciless capitalist employer, calls upon the workers to ally themselves with the leading monarchical and agrarian classes.

Even in the struggle that the young capitalist regimes lead to prevent reactionary restoration, the proletariat is unable to refuse support to the bourgeoisie.

The strategy of the proletariat begins to anticipate anti-bourgeois movements in the same spirit of the insurrectionary struggle as carried on at the side of the bourgeoisie, in a manner arriving immediately at the simultaneous liberation from feudal oppression and capitalist exploitation.

One finds an embryonic manifestation of this fact in the Great French Revolution with Babeuf's "League of the Equals".

Theoretically, this movement is immature; but the bourgeoisie exercising in its victory, an implacable repression against the workers who had fought for its interests, were given a significant historic lesson.

On the eve of the bourgeois and national revolutionary wave of 1848, the theory of the class struggle was already completely elaborated. The relationships between bourgeoisie and proletarian are henceforth very clear on the European and world scale.

Marx, in the Communist Manifesto, projected the alliance with the bourgeoisie against the parties of monarchical restoration in France and Prussian conservatism; at the same time that the immediate development towards a revolution envisaged the conquest of power by the working class. In this historic phase, the attempt at workers' revolt is mercilessly repressed, but the doctrine and strategy of the class corresponding to this phase confirms itself on the historic road of the marxist method.

The great attempt by the Paris Commune to produce in the same situation and corresponding to the same historic evaluation, which at the time the self-same French proletariat, after having overthrown Napoleon III, assured the victory of the Bourgeois Republic, attempted still, at the same time, the conquest of power, and gave for some months, the first historic example of its class government.

What is most significant and suggestive in this episode is the anti-proletarian alliance, without conditions, of the democratic bourgeoisie with the conservatives and with the victorious Prussian Army in order to crush the first attempt at the dictatorship of the proletariat.

B. In the second phase, in which reformism is connected to the framework of bourgeois economy, representative and parliamentary systems are largely made use of. An alternative of historic significance poses itself for the proletariat.

Theoretically the question is posed as to the interpretation of revolutionary doctrine considered as a critique of bourgeois institutions and all the ideologies it defends.

The overthrow of capitalist domination and the substitution of a new economic order will take place with the violent collision, or will be able to arrive at a new economic order through gradual change and the use of parliamentary legalism.

In practice, the question is, to know whether the party of the working class must any longer associate itself with the bourgeoisie against the forces of pre-capitalist regimes, (those last are disappearing at the present time). At least allied with an advanced and progressive party of the bourgeoisie, more disposed to reform of its organisation.

The present revision of Marxism developed during the idyllic intermediate period of capitalism between 1871 and 1914. It falsified directives and the fundamental texts of the doctrine. It established a new strategy, according to which vast economic and political organisations of the working class must prepare

a gradual transformation of the whole capitalist economic machine by penetrating and conquering the political institutions legally.

The polemics of this phase, divided the proletarian movement into opposing tendencies. Although in general, the question of the necessity of insurrectionary assault to break the bourgeois power was not posed, the left marxists resisted extremely vigorously, the tactic of collaboration in the unions and on the parliamentary plane. Therefore the left marxists were opposed to the proposition of support to bourgeois governments and opposed the participation of the socialist parties in ministerial coalitions.

C. In the third phase capitalism faces the double necessity of continuing to develop the productive forces and avoid the break-down of the equilibrium of its organisation. That is why it is compelled to abandon liberal and democratic methods, leading to an equal concentration in the hands of the powerful state organs, of economic life, and political domination. In this phase as well, two alternatives are posed for the workers' movement.

Theoretically we must state the strictest form of domination by the capitalist class constitutes a necessary phase; the most developed and modern that capitalism has reached, in order to arrive at the end of its cycle, exhausting its historic possibilities.

Therefore the sharp use of political-police methods is not a temporary phenomena, after which we would return to forms pretending liberal tolerance.

From the tactical viewpoint, it is false and illusory to pretend that the proletariat must begin a struggle to press capitalism to return to liberal and democratic concessions, because the climate of democratic politics is no longer necessary for the ultimate growth of capitalist productive energies, an indispensable premise for the socialist economy.

In the first revolutionary bourgeois phase, the question was not only posed by history, but found a solution in the parallel struggle of the Third and Fourth Estates; the alliance between the two classes being an indispensable step on the road toward socialism.

In the second phase, the question is legitimately posed of a parallel action between democratic reformism and the proletarian socialist parties. If history has given reason to answer, No, by the left revolutionary marxists to the revisionist right wing, and the reformists, they cannot be considered conformist before the fatal degeneration of 1914-1918. If in effect they believed the wheels of history turned at a slow rhythm, they still did not attempt to turn the wheels back. It is necessary to render this justice to Bebel, Jaurès and Turati.

In the present phase of Imperialism, which has seen the most avid and ferocious world wars, the question of a parallel action between the proletariat and the democratic bourgeoisie is no longer posed historically. Those who maintain the opposite view, no longer represent an alternative version or tendency of the workers' movement. They have made nothing but the complete passage to the conservatism of Conformism.

The only alternative posed today and to which it is necessary to answer to, is the other. The development of the world capitalist regime is centralist, totalitarian, and "fascist". Must the working class be allied to the movement that has become the sole Reformist aspect of the domination of the bourgeoisie? Can Socialism in its beginnings, be installed through this inexorable advance of State

Capitalism? Should the working class help to disperse the last traditional resistance of the free-enterprisers, liberals, and bourgeois conformists of the first period?

Or, on the contrary, must the workers' movement, hard struck and dislocated for being incapable of realising its independence from class-collaboration in two world wars, reconstruct itself by rejecting such a method and the illusion that the bourgeois regime represents historically a bourgeois pacifist organisation susceptible of legal penetration, or at least, most vulnerable to the pressure of the masses (answers which constitute two forms equally dangerously defeatist in relation to the whole revolutionary movement)?

The dialectic method of Marxism answers this question of an alliance with the new modern bourgeois forms, for the same reasons that yesterday it fought the alliance with reformism of the democratic and pacifist phase.

Capitalism, dialectic premise of socialism, has no need of help in being born (affirming its revolutionary dictatorship), nor to grow (in its liberal and democratic phase).

In the modern phase, it must inevitably concentrate its economic and political forms in a monstrous unity.

Its transformation and its reformism assures its development at the same time as its conservatism.

The movement of the working class will reject succumbing to bourgeois domination by refusing aid to the developing phases, necessary to capitalism. The working class must recognise its forces outside of these antiquated perspectives, by freeing itself from the burden of old traditions and denouncing the whole historic epoch in which the working class retarded its own development because of tactical harmony with all forms of reformism.

The Russian revolution

The most burning problem of contemporary history in the present epoch from the end of the world war, was the crisis of the czarist regime; its feudal state structure; and its backward capitalist development.

The Left Marxist, Lenin, and the Bolsheviks has already developed for decades its position with the strategic perspective of leading the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat, simultaneously with all the anti-absolutist forces, for the overthrow of the feudal empire.

The war permitted the realisation of this great goal, and concentrated in the brief span of nine months, the passage of power from the hands of the dynasty, aristocracy and clergy, to that of the proletariat, while on the way, it passed through a government of bourgeois democratic parties.

This great development gave the world an enormous push on questions relating to the class struggle; the struggle for power; to the strategy of proletarian revolution, and to the regroupment of tendencies.

In this brief period, the strategy and tactics of the revolutionary party went through all the phases: - struggle by the side of the bourgeoisie, who were uneasy over the downfall of the old feudal state and tried to construct its own property system; split with and struggle against the reformist and gradualist parties of the workers' movement, until the exclusive monopoly of power was in the hands of the working class and the Communist Party.

The historic repercussion of these facts on the workers' movement was a crushing defeat for revisionism and collaboration. The proletarian parties of all countries oriented themselves toward the armed struggle for power.

But the false interpretations produced by the application of Russian tactics and strategy to the other countries, relying on a Kerensky regime and applying a politics of coalition, which pretended support as a 'rope supports a hanging man', in order to deal the death blow at a decisive turning of events, were ruinous.

It is forgotten that in Russia, the successive phases of the movement relied intimately on the late formation of the political state of the capitalists. Whereas in the other countries this capitalist political state had been stabilised for a century, or at least for some decades and was stronger because its legal structure was most clearly democratic and parliamentary.

It is not understood that the alliance between Bolsheviks and non-Bolsheviks in the insurrectionary battles, and even sometimes to prevent the attempt at feudal restoration, represented historically the last example of such a relation of political forces. The proletarian revolution in Germany, for example, if it had been victorious, as Marx waited for the crisis of 1848, would have followed the same tactical line of the Russian Revolution: in 1918, the bourgeoisie would have been unable to win if the revolutionary communist party had had sufficient forces to sweep away the bloc of the Kaiser, the bourgeoisie, and the social-democrats in power in the Weimar Republic.

The International Communist movement swung completely away from the correct revolutionary strategy when Italy, presenting the first example of a totalitarian type of bourgeois government, assigned the proletariat to the struggle for liberty and constitutional guarantees within an anti-fascist coalition, a strategic position fundamentally false.

To confuse Hitler and Mussolini, reformers of the Capitalist regime in the most modern sense, with Kornilov or the forces of the restoration and of the Holy Alliance of 1815, is the greatest error of evaluation and signifies the total abandonment of the revolutionary method.

The imperialist phase, matured economically in all modern countries, appeared and will appear, in its fascist political form as a given succession of immediate relationship of forces between states and states, class and class in the various countries of the world.

This phase could be considered as a new opportunity for the revolutionary assault by the proletariat. But the proletariat is not taking the opportunity to do so. To confuse the forces of the communist vanguard with the illusory aim of stopping the bourgeoisie from abandoning its legality, or to demand a restoration of constitutional guarantees to the parliamentary system, is false. On the contrary, the proletariat must accept the historic issue of this instrument of bourgeois oppression and the invitation to struggle outside the legality in order to attempt to smash the rest of the apparatus - police, military, bureaucracy, and juridical - of the capitalist power and the State.

The passage of the Communist Parties to the strategy of a great anti-fascist bloc, aggravated again in the anti-German war of 1939 with the slogans of national collaboration, partisan movements of committees of national liberation, up to the scandal of ministerial coalition, has signified the second disastrous defeat for the world revolutionary movement.

There can be no revival of the proletarian revolutionary movement as long as theory, organisation and action is not freed in struggle against this kind of politics which solidarises the socialist and communist parties inspired by Moscow.

The new movement must base itself on a political line precisely the opposite of the slogans of these opportunist movements, whose anti-fascism put them in a position completely in line with the fascist evolution of the social organisation.

The new revolutionary movement of the proletariat must base itself on the following line:

1). Reject the perspective according to which after the defeat of Italy, Germany and Japan, the phase of return to democracy would be reopened. On the contrary, confirmation that the war was accompanied by a transformation to fascist methods of government in the victor countries, even if the reformist and labourite parties participated in the government. Refuse to demand the return to liberal forms - an illusory demand and not to the interests of the proletariat.

2). Confirmation that the present Russian regime has lost its proletarian character, along with the abandonment of revolutionary politics by the Third International. This has lead back to the reestablishment of bourgeois content, in the political, economic and social forms of Russia. This evolution is not a return to antique forms of autocratic tyranny. or pre-bourgeois forms, but is the advent, by a different historic road of the same type of social organisation at present essentially evolved by State Capitalism of countries with a totalitarian regime. A regime in which the great State plans open up a road of important development and give those countries a high imperialist potential.

In face of such a situation, we do not demand that Russia return to parliamentary democratic forms, which are in decay in all the modern states. On the contrary, we work for the reestablishment of a completely revolutionary communist party in Russia.

3). Reject all invitation to national solidarity with classes and parties, who yesterday claimed the over-throw of that which they called totalitarian, in combating the Axis states, only in order to reconstruct it by legal methods, through the reconstruction of world capitalism, ruined by the war.

4). Reject the manoeuvre and tactic of the united front; that is, reject the invitation of so-called socialists and Communists, which cannot result in anything proletarian issuing forth from their so-called proletarian unity.

5). Struggle against all ideologies which attempt to mobilise the working classes of different countries on the patriotic front for the third Imperialist War. Against the demand to fight for "Red" Russia against American-Anglo-Saxon Imperialism. Against supporting the democracy of the West against Stalinist totalitarianism in a war falsely presented as anti-fascist.

Force, Violence, and Dictatorship in the Class Struggle (1946)

I. Actual and Potential Violence

In the history of social aggregates we recognise the use of material force and violence in an overt form whenever we observe conflicts and clashes among individuals arid among groups which result, through many different forms, in the material injury and destruction of physical individuals.

Whenever this aspect comes to the surface in the course of social history, it is received by the most varied reactions of abomination or of exaltation which in turn furnish the most banal foundations of the various successive mystical doctrines that fill and encumber the thought of the collectivities.

Even the most opposing conceptions are in agreement that violence among humans is not only an essential element of social energetics but also an integral factor, if not always a decisive one, of all the transformations of historical forms.

In order to avoid falling into rhetorics and metaphysics - such as those numerous confessions and philosophies which oscillate between either the apriorisms of the worship of force, of the «superman» or of the superior people, or else the apriorisms of resignation, non-resistance and pacifism - it is necessary to go back to the basis of that material relationship, physical violence. It is necessary to recognise its fundamental role in all forms of social organisation even when it acts only in its latent state, that is through pressure, threat and armed preparation which produce the most widespread historical effects even before there has been bloodshed, after it, or without it.

* * *

The beginning of the modern age, which is socially characterised by the gigantic development of productive techniques and the capitalist economy, was accompanied by a fundamental conquest of scientific knowledge of the physical universe that is bound to the names of Galileo and Newton.

It became clear that two fields of phenomena which Aristotelian and scholastic physics had held as absolutely separate and even metaphysically opposite - the field of terrestrial mechanics and the field of celestial mechanics - were in reality one and the same and had to be investigated and represented with the same theoretical scheme.

In other words it was understood for the first time that the force which a body exerts on the ground on which it rests, or on our hand which supports it, not only is the same force which puts the body in motion when it is left free to fall but it is also the same force which governs the movements of the planets in space, their revolutions in apparently immutable orbits, and their possible collisions with each other.

It was not a question of a merely qualitative and philosophical identity but of a scientific and practical one, since the same kind of measurement could establish the dimensions of the fly-wheel of a machine and determine, for instance, the weight and the velocity of the moon.

The great conquests of knowledge - as could be shown by a study of gnoseology conducted with the Marxist method - do not consist in establishing new eternal and irrevocable truths by means of revealing discoveries, since the road always remains open to further developments and to richer scientific and mathematical representations of the phenomena of a given field. Instead, they consist essentially in definitively breaking down the premises of ancient errors, including the blinding force of tradition which prevented our knowledge from reaching a representation of the real relationships of things.

In fact, even in the field of mechanics science has and will make discoveries which go beyond the limits of Galileo's and Newton's laws and formulas. But the historical fact remains that they demolished the obstacle of the Aristotelian conception according to which an ideal sphere, concentric to the earth, separated two incompatible worlds - the earthly world of ours, that of corruption and wretched mortal life, and the celestial world of incorruptibility and of the icy, splendid immutability. This conception was profitably utilised by the ethical and mystical constructions of christianity and was perfectly adaptable as a social parallel of the relationships in a human world based on the privileges of aristocracies.

The identification of the field of mechanical facts revealed by our immediate experience with the field of cosmic facts allowed for it to be simultaneously established that the energy a body possesses is identical in substance whether its movement with respect to us and its immediate surroundings is empirically evident or whether this body itself is apparently at rest.

The two concepts of potential energy (energy with respect to position or positional energy) and of kinetic energy (the energy of motion) when applied to material bodies will be and have already been subjected to more and more complex interpretations. These interpretations will lead to the point where the quantities of matter and energy which appeared invariable in the formulations of the classical physics texts (and which are still adequate to calculate and construct structures on the human scale that utilise non-atomic forms of energy) will prove to be transmutable through an incessant exchange whose radius of action extends to the entire cosmos.

However, it still remains that the recognition of the identity in their action between the potential reserves and the kinetic manifestations of energy was a historically decisive step in the formation of scientific knowledge.

This scientific concept has become familiar to everyone living in the modern world. Water contained in an elevated tank is still and appears motionless and lifeless. Let us open the valves of the pipeline with a turbine situated below and the turbine will be set in motion yielding us motive power. The amount of available power was already known before we opened the valve since it depends on the mass of the water and on its height: that is to say it is positional energy.

When the water flows and moves, the same energy manifests itself as motion, i.e. as kinetic energy.

By the same token, any child of today knows that if we do not touch the two still, cold wires of an electric circuit, no exchange will take place between them; but if we introduce a conductor, sparks, heat and light are emitted with violent effects on muscles and nerves if the conductor is our body.

The two harmless wires had a certain potential, but woe to whomever transforms this energy into a kinetic state. Today all this is known even by the illiterate but it would have greatly baffled the seven sages of ancient Greece and the doctors of the church.

* * *

Let us now pass from the field of mechanics to that of organic life. Among the much more complex manifestations and transformations of biophysics and biochemistry which govern the birth, nourishment, growth, motion and reproduction of animals, we find the use of muscular power in the struggle against the physical environment as well as against other living beings of the same or of different species.

In these material contacts and in these brutal clashes the parts and the tissues of the animals are hurt and lacerated and in the cases of the most serious injuries, the animal dies.

The intervention of the factor of violence is commonly recognised only when an injury to an organism results from the use of muscular power by one animal against another. We do not see violence, in common language, when a landslide or a hurricane kills animals but only when the classic wolf devours the lamb or comes to blows with another wolf which claims a share of it.

Gradually the common interpretation of these facts slips down into the deceitful field of ethical and mystical constructions. One hates the wolf but one weeps for the lamb. Later on man will legitimise without question the killing of the same lamb for his meal but will scream with horror against cannibals; murderers will be condemned but warriors will be exalted. All these cases of the cutting and tearing of living flesh can be found in an infinite gamut of tones which furnish the prolific soil for endless literary variations. Among them we also could include - to give an ethical problem to those who would judge our actions - the incision of the surgical knife on the cancerous tumour.

The early human representations, with the inadequacy which characterised them, investigated the phenomena of mechanical nature and, due to an infantile anthropomorphism, applied moral criteria to these phenomena.

Earth returned to the earth, water returned to the sea and air and fire rose because each element sought its own element, its natural position, and shunned its opposites, since love and hatred were the moving forces of things.

If water or mercury did not drop down in the overturned vessel it was because nature abhorred a vacuum. After Torricelli had carried out a barometric vacuum, it became possible to measure the weight of the air, which also is a heavy body and tends downwards with such violence that it would crush us to the ground if we were not surrounded and penetrated all over by it. Air therefore does love its opposites after all and should be condemned for an adulterous violation of its duties.

In every field, to one extent or another, voluntarism and ethicism lead man to believe in the same stupidities.

Going back to the violent struggle of the animal against adversities or to the struggle for the satisfaction of his needs through the use of his muscular strength (and leaving aside the bourgeois Darwinian discourse on the struggle for survival, natural selection and similar refrains) we shall point out that here too the same motives and effects of the use of force can present themselves as potential or virtual on one side, and as kinetic or actual on the other.

The animal who has experienced the dangers of fire, ice and flood will learn that instead of confronting them it is best to flee as soon as he perceives the danger signs. In the same way violence between two living beings can exercise its effects in many cases without being physically manifested.

The wild dog will never contend with the lion for the killed roe-buck since he knows that he would follow the same destiny as the victim. Many times the prey succumbs from terror before being actually seized by the carnivore; sometimes a glance is enough to immobilise it and deprive it not only of the possibility of struggle but also of flight itself.

In all these cases the supremacy of force has a potential effect without need of being materially carried out.

If our ethical judge should pass sentence on the matter, we doubt that he would acquit the carnivore on the sole ground that his prey had freely chosen to be devoured.

* * *

In the primitive human aggregates the network of the relationships among individuals grows and extends itself progressively. The greater variety of needs and of the means to satisfy them, in addition to the possibility of communication between one being and another due to the differentiations of language, all give rise to a sphere of relationships and influences which in the animal world were only roughly outlined.

Even before it is possible to speak of a true production of objects of use that can be employed for the satisfaction of the needs and necessities of human life, a division of functions and of aptitudes to carry them out is established among the members of the first groups, who devote themselves to the tasks of harvesting wild vegetables, of hunting, of fishing and of the first rudimentary activity in the construction and conservation of shelters and in the preparation of food.

An organised society begins to form itself and with it arises the principle of order and authority. The individuals who have a superior physical strength and nervous energy no longer resort only to muscular strength to impose fixed limits on others in the use of their time and their labour and in the enjoyment of the useful goods that have been acquired. Rules begin to be established to which the community adapts itself. Respect of these rules is imposed without the needs of using physical coercion every time; it suffices to threaten the would-be transgressor with fierce punishment and in extreme cases with death.

The individual who, driven by his primitive animality, might want to elude such impositions must either engage in a hand-to-hand combat with the leader (and probably also with the other members of the collectivity who would be ordered to back their leader in exercising the punishment) or else the individual must flee from the collectivity. But in this last case he would be compelled to satisfy his material needs less abundantly and with more risks since he would be deprived of the advantages of organised collective activity, however primitive it might be.

The human animal begins to trace his evolutionary cycle, a cycle which certainly is neither uniform and continuous nor without crises and reversals but which, in a general sense, is unrestrainable. From his original condition of unlimited personal freedom, of total autonomy of the single individual, he becomes more and more subjected to an increasingly dense network of bonds which takes the features and the names of order, authority, and law.

The general trend of this evolution is the lessening of the frequency of cases in which violence among men is consumed in its kinetic form, i.e. with struggle, corporal punishment and execution. But, at the same time, the cases in which authoritarian orders are executed without resistance become doubly more frequent, since those whom the orders are addressed to know by experience that it would not pay to elude these dictates.

A simplistic schematisation and idealisation of such a process leads to an abstract conception of society which sees only two entities, the individual and the collectivity, and arbitrarily assumes that all the relationships of each individual to the organised collectivity are equivalent (such as in the illusory perspective of the «Social Contract»). This theory postulates the ongoing march of the human collectivity as being conducted either by an obliging god who leads the drama towards a happy ending or else by a redeeming inspiration, more mysterious still, which is placed who knows how in each person's mind and is immanent to his way of thinking, feeling, and behaving. It is presented as a march which leads to a idyllic equilibrium in which an egalitarian order allows everybody to enjoy the benefits of the common work, while the decisions of each individual are free and freely willed.

Dialectical materialism on the contrary, scientifically sets into relief the importance of the factor of force and its influence not only when it is overtly manifested, such as in wars among peoples and classes, but also when it is applied in a potential state by means of the functioning of the machinery of authority, of law, of constituted order and of armed power. It explains that the origin and the extension of the use of force springs from the relationships in which individuals are placed as a result of the striving and the possibility to satisfy their needs.

If we analyse the ways and means by which human aggregates since prehistory have procured their means of subsistence, as well as the first rudimentary devices, arms and tools that extend the reach of the limb of animal man to act over external bodies, we will be led to the discovery of an extremely rich variety of relationships and intermediate positions between the individual and the totality of the collectivity which are the basis of a division of this collectivity into many diverse groups, according to attributions, functions and satisfactions. This investigation furnishes us the key to the problem of force.

The essential element of that which is commonly called civilisation is this: the stronger individual consumes more than the weaker one (and up until this point we remain within the field of the relationships of animal life and, if we want, we can also add here that so-called «nature», which bourgeois theories conceive of as a clever supervisor, provided for the fact that more muscles means more stomach and more food); but the stronger also arranges things in such a way that the major share of the workload falls on the weaker one. If the weaker refuses to grant the richest meal and the easiest job (or no job at all) to the stronger, then muscular superiority subdues him and inflicts on him the third humiliation of being struck.

The distinctive element of civilisation, as we said, is that this simple relationship explained above is materialised innumerable times in all the acts of social life with no need to use coercive force in its actual, kinetic form.

The division of men into groups which are so dissimilar in their material situation of life has its basis initially in a distribution of tasks. It is this which, in a great complexity of manifestations, assures the privileged individual, family, group, or class a recognition of its position. This recognition, which has its origins in a real consideration of the initial utility of the privileged elements, leads to the formation of an attitude of submission among the victimised elements and groups. This attitude is handed down in time and becomes part of tradition since social forms have an inertia which is analogous to that of the physical world; due to this inertia these social forms tend to trace the same orbits and to perpetuate the same relationships if superior causes do not introduce a disruption.

Let us continue our analysis, which even the reader who is unfamiliar with the Marxist method will understand to be a schematic explanation for the sake of brevity. When for the first time the minus habens (the have-not) not only does not constrain his exploiter to use force in order to compel him to execute the orders, but also learns to repeat that rebellion is a great disgrace since it jeopardises the rules and order on which everybody's salvation depends - at this point, hats off please, the Law is born.

The first kings were clever hunters, valiant warriors who risked their life and shed their blood for the defence of the tribe; the first wizards were intelligent investigators of the secrets of nature useful for curing illnesses and for the well-being of the tribe; the first masters of slaves or of wage labourers were capable organisers of the productive efforts for the best yield in the cultivation of the land or in the use of the first technologies. The initial recognition of the useful function they fulfilled led them to build the apparatus of authority and power. This apparatus permitted those who were at the top of the new and more profitable forms of social life to appropriate, for their own enjoyment, a large portion of the increased production that had been realised.

Man first submitted the animals of other species to such a relationship. The wild ox was subjugated to the yoke for the first time only after a harsh struggle and with the sacrifice of the boldest tamers. Later, actual violence was no longer necessary in order to make the animal lower his head. The powerful effort of the ox multiplied the quantity of grain at the master's disposal and the ox, for its nourishment and for the preservation of its muscular efficiency, received a fraction of the crops.

The evolved homo sapiens did not wait long to apply this same relationship to his fellow-man with the rise of slavery. The adversary, defeated in a personal or in a collective conflict, the prisoner of war, crushed and hurt, is forced with further violence to work with the same economic contracts as the ox. At the beginning he may have revolted, rarely being able to overwhelm the oppressor and escape his grip; in the long run the normal situation is that the slave, even if superior to his master in muscular strength just as is the ox, suffers under his yoke and functions like the animal - only providing a much wider range of services than the beast.

Centuries pass and this system builds its own ideology, it is theorised; the priest justifies it in the name of the gods and the judge with his penalties prohibits it from being violated. There is a difference, and a superiority of the man of the oppressed class over the ox: no one could ever teach the ox to recite in a most spontaneous way, a doctrine according to which the drag of the plough is an immense advantage for him, a healthy and civilised joy, a fulfilment of God's will and an accomplishment of the sanctity of the law, nor will it ever happen that the ox officially acknowledges all this by casting votes in a ballot box.

Our long discourse on such an elementary subject aims at this result: to credit the fundamental factor of force with the sum-total of effects which are derived from it not only when force is employed in its actual state, with violence against the physical person, but also and above all when it acts in its potential or virtual state without the uproar of the fight and the shedding of blood.

Crossing the centuries (and avoiding a repetition of the analysis of the successive historical forms of productive relationships, of class privileges, and of political power) we must come to an application of this result and this criterion to present-day capitalist society.

It is thus possible to defeat the tremendous contemporary mobilisation of deceit, the big universal production which provides for the ideological subjugation of the masses to the sinister dictates of the dominant minorities. The fundamental trick of all this machinery is «atrocitism»: that is, the exhibition (which incidentally is often corroborated by powerful falsifications of facts) of all the episodes of material aggression in which social violence, as a result of the relationships of force, is manifested and consumed in blows, gunshots, in killings and in atomic massacres - and this last would certainly have appeared as the most infamous if the producer of this show had not had tremendous success in stupefying the world.

It will thus be possible to give the proper consideration, the quantitatively and qualitatively preponderant importance, to the countless cases in which aggression, resulting always in misery, suffering and destruction

of human life on a tremendous scale, is exercised without resistance, without clashes and - as we said at the beginning - without bloodshed even in times and places in which social peace and order seem to be dominant. This is the social peace and order that is boasted of by the professional pimps of spoken and written propaganda as being the full realisation of civilisation, order, and freedom.

In comparing the importance of both factors - violence in an actual state and violence in a potential state - it will be evident that despite of all the hypocrisies and scandalmongerings, the second factor is the predominant one. It is only on such a basis that it is possible to build a doctrine and to wage a struggle capable of breaking the limits of the present world of exploitation and oppression.

II. The Bourgeois Revolution

The research we have engaged in regarding the «dosage» of violence exercised in its actual state (through physical beatings and injuries) and violence left at its potential state (by subduing the dominated to the will of the dominators through the complex play of penalties threatened but not exercised) if applied to all social forms which preceded the bourgeois revolution would prove to be too lengthy. For this reason we shall consider the question by starting from a comparison of the social world of the ancien régime which preceded the great revolution with that of capitalist society in which we have the great joy to be living.

According to a first and well known interpretation, the revolution which carried into effect the principles of freedom, equality and fraternity, as expressed in the elective institutions, was a universal and final conquest for mankind. This was claimed on the basis
1) that it radically improved the conditions of life of all the members of society by freeing them from the old oppressions and by opening up for them the joy of a new world and
2) that it eliminated the historical eventuality of any further social conflict which could violently shatter the newly established institutions and relationships.

A second interpretation which is less naïve and less impudently apologetic about the delightfulness of the bourgeois system, recognises that it still harbours large differences of social conditions and economic exploitation to the detriment of the working class and that further transformations of society must be carried out through more or less brusque or gradual means. However it maintains with absolute obstinacy that the conquests of the revolution that brought the capitalist class to power represented a

substantial advancement also for the other classes which, thanks to it, gained the inestimable advantage of legal and civil liberties. Therefore, it alleges that the question is only that of proceeding on the road that has already been opened up; that is to say, it is claimed that all that is necessary is to eliminate the remaining forms of despotism and exploitation - after having eliminated the most sever and atrocious ones - all the while keeping hold of those first fundamental conquests. This worn out interpretation is served to us in many forms. This is the case when Roosevelt, from the summit of the pyramid of power, deign to add new liberties, freedom from need and freedom from fear, to the well known liberties of the old literature (and this at a time when a war of unprecedented violence was raging, bringing an extermination and starvation of human beings beyond any previous limit). This is also the case when, from the base of the pyramid, a naïve representative of the vulgar popular politicking formulates, with new words, the old concoction of democracy and socialism by chattering about social liberties which should be added to those that have already been achieved.

We should not need to recall that the Marxist analysis of the historical process of the rise of capitalism has nothing to do with the two interpretations we have mentioned.

In fact, Marx never said that the degree of exploitation, oppression and abuse in capitalist society was inferior to that of feudal society but, on the contrary, he explicitly proved the opposite.

Let us say right now, in order to avoid any serious misunderstanding, that Marx proclaimed that it was a historical necessity for the Fourth Estate to fight side by side with the revolutionary bourgeoisie against the monarchy, the aristocracy, and the clergy. He condemned the doctrines of «reactionary»socialism according to which the workers - warned in time of the wild exploitation to which they would be subjected by the capitalists in the manufacturing and industrial plants - should have blocked with the leading feudal class against the capitalists. The most orthodox and left-wing Marxism recognises that in the first historical phase which follows the bourgeois revolution, the strategy of the proletariat could not be other than that of a resolute alliance with the young Jacobean bourgeoisie. These clear-cut classical positions are not derived at all from the assumption that the new economic system is less bestial and oppressive than the previous one. They result instead from the dialectical conception of history which explains the succession of events as being determined by the productive forces which, through constant expansion and utilisation of always new resources, weigh down upon the institutional forms and the established systems of power, thus causing crises and catastrophes.

Thus revolutionary socialists have been following the victories of modern capitalism for more than a century in its impressive expansion all over the world and they consider this as useful conditions of social development. This is so because the essential characteristics of capitalism (such as the concentration of productive forces, machines and men into powerful units, the transformation of all use values into exchange values and the interconnection of all the economies of the world) constitute the only path that leads, after new gigantic social conflicts have taken place, to the realisation of the new communist society. All this remains true and necessary although we know perfectly well that the modern industrial capitalist society is worse and more ferocious than those which preceded it.

Of course, it is difficult for this conclusion to be digested by minds which have been shaped by bourgeois ideology and which have been ingrained with the idealisms pullulating from the romantic period of the liberal democratic revolutions. In fact if our thesis is judged according to sentimentalist, literary and rhetorical criteria, it cannot but arouse the banal indignation from those righteous people who would not fail to confront us with their jumbled erudition about the cruelties of the old despotisms - the autos-

da-fé, the Holy Inquisition, the corvées of the serfs, the right of the king as well as the last feudal squire to dispose of the life and death of their subjects, the jus primae noctis and so forth - thus showing us that pre-bourgeois societies were the theatre for daily incessant violence and that their institutions were dripped with blood.

But if the research is founded on a scientific and statistical basis and if we consider the amount of human work extorted without compensation in order to allow a privileged enjoyment of wealth; if we consider the poverty and misery of the lower social strata; if we consider the lives which are sacrificed and broken as a result of economic hardships and of the crises and clashes which break out in the form of private feuds, civil wars, or military conflicts among states; if we consider all this, the heaviest index shall have to be computed and attributed to this civilised, democratic and parliamentarian bourgeois society.

In response to the scandalised accusation of those who reproach the communists for aiming at the destruction of private property, Marx answered - and it is a fundamental point - that one of the basic aspects of the social upheaval brought forth by capitalism was the violent, inhuman expropriation of the artisan labourer. Before the rise of the large manufactures and mechanised factories, the isolated craftsman (or one who worked in association with a few relatives and apprentices) was bound to his tools as well as to the products of his work by a factual, technical and economic tie. The right of ownership over his few implements and over the limited amount of commodities produced in his shop was, in fact, legally recognised with no limitation. The coming of capitalism crushes this patriarchal and almost idyllic system. It defrauds the intelligent industrious craftsman of his modest possessions and drags him, dispossessed and starving, into the forced labour camps of the modern bourgeois enterprise. While this upheaval unfolds, often with open violence and always under the pressure of inexorable economic forces, the bourgeois ideologists define its legal aspects as a conquest of liberty which frees the working citizen from the fetters of the medieval guilds and trade rules, transforming him into a free man in a free state.

Such was the process which manufacturing industry underwent on the whole, and the presentation, in Marxist terms, of the development of agricultural production is not much different. To be sure, the system of feudal servitude obliged the labourer of the soil to give up a large portion of his production for the benefit of the dominant classes, i.e. the nobility and the clergy. But the serf who was bound to the soil maintained a technical and productive tie with the earth itself and with a part of the products, a tie which indirectly offered him a guarantee of a secure, quiet life (a situation which was also due to the low population density and to the limited exchange of products with the large urban centres).

The capitalist revolution breaks those relationships and claims to free the serf-peasant from a whole series of abuses. However the land labourer, reduced to a pure proletarian, follows the destiny of the slave-army of industrial labourers, or else he is transformed into a fully legal manager or owner of a small plot of land, only to be dispossessed by the capitalist usurer, the tax collector, or through the melting away of the value of money.

It is not in the scope of this work to go into a detailed analysis of this process. However the elementary considerations we have made will be enough to answer those who pretend they have never heard before that Marx considered the new bourgeois society to be more infamous than feudal society.

The essential point to establish is this: the differentiating criterion which must be used in order to know if a new historical movement should be supported or combated is not whether or not this movement has realised and accorded more equality, justice and freedom, which would be an inconsistent and trivially literary criterion. Instead it is the totally different and almost always opposite criterion of asking whether the new situation has promoted and brought forth the development of more powerful and complex productive forces at society's disposal.

These more highly developed forces are the indispensable condition for the future organisation of society itself in the sense of a more efficient utilisation of labour which will be able to provide a larger amount of consumer goods for the benefit of all.

It was not only useful but also absolutely necessary for the bourgeoisie, by means of civil war, to demolish the institutional obstacles which hampered the development of large factories and the modern exploitation of the land. If we consider these results, it does not matter that the first and immediate consequence, a transitory one on a larger historical scale, was that of making the chains of the social disparity and the exploitation of the labour force heavier and more hideous.

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The critique of scientific socialism has clearly shown that the great social transformation achieved by capitalism (a transformation which historically has fully matured and which in turn is fertile with further great developments) cannot be defined either as a radical liberation of the vast masses or as a meaningful leap forward in their standard of living. The transformation of the institutions concerns only the mode in which the small, dominant, privileged minority aligns and organises itself in society.

The members of the pre-bourgeois privileged classes formed a system of complex hierarchies. The high-ranking ecclesiastics belonged to the ordered and well-organised network of the church; the noblemen, who also occupied the highest civil and military offices, were hierarchically arranged in the feudal system which had at its summit the King.

It is quite different in the new type of society (and it must be understood that we are referring here to the first and classical type of bourgeois economic society based on the unlimited freedom of production and exchange and leaving aside the great differences between the various nations and historical phases). In this society the members of the higher and privileged stratum are almost totally free from ties of interdependence since each factory owner has no personal obligations towards his colleagues and competitors in the management of his company and in the choice of his initiatives. This technical and social change, in the ideological field, takes the appearance of a historical turn from the realm of authority to that of freedom.

It is clear however that this conquest, this sensational change of scenery, did not take place on the theatre of the entire social collectivity but only within the narrow circles of the fortunate stratum of full and gilded bellies, to which we may add the small following of accomplices and direct agents, i.e. politicians, journalists, priests, teachers, high officials and the rest.

The mass of half-empty bellies are not absent in this gigantic tragedy -on the contrary, they participate in it fighting with the sacrifice of their lives and blood. What they are excluded from is the participation in the benefits of this transformation.

The conquest of legal freedom, which all charters and constitutions claim to be the heritage of all citizens does not concern the majority who are even more exploited and starved than before; in reality this conquest is only the internal affair of a minority. All the contemporary and historical questions which have been placed again before the nauseating postulate of freedom and democracy must be resolved in light of this approach.

On the scale of the individual, the materialist thesis states that since the mind functions only when the stomach is nourished, the theoretical right to freely think and to freely express one's thought in fact concerns only he who actually has the possibility of such superior activity. Of course it is perfectly contestable whether those who constantly boast of having attained this superior activity actually should be credited with it, but in any case it is certainly precluded for the mass of poorly-fed bellies.

The harshness of this thesis customarily unchains a sequence of bitter reproaches against the «vulgar obscene materialism». This materialism is accused of taking into account only the factor of economics and nourishment, ignoring the glorious realm of spiritual life and refusing to acknowledge those satisfactions which are not reducible to physical sensations, i.e. those which man is supposed to draw from the use of reason, from the exercise of civil liberties, and from the enjoyment of electoral rights by which the citizen chooses his representatives and the heads of state.

Here we have nothing new to present and at the most we will only verify well-known theories with recent facts. Therefore in regard to these reproaches it is necessary once again to establish the real scope of the economic determinism professed by Marxists as opposed to a common deformation which is more obstinant in refusing to disappear than scabies or other contagious diseases. This deformation reduces the problem to the petty individual scale and pretends that the political, philosophical or religious opinions of each individual are derived from his economic relationships in society and mechanically spring forth from his desires and interests. Hence the large landowner will be a right-wing reactionary bigot; the bourgeois businessman will be a conservative in regards to economics but sometimes, at least until recently, vaguely leftist in philosophy and politics; the petty bourgeois will be more or less democratic; and the worker will be a materialist, a socialist and a revolutionary.

Such a Marxism, custom-made for the bourgeois democrats, is very convenient for optimistically declaring that since the economically oppressed workers constitute the great majority of the population, it will not be long before they have control of the representative and executive organs and, later on, all wealth and capital. Naturally for the rapid movement of this merry-go-round it will be of great advantage to swing the political opinions, beliefs and movements towards the left, forming blocs and jumbled conglomerations with all the slime of the middle strata which supposedly are progressively evolving and taking a position against the politics and privileges of the upper classes.

In place of this stupid caricature, Marxism draws a totally different picture. While speaking of the ideological, political and mystical superstructures which find their explanation in the underlying economic conditions and relationships, Marxism establishes a law and a method which have a general and social relevance. In order to explain the significance of the ideology which, in a given historical epoch, prevails among a people who are governed through a given regime, we must base our analysis on data concerning the productive techniques and the relationships of the distribution of goods and products. In other words, we must base it on the class relationships between the privileged groups and the collectivities of producers.

Briefly, and in plain words, the law of economic determinism states that in each epoch the general prevailing opinions, the political, philosophical and religious ideas which are shared and followed by the great majority are those which correspond to the interests of a dominant minority who holds all power and privilege in its hands. Hence the priests and wisemen of the ancient oriental peoples justify despotism and human sacrifice, those of the pagan civilisations preach that slavery is just and beneficial, those of the christian age exalt property and monarchy, and those of the epoch of democracy and the Enlightenment canonise the economic and juridical systems suitable to capitalism.

When a particular type of society and production enters into a crisis and when forces arise in the technical and productive domain which tend to break its limits, class conflicts become more acute and are reflected in the rise of new doctrines of opposition and subversion which are condemned and attacked by the dominant institutions. When a society is in crisis, one of the characteristics of the phase which opens up is the continuous relative decrease in the number of those who benefit from the existing regime; nevertheless, the revolutionary ideology does not prevail in the masses but is crystallised only in a vanguard minority that is joined even by elements of the dominant class. The masses will change ideologically, philosophically and religiously through the force of inertia and through the formidable means utilised by every dominant class for the moulding of opinions, but this transformation will occur only after a long period following the collapse of the old structures of domination. We can even state that a revolution is truly mature when the actual physical fact of the inadequacy of the systems of production places these systems into conflict even with the material interests of a large section of the privileged class itself. And this is true in spite of the fact that the old traditional dictates of the dominant opinions, with their tremendous reactionary inertia, continue to be endlessly repeated by the mass which is the victim of it as well as by the superior layers which are the depositories of the regime.

Thus slavery definitively collapsed, in spite of an obstinate resistance on the level of ideology and that of force, when it proved to be a system which was scarcely profitable for the exploitation of labour and which was of little advantage for the slave-masters.

To say it briefly, the liberation of an oppressed class does not proceed first from the liberation of the spirit and then of the body but it must emancipate the stomach well before it can affect the brain.

The forces for deceptively mobilising the opinions of the masses in a way which conforms to the interests of the privileged class are, in capitalist society, much more powerful than in pre-bourgeois societies. Schools, the press, public speeches, radios, motion pictures, and associations of all kinds represent means which are a hundred times more powerful than those that were available to societies in the past. In the capitalist regime, thought is a commodity and it is made to order by utilising the necessary equipment and economic means for its mass production. Germany and Italy had their Ministries of Propaganda and People's Culture, and Great Britain, in turn, instituted its Ministry of Information at the beginning of World War II in order to monopolise and control the whole flow of news. In the period between the two World Wars, the dispatch of news was already a monopoly of the powerful network of the British press agencies; today such a monopoly obviously has crossed the Atlantic. Thus as long as military operations were favourable for the Germans the daily production of tall tales and lies from the English information factory attained a level that the fascist organisations could only envy. To give one example, at the time of the incredible German military operation to conquer

Norway in 48 hours, the British radio broadcasted the details of a disastrous defeat of the German fleet in the Skagerrak!

The social factor of the manipulation of ideas, which ranges from the falsification of the news to the fabrication of ready-made critics and opinions, is of no small importance (in fact, in the news industry today the various versions of an event are already compiled before the event actually happens, so even if a reporter seems to tell it like it is, it still remains a falsehood - the event that is reported is always the event which must take place according to this or that state or this or that party). This manipulations of ideas is a component of that mass of virtual violence, that is to say, of violence which does not take the form of a brutal imposition carried out with coercive means but which nonetheless is the result and the manifestation of real forces that deform and modify the actual situation.

The modern type of democratic bourgeois society does not joke with the administration of actual (or kinetic) violence through its police and military apparatus - and in reality it exceeds the level of kinetic violence used by the old regimes which are so slandered by bourgeois democracy. But alongside of this, it brings the volume of that application of virtual violence to a level never known before, a level which is comparable to the unprecedented level of production and the concentration of wealth. Due to this, sections of the masses appear which, out of apparently free choices of confessions, opinions, and beliefs, act against their own objective interests and accept the theoretical justifications of social relationships and events which cause their misery and even their destruction.

The passage from the pre-bourgeois forms to the present society has thus increased and not diminished the intensity and the frequency of the factor of oppression and coercion.

And when Marxism, for all these reasons we have explained, advocates the full completion of that fundamental historical step, we certainly do not intend to forget or to contradict this fundamental position.

It is only with criteria which are consistent with those we have established above, that we can judge and unravel one of the burning questions of today, i.e. the transformation of the bourgeois method of administration and government corresponding to the rise of the dictatorial and fascist totalitarian regimes.

Such a transformation does not represent a change of one ruling class for another, or even less a revolutionary rupture of the modes of production. But while making this critique it is necessary to avoid the banal errors which, in line with the deviations of Marxism we have been refuting, would lead to attributing to the democratic-parliamentary form and phase a lesser intensity and density of class violence.

This criterion, even if it were in keeping with the facts, would not in any case be sufficient to induce us to support and defend the democratic-parliamentary phase, for the same dialectical reasons that we have used in evaluating the previous historical changes. But an analysis of this question can demonstrate that to refuse the temptation of considering only actual violence and to take into account, on the contrary, the whole volume of potential violence which is inherent to the life and dynamics of society, is the only way to avoid falling into the deception of preferring (even if it is in a subordinate and relative manner) the hypocritical method and the noxious atmosphere of liberal democracy.

III. The Democratic Form and the Fascist Form of Bourgeois Rule

This work examines the extent to which force is used in social relationships, distinguishing between the two forms in which violence is manifested: the open manifestations which are carried out up to the point of the massacre; and the mechanism of social rules which are obeyed by the affected individual or group without physical resistance, due to the threat of punishment inflicted on offenders or, in any case, due to the predisposition of the victims to accept the norms which rule over them.

In the first chapter we have established a comparison between the two types of manifestation of energy in the social domain and the two forms in which energy is manifested in the physical world: the actual or kinetic form (or energy of motion) which accompanies the collisions and explosions of the most varied agents; and the virtual or potential form (or energy of position) which even if it does not produce such effects plays just as great a role in the collection of events and relationships under consideration.

This comparison - developed from the field of physics to that of biology, then to that of human society - has been carried out with brief references to the course of historical epochs. Arriving at the present bourgeois capitalist period we have shown that in this period the play of force and violence in the economic, social, and political relationships between individuals and above all between classes not only has an enormous and fundamental role but - inasmuch as we can measure it - becomes much more frequent and widespread than in previous epochs and pre-capitalist societies.

In a more exhaustive study we could use a social-economic measurement if we try to translate into figures the value of human labour extorted to the benefit of the privileged classes from the great masses who work and produce. In modern society there is a constant decrease in the proportion of individuals and economic groupings which succeed in living in their own autonomous cycle, consuming what they produce without external relationships. Simultaneously there has been an enormous increase in the number of those who work for others and who receive a remuneration that compensates them for only a part of their work; likewise there has been an enormous increase in the social gap between the living standard of the great productive majority and that of the members of the possessing classes. In fact what is important is not the individual existence of one or only a few tycoons who live in luxury, but the mass of wealth which a social minority can use for its pleasures of all kinds while the majority receives only a little more than is absolutely necessary for existence.

Since our subject deals more with the political aspect of the question than the economic, the question we must pose in regard to the regime of capitalist privilege and rule is that of the relationship between the use of brute violence and that of potential force which compels the impoverished to submit to the rules and laws in force without violating them or revolting.

This relationship varies greatly according to the various phases of the history of capitalism and according to the various countries where capitalism has been introduced. We can cite examples of neutral and idyllic zones where the power of the state is exalted as being freely accepted by all the citizens; where there is only a small police force and where even the social conflicts between workers and employers are solved through peaceful means. But these Switzerlands tend, in time and space, to become more and more rare oases in the worldwide capitalist system.

At its birth capitalism could not conquer its ground without open and bloody struggle since the shackles of the state organisation of the old regime could only be broken through force. Its expansion in the non-

European continents with its colonial expeditions and wars of conquest and pillage was no less bloody, because only through massacre could the mode of social organisation of the native population be replaced by that of capitalism, and in some cases this meant the extermination of entire human races, something unknown in prebourgeois civilisation.

In general, after this virulent phase of the birth and foundation of capitalism, an intermediate period of its development begins. Although this period is marked by constant social clashes, by the repression of revolts of the exploited classes, and by wars between states which however do not embrace all the known world, it is the one which has more than any other given rise to the liberal and democratic apologia that falsely depicts a world in which - except for exceptional and pathological cases - the relationships between individuals and between social strata are supposed to have taken place with a maximum of order, peace, spontaneous consent and free acceptance.

Let us say incidentally that in these colonial or national wars, revolts, insurrections, or repressions - which constitute, even in the smoother and calmer phases of bourgeois history, the areas in which open violence is unleashed - the bloodshed and the number of victims in these crises tend to increase, all the other conditions being equal, with respect to the crises of the past, and for this we can thank «progressive» bourgeois technological development. In fact, in parallel with the improvement of the means of production, the means of attack and destruction are made more and more potent, more powerful weapons are created, and the casualties which Caesar's praetorians could inflict by putting rebels to the sword were a joke compared to those which machine-gun fire can inflict against the insurgents of the modern epoch.

But our aim is to show that even in long phases of bloodless enforcement of capitalist rule, class force does not cease to be present, and its influence in its potential state against the possible deviations of isolated individuals, organised groups or parties remains the primary factor in conserving the privileges and institutions of the ruling class. We have already cited among the manifestations of this class force not only the entire state apparatus, with its armed forces and its police, even when its weapons are kept at rest, but also the whole arsenal of ideological indoctrination which justifies bourgeois exploitation and is carried out by means of the schools, the press, the church and all the other ways by which the opinions of the masses are moulded. This epoch of apparent tranquillity is only disturbed occasionally by unarmed demonstrations of the proletarian class organisations; and the bourgeois onlookers can say, after the Mayday march, as in the verses of the poet: «Once more, thanks to Christ and to the police chief, we have had no trouble».

When social unrest rumbles more threateningly, the bourgeois state begins to show its power by taking measures to maintain order. A technical police expression gives a good idea of the use of potential violence: «the police and the troops are standing by». This means that there is no street fighting yet, but that if the bourgeois order and the bosses' «rights» were threatened the armed forces would leave their quarters and open fire.

The revolutionary critique has never let itself be hypnotised by the appearances of civility and serene equilibrium of the bourgeois order. It long ago established that even in the most democratic republic the political state constitutes the executive committee of the ruling class; and thus it decisively demolished the stupid theories which would have us believe that after the destruction of the old feudal, clerical and autocratic state a new form of state arises in which, thanks to elective democracy, all the elements of society, whatever their economic condition may be, are represented and protected with equal rights.

The political state, even and primarily that representative and parliamentary one, constitutes an apparatus of oppression. It can be compared to an energy reservoir which stores the forces of domination of the economically privileged class. This reservoir is such that these forces are kept in the potential state in situations where social revolt does not near the point of exploding, but it unleashes them in the form of police repression and bloody violence as soon as revolutionary tremors rise from the social depths.

This is the sense of the classical analysis of Marx and Engels on the relationship between society and state, or in other words between social classes and the state. All attempts to shake this fundamental point of the proletariat's class doctrine have been crushed in the restoration of the revolutionary principles carried out by Lenin, Trotsky and the Communist International immediately after World War I.

There is no scientific sense in establishing the existence of a quantum of potential energy if it is not possible to foresee that, in subsequent situations, it will be liberated in the kinetic state. Likewise the Marxist definition of the character of the bourgeois political state would remain meaningless and inconsistent if it did not conform to the certainty that in the culminating phase this organ of power of capitalism will inevitably unleash all its resources in the kinetic state against the eruption of the proletarian revolution.

Moreover, the equivalent of the Marxist thesis on the increase of poverty, and on the accumulation and concentration of capital could, in the sphere of politics, be nothing other than the concentration and increase of the energy contained within the state apparatus. In fact once the deceitfully peaceful phase of capitalist era had been closed with the outburst of the war of 1914 and with the economic characteristics evolving towards monopoly and towards the active intervention of the state in the economy and in the social struggles, it became evident - above all in the classical analysis of Lenin - that the political state of bourgeois regimes was taking on more and more decided forms of strict domination and police oppression. We have established in other works that the third and most modern phase of capitalism is economically defined as monopolist, introducing economic planning, and politically defined as totalitarian and fascist.

When the first fascist regimes appeared they were considered in the more immediate and commonplace interpretations as a restriction and an abolition of the so-called parliamentary and legal «guaranteed»rights. In actuality it was simply a question, in certain countries, of a passage of the political energy of domination of the capitalist class from the potential state to the kinetic state.

It was clear to every follower of the Marxist perspective - a perspective defined as catastrophic by the stupid castrators of that doctrine's revolutionary strength - that the increasing severity of the class antagonisms would move the conflicts of economic interests to the level of an erupting revolutionary attack launched by the proletarian organisations against the citadel of capitalist state, and that the latter would uncover its artillery and engage in the supreme struggle for its survival.

In certain countries and in certain situations, for example in Italy in 1922 and in Germany in 1933, the tensions of the social relations, the instability of capitalist economic fabric and the crisis of the state apparatus itself due to the war became so acute that the ruling class could see that the inevitable moment was at hand where, with all the lies of democratic propaganda being exhausted, the only solution was the violent clash between the antagonistic social classes.

Then there occurred what was correctly defined as a capitalists' offensive. Until then the bourgeois class, with its economic exploitation in vigorous development, had seemed to have been slumbering behind the apparent kindliness and tolerance of its representative and parliamentary institutions. Having succeeded in mastering a very significant degree of historical strategy, it broke the hesitations and took the initiative, thinking that rather than a supreme defence of the state's fortress against the assault of revolution (which, according to Marx's and Lenin's teaching, does not aim at taking over the state but at totally smashing it) it was preferable to launch an offensive action aiming at the destruction of the bases of the proletarian organisation.

Thus a situation which was clearly foreseen in the revolutionary perspective was accelerated to a certain extent. In effect, Marxist communists have never thought that it was possible to carry out their program without this supreme clash between the opposing class forces; and moreover, the analysis of the most recent evolution of capitalism and of the monstrous enlargement of its state machineries with their enormous framework clearly indicated that such a development was inevitable.

The great error of judgement, tactics, and strategy which favoured the victory of the counter-revolution was that of deploring capitalism's powerful shift from the democratic hypocrisy to open violence, as if it was a movement that could be historically reversed. Instead of counterposing to this movement the necessity of the destruction of capitalist power, one counterposed instead the stupid pacifist pretension that capitalism would go in reverse, backwards along its path, in a direction opposite to the one which we Marxists have always ascribed to it, and that for the personal convenience of some cowardly rogue politicians, capitalism would be kind enough not to unsheathe its class weapons and return to the inconsistent and obsolete position of mobilisation without war which constituted the «pleasant» aspect of the previous period.

The basic mistake is to have been astonished, to have whined or to have deplored that the bourgeoisie carried out its totalitarian dictatorship without mask, whereas we knew very well that this dictatorship had always existed, that the state apparatus had always had, potentially if not in actuality, the specific function of wielding, preserving and defending the power and privilege of the bourgeois minority against revolution. The error consisted in preferring a bourgeois democratic atmosphere to a fascist one; in shifting the battle front from the perspective of the proletarian conquest of power to that of an illusory restoration of a democratic method of capitalist government in the place of the fascist one.

The fatal mistake was of not understanding that in any case the eve of the revolution which had been awaited for so many decades would reveal a bourgeois state drawn up for the armed defence against the proletarian advance, and that therefore such a situation must appear as a progress, and not as a regression, in comparison with the years of apparent social peace and of limited impetus from the class force of the proletariat. The damage done to the development of the revolutionary energies and to the prospects of the realisation of a socialist society does not stem from the fact that the bourgeoisie organised in a fascist form is supposedly more powerful and more efficient in defending its privilege than a bourgeoisie still organised in a democratic form. Its class power and energy is the same in both cases. In the democratic phase it is in its potential state: over the muzzle of the cannon there is the innocuous protection of a covering. In the fascist phase energy is manifested in the kinetic state: the hood is taken off and the shot is fired. The defeatist and idiotic request which the traitorous leaders of the proletariat make to exploitative and oppressive capitalism is that it put back the deceitful covering

over the muzzle of the weapon. If this were done the efficiency of the domination and exploitation would not have diminished but only increased thanks to the revitalised expedient of legalistic deception.

Since it would be even more insane to ask the enemy to disarm, we must gladly welcome the fact that, compelled by the urgencies of the situation, it unveils its own weapons, for then these weapons will be less difficult to face and to defeat.

Therefore the bourgeois regime of open dictatorship is an inevitable and predicted phase of the historical life of capitalism and it will not die without having gone through this phase. To fight to postpone this unmasking of the energies of the antagonistic social classes, to carry on a vain and rhetorical propaganda inspired by a stupid horror of dictatorship in principle, all this work can only favour the survival of capitalist regime and the prolonged subjection and oppression of the working class.

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And with just as much certainty we can conclude the following, though it is quite likely to cause an uproar from all the geese of the bourgeois left: the comparison between the democratic phase of capitalism and the totalitarian phase shows that the amount of class oppression is greater in the first (although it is obvious that the ruling class always tends to choose the method which is more useful for its conservation). Fascism undoubtedly unleashes a greater mass of police and repressive violence, including bloody repression. But this aspect of kinetic energy primarily and gravely affects the very few authentic leaders and revolutionary militants of the working class movement, together with a stratum of middle bourgeois professional politicians who pretend to be progressive and friends of the working class, but who are nothing but the militia specially trained by the capitalists for use in the periods of the parliamentary comedy. Those who do not change their style and their costume in time are ousted with a kick in the ass - which is the main reason for their outcries.

As for the mass of the working class, it continues to be exploited as it has always been in the economic field. And the vanguard elements which form within the class for the assault against the present regime continue as always to receive - as soon as they take the correct anti-legalistic way of action - the lead which is reserved for them even by the bourgeois democratic governments. This we can see in countless examples, on the part of the republicans in France in 1848 and 1871, on the part of Social Democrats in Germany in 1919, etc.

But the new method introducing planning in the management of capitalist economy - which in relation to the antiquated unlimited classical liberalism of the past constitutes a form of self-limitation of capitalism - leads to a levelling of the extortion of surplus value around an average. The reformist measures which the right-wing socialists had advocated for many decades are adopted. In such a way the sharpest and extreme edges of capitalist exploitation are eased, while forms of public assistance develop.

All this aims at delaying the crises of class conflicts and the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production. But undoubtedly it would be impossible to reach this aim without having succeeded in reconciling, to a certain degree, the open repression against the revolutionary vanguard with a relief of the most pressing economic needs of the great masses. These two aspects of the historical drama in which we live are a condition for one another. Churchill in his latter days said with good reason to

the Labourites: you won't be able to found a state-run economy without a police state. More interventions, more regulations, more controls, more police. Fascism consists of the integration of artful social reformism with the open armed defence of state power.

Not all the examples of fascism are at the same level. Nevertheless the German one, as pitiless in the elimination of its enemies as one may say, has achieved a very high average standard of living economically speaking and an administration that technically was excellent, and when it has imposed war restrictions these even fell on the propertied classes and this to an unprecedented extent.

Therefore, even though bourgeois class oppression, in the totalitarian phase, increases the proportion of the kinetic use of violence with respect to the potential one, the total pressure on the proletariat does not increase but diminishes. It is precisely for this reason that the final crisis of the class struggle historically undergoes a delay.

The death of revolutionary energies lies in class collaboration. Democracy is class collaboration through lots of talk, fascism is plain class collaboration in fact. We are living in the midst of this latter historical phase. The rekindling of the class struggle will dialectically arise from a later phase, but for the time being let us establish that it cannot proceed through rallying the working classes behind the slogan of the return to liberalism, in which they have nothing to gain, not even relatively.

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This section deals mainly with the use of force, violence and dictatorship by the ruling classes. It does not exhaust the subject of the use of these energies by the proletariat in the struggle for the conquest of power and in the exercise of power, an important question that will be reserved for following sections. But still remaining within the field of the study of the bourgeois forms of dictatorship, it would do well to specify that when we speak about the fascist, totalitarian and dictatorial capitalist method we always refer to collective organisations and actions. We do not see the prevailing factor of the historical scene to be individual dictators, who so greatly occupy the attention of a public that has been artfully enthralled, whether it is by their supporters or their adversaries.

During the last world war, two of the Big Three have been eliminated: Roosevelt and Churchill. But nothing has substantially changed in the course of events. We will leave Italy aside because here the examples of fascism and anti-fascism have had a very clownish character (the first models of an innovation always make one laugh, as the early automobiles which can be seen in a museum compared with a modern mass produced one). In Germany the person of Hitler represented a superfluous factor of the powerful Nazi organisation of forces. The Soviet regime will do very well without Stalin when his time has come. The other impressive machinery of domination, that of Japan, was based upon castes and classes without a personal leader.

We can escape from the overwhelming tide of lies which gorges modern public opinion only if we relentlessly drive away both the fetish of the individual as a protagonist of history, meaning not only the ordinary person, the man in the street, but also the one in the centre of the stage, the Leader, the Great Man.

That we live in an epoch of self-government of the peoples, not even the simpletons believe...

But we are not in the hands of a few great men either. We are in the hands of a very few great class Monsters, of the greatest states of the world, machines of domination whose enormous power weighs upon everybody and everything. Their open accumulation of potential energies foreshadows, in all corners of the earth, the kinetic use of immense and crushing forces when the conservation of the present institutions will require it. And these forces will be unleashed without the slightest hesitation on any side in the face of civil, moral and legal scruples, those ideal principles which are croaked about from morning till night by the infamous, purchased, hypocritical propagandas.

IV. Proletarian Struggle and Violence

The first three parts of this article have briefly outlined the historical development of the class struggles up to present-day bourgeois society. They presented the perspective which Marxist socialism has long given on this subject but which nevertheless continues to be an object of deviation and confusion.

To clarify the question we made the fundamental distinction between energy in the potential state (energy which is capable of entering into action but is not yet acting) and energy in the actual or kinetic state (energy which has already been set into motion and is producing its various effects). We explained the nature of this distinction in the physical world and extended it in a very simple way to the field of organic life and human society.

The problem was then to identify this energy, i.e. violence and coercive force, in the events of social life. We have emphasised that this is operating not only when there is a brutal physical act against the human body such as physical restraint, beating, and killing, but also in that much larger field where the actions of individuals are coerced through the simple threat and under the penalty of violence. This coercion arises inseparably with the first forms of collective productive activity and thus of what is considered to be civilised and political society. Coercion is an indispensable factor in the development of the whole course of history and in the development of the successive institutions and classes. The question is not to exalt or condemn it, but to recognise and consider it in the context of the different historical epochs and the various situations.

The second section compared feudal society with bourgeois capitalist society. Its aim was to illustrate the thesis, which of course is not new, that the passage from feudalism to capitalism - an event fundamental in the evolution of the technology of production as well as in the evolution of the economy - has not been accompanied by a decrease in the use of force, violence, and social oppression.

For Marx, the capitalist form of economy and society is the most antagonistic that history has presented until now. In its birth, its development, and its resistance against its own destruction, capitalism reaches a level of exploitation, persecution, and human suffering unknown before. This level is so high in quality and quantity, in potential and mass, in severity and range and - if we translate it into the ethical-literary terms which are not ours - in ferocity and immensity, that it has reached the masses, the peoples, and the races of all corners of the earth.

Finally the third section dealt with the comparison between the liberal-democratic and the fascist-totalitarian forms of bourgeois rule, showing that it is an illusion to consider the first to be less oppressive and more tolerant than the second. If we take into consideration not violence as it is openly manifested, but instead the actual potential of the modern state apparatuses, that is to say their ability

and capacity to resist all antagonistic, revolutionary assaults, we can easily substitute the blind commonplace present-day attitude, one that rejoices because two world wars supposedly drove back the forces of reaction and tyranny, and replace it by the obvious and clear verification that the capitalist system has more than doubled its strength, a strength concentrated in the great state monsters and in the world Leviathan of class rule now being constructed. Our proof of this is not based on an examination of the juridical hypocrisy or of the written or oratorical demagogy of today, which anyway are more revolting than they were under the defeated regimes of the Axis powers. Instead it is based on the scientific calculation of the financial, military, and police forces, in the measurement of the frantic accumulation and concentration of private or public, but always bourgeois, capital.

In comparison to 1914, 1919, 1922, 1933, and 1943, the capitalist regime of 1947 weighs down more, always more, in its economic exploitation and in its political oppression of the working masses and of everyone and everything that crosses its path. This is true for the «Great Powers» after their totalitarian suppression of the German and Japanese state machines. It is also and no less true even for the Italian state: although defeated, derided, forced into vassalage, saleable and sold in all direction, it is nevertheless more armed with police and more reactionary now than under Giolitti and Mussolini, and it will be even more reactionary if it passes from the hands of De Gasperi to those of the left parties.

Having summarised the first three parts, we must now deal with the question of the use of force and violence in the social struggle when these methods of action are taken up by the revolutionary class of the present epoch, the modern proletariat.

In the course of about a century, the method of class struggle has been accepted in words by so many and such various movements and schools that the most widely differing interpretations have clashed in violent polemics, reflecting the ups and downs and the turning points of the history of capitalism and of the antagonims to which it gives rise.

The polemic has been clarified in a classic way in the period between World War I and the Russian Revolution. Lenin, Trotsky, and the left-wing communist groups who gathered in Moscow's International settled the questions of force, violence, the conquest of power, the state, and the dictatorship in a way we must consider as definitive on the theoretical and programmatic level.

Opposed to them were the countless deformations of social-democratic opportunism. It is not necessary to repeat our refutation of these positions but it is useful to simply recall some points which clarify the concepts which distinguish us. Moreover, many of these false positions, which were then trampled to the ground and which seemed to have been dispersed forever, have reappeared in almost identical forms in the working class movement today.

Revisionism pretended to show that the prediction of a revolutionary clash between the working class and the defensive network of bourgeois power was an obsolete part of the Marxist system. Falsifying and exploiting the Marxist texts (in this case a famous preface and letter of Engels) it maintained that the progress of military technology precluded any perspective of a victorious armed insurrection. It claimed instead that the working class would achieve power very shortly through legal and peaceful means due to the development and strengthening of working class unions and of parliamentary political parties.

Revisionism sought to spread throughout the ranks of the working class the firm conviction that it was not possible to overthrow the power of the capitalist class by force and, furthermore, that it was possible to realise socialism after conquering the executive organs of the state by means of a majority in the representative institutions. Left Marxists were accused of a worship of violence, elevating it from a means to an end and invoking it almost sadistically even when it was possible to spare it and attain the same result in a peaceful way. But in the face of the eloquence of the historical developments this polemic soon unveiled its content. It was a mystique not so much of non-violence as it was an apology of the principles of the bourgeois order.

After the armed revolution triumphed in Leningrad over the resistance of both the Czarist regime and the Russian bourgeois class, the argument that it was not possible to conquer power with arms changed into the argument that it must not be done, even if it is possible. This was combined with the idiotic preaching of a general humanitarianism and social pacifism which of course repudiates the violence utilised for the victory of the working class revolutions, but does not denounce the violence used by the bourgeoisie for its historical revolutions, not even the extreme terroristic manifestations of this violence. Moreover, in all the controversial debates, in historical situations which were decisive for the socialist movement, when the right contested the propositions of direct action, it admitted that. it would have agreed with the necessity of resorting to insurrection if it were for other objectives. For example, the Italian reformist socialists in May 1915 opposed the proposal for a general strike at the moment of war mobilisation, using ideological and political arguments in addition to a tactical evaluation of the relation of forces; but they admitted that if Italy intervened in the war on the side of Austria and Germany they would call the people to insurrection.

In the same way, those who theorise the «utilisation» of legal and democratic ways are ready to admit that popular violence is legitimate and necessary when there is an attempt from above to abolish constitutional rights. But in such a case how can it be explained that the development of military technology in the hands of the state is no longer an insurmountable obstacle? How can it be foreseen, in the event of a peaceful conquest of the majority, that the bourgeoisie will not use those military means in order to maintain power? How can the proletariat in these situations victoriously use the violence which is criticised and condemned as a class means? The social democrats cannot answer this because in doing so they would be obliged to confess that they are pure and simple accomplices in preserving bourgeois rule.

A system of tactical slogans such as theirs can in fact be reconciled only with a clearly anti-Marxist apology of bourgeois civilisation which precisely is the essence of the politics of those parties which have risen from the deformed trunk of anti-fascism.

The social-democratic thesis contends that the last historical situation where the recourse to violence and forms of civil war was necessary was precisely that situation which enabled the bourgeois order to rise from the ruins of the old feudal and despotic regimes. With the conquest of political liberties an era of civilised and peaceful struggles is supposedly opened in which all other conquests, such as economic and social equality, can be realised without further bloody conflicts.

According to this ignoble falsification, the historical movement of the modern proletariat and socialism are no longer the most radical battle of history. They are no longer the destruction of an entire world down to its foundations, from its economic framework and its legal and political system to its ideologies

still impregnated with all the lies transmitted by previous forms of oppression and still poisoning even the very air we breathe.

Socialism is reduced to a stupid and irresolute combination of supposed legal and constitutional conquests by which the capitalist form has pretendedly enriched and enlightened society and vague social postulates which can be grafted and transplanted onto the trunk of the bourgeois system.

Marx measured the irresistible and increasing pressures in the social depths which will cause the mantle of the bourgeois forms of production to explode, just as geological cataclysms break the crust of the planet. His formidable historical vision of social antagonisms is replaced by the contemptible deception of a Roosevelt who adds to the short list of bourgeois liberties those of freedom from fear and freedom from need, or of a Pius XII who, after blessing once again the eternal principle of property in its modern capitalist form, pretends to weep over the abyss which exists between the poverty of the multitude and the monstrous accumulations of wealth.

Lenin's theoretical restoration of the revolutionary doctrine re-established the definition of the state as a machine which one social class uses to oppress other classes. This definition above all is fully valid for the modern bourgeois, democratic, and parliamentary state. But as a crowning point of the historical polemic, it must be made clear that the proletarian class force cannot take over this machine and use it for its own purposes; instead of conquering it, it must smash it and break it to pieces.

The proletarian struggle is not a struggle that takes place within the state and its organs but a struggle outside the state, against it, and against all its manifestations and forms.

The proletarian struggle does not aim at seizing or conquering the state as if it were a fortress which the victorious army seeks to occupy. Its aim instead is to destroy it and to raze its defeated defences and fortifications to the ground.

Yet after the destruction of the bourgeois state a form of political state becomes necessary, i.e. the new organised class power of the proletariat. This is due to the necessity of directing the use of an organised class violence by means of which the privileges of capital are rooted out and the organisation of the freed productive forces in the new, non-private, non-commodity communist forms is made possible.

Consequently it is correct to speak of the conquest of power, meaning a non-legal, non-peaceful, but violent, armed, revolutionary conquest. It is correct to speak of the passage of power from the hands of the bourgeoisie to those of the proletariat precisely because our doctrine considers power not only authority and law based on the weight of the tradition of the past but also the dynamics of force and violence thrust into the future, sweeping away the barriers and obstacles of institutions. It would not be exact to speak of the conquest of the state or the passage of the state from the administration of one class to that of another precisely because the state of a ruling class must perish and be shattered as a condition for the victory of the formerly subjected class. To violate this essential point of Marxism, or to make the slightest concession to it (for instance allowing the possibility that the passage of power can take place within the scope of a parliamentary action, even one accompanied by street fighting and battles, and by acts of war between states) leads to the utmost conservatism. This is because such a concession is tantamount to conceding that the state structure is a form which is opened to totally different and opposed contents and therefore stands above the opposing classes and their historical

conflict. This can only lead to the reverential respect of legality and the vulgar apology for the existing order.

It is not only a question of an error of scientific evaluation but also of a real degenerative historical process which took place before our eyes. It is this process which has led the ex-communist parties down hill, turning their backs on Lenin's theses and arriving at the coalition with the social-democratic traitors, the «worker's government», and then the democratic government, that is to say a direct collaboration with the bourgeoisie and at its service.

With the unequivocally clear thesis of the destruction of the state, Lenin re-established the thesis of the establishment of the proletarian state. The second thesis does not please the anarchists who, though they had the merit of advancing the first, had the illusion that immediately after bourgeois power was smashed society could dispense with all forms of organised power and therefore with the political state, that is to say with a system of social violence. Since the transformation of the economy from private to socialist cannot be instantaneous, it follows that the elimination of the non-labouring class cannot be instantaneous and cannot be accomplished through the physical elimination of its members. Throughout the far from brief period during which the capitalist economic forms persist while constantly diminishing, the organised revolutionary state must function, which means - as Lenin unhypocritically said - maintaining soldiers, police forces, and prisons.

With the progressive reduction of the sector of the economy still organised in private forms, there is a corresponding reduction of the area in which it is necessary to use political coercion, and the state tends to progressively disappear.

The points which we have recalled here in a schematic way are enough to demonstrate how both a magnificent polemical campaign ridiculing and crushing its opponents and, above all, how the greatest event up to now in the history of the class struggle have brought out in all their clarity the classical theses of Marx and Engels, the Communist Manifesto, and the conclusions which have been drawn from the defeat of the Paris Commune. These are the theses of the conquest of political power, the proletarian dictatorship, the despotic intervention in the bourgeois relationships of production, and the final withering away of the state. The right of speaking of historical confirmations parallel to the brilliant theoretical construction seems to cease when this last phase is attained since we have not yet witnessed - in Russia or anywhere else - the process of the withering away, the dying down of itself, the dissolving away (Auflösung in Engels) of the state. The question is important and difficult since a sound dialectic can demonstrate nothing with certainty on the basis of a more or less brilliant series of spoken or written words. Conclusions can only be based on facts.

The bourgeois states, in whatever atmospheres and ideological climates, inflate in a more and more terrible way before our eyes. The only state which [in 1947 - Ed.] is presented, through tremendous propaganda, as a working class state, expands its apparatus and its bureaucratic, legal, police, and military functions beyond all limits.

So it is not surprising that the prediction of the shrivelling up and elimination of the state, after it has fulfilled its decisive role in the class struggle, is greeted with a widespread scepticism.

Common opinion seems to say to us: «You can always wait, you who theorise even red dictatorships! The state organ, like a tumour in the body of society, will not regress and will instead invade all its

tissues and all its innermost recesses until suffocating it». It is this commonplace attitude which encourages all the individualist, liberal, and anarchist ideologies, and even the old and new deformed hybrids between the class method and the liberal one, all of which are served to us by socialisms based on nothing less than the personality and on the plenitude of its manifestation.

It is quite remarkable that even the few groups in the communist camp which reacted to the opportunist degeneration of the parties of the now dissolved International of Moscow, tend to display a hesitation on this point. In their preoccupation with fighting against the suffocating centralisation of the Stalinist bureaucracy, they have been led to cast doubts on the Marxist principles re-established by Lenin, and they reveal they believe that Lenin - and along with him all the revolutionary communists in the glorious period of 1917-20 - were guilty of an idolisation of the state.

We must firmly and clearly state that the current of the Italian Marxist left, with which this review is linked, does not have the slightest hesitance or repentance on this point. It rejects any revision of Marx and Lenin's fundamental principle that the revolution, as it is a violent process par excellence, is thus a highly authoritarian, totalitarian, and centralising act.

Our condemnation of the Stalinist orientation is not based on the abstract, scholastic, and constitutionalist accusation that it committed the sinful acts of abusing bureaucratism, state intervention, and despotic authority. It is based instead on quite different evaluations, i.e. the economic, social, and political development of Russia and the world, of which the monstrous swelling of the state machine is not the sinful cause but the inevitable consequence.

The hesitation about accepting and defending the dictatorship is rooted not only in vague and stupid moralising about the pretended right of the individual or the group not to be pressured by or forced to yield to a greater force, but also in the distinction - undoubtedly very important - made between the concept of a dictatorship of one class over another and the relationships of organisation and power within the working class which constitutes the revolutionary state.

With this point we have reached the aim of the present article. Having restated the basic facts in their correct terms, we of course do not pretend to have exhausted these questions, which is something that only history can do (as we consider it to have done with the question of the necessity of violence in the conquest of power). The task of the party's theoretical work and militancy is something other: it is to avoid, in the search for a solution to these questions, the unconscious utilisation of arguments which are dictated or influenced by enemy ideologies, and thus by the interests of the enemy class.

Dictatorship is the second and dialectical aspect of revolutionary force. This force, in the first phase of the conquest of power, acts from below and concentrates innumerable efforts in the attempts to smash the long-established state form. After the success of such an attempt, this same class force continues to act but in an opposite direction, i.e. from above, in the exercise of power entrusted to a new state body fully constituted in its whole and its parts and even more robust, more resolute and, if necessary, more pitiless and terroristic than that which was defeated.

The outcries against the call for the proletarian dictatorship (a claim that even the politicians of the iron Moscow regime are hypocritically hiding today) as well as the cries of alarm against the pretended impossibility of curbing the lust for power and consequently for material privilege on the part of the bureaucratic personnel crystallised into a new ruling class of caste, all this corresponds to the vulgar and

metaphysical position which treats society and the state as abstract entities. Such a position is incapable of finding the key to problems through an investigation into the facts of production and into the transformation of all relationships, which the collision between classes will give birth to.

Thus it is a banal confusion to equate the concept of dictatorship that we Marxists call for, with the vulgar conception of tyranny, despotism, and autocracy. The proletarian dictatorship is thus confused with personal power, and on the basis of the same stupidities, Lenin is condemned just like Hitler, Mussolini, or Stalin.

We must remember that the Marxist analysis completely disclaims the assertion that the state machines act under the impulse of the will of these contemporary «Duces». These «Duces» are nothing but chessmen, having only symbolic importance, which are moved on the chessboard of history by forces from which they cannot escape.

Furthermore we have shown many times that the bourgeois ideologists do not have the right to be shocked by a Franco, a Tito, or the vigorous methods used by the states which present them as their leaders, since these ideologists do not hesitate to justify the dictatorship and terror to which the bourgeoisie resorted precisely in the period following its conquest of power. Thus no right-minded historian classifies the dictator of Naples in 1860, Giuseppe Garibaldi, as a political criminal but on the contrary exalts him as a true champion of humanity.

The proletarian dictatorship, therefore, is not manifested in the power of a man, even if he has exceptional personal qualities.

Does this dictatorship then have as its acting agent a political party which acts in the name and in the interests of the working class? Our current answers this question, today as well as at the time of the Russian Revolution, with an unconditional «yes».

Since it is undeniable that the parties which pretend to represent the proletarian class have undergone profound crises and have repeatedly broken up or undergone splits, our decidedly affirmative answer raises the following question: is it possible to determine which party has in effect such a revolutionary prerogative, and what criterion is to be used to determine it? The question is thus transferred to the examination of the relationship between the broad class base and the more limited and well defined organ which is the party.

In answering the questions on this point we must not lose sight of the distinctive characteristic of the dictatorship. As is always the case with our method, before concrete historical events reveal the positive aspects of this dictatorship, we shall define it by its negative aspect.

A regime in which the defeated class still exists physically and constitutes from a statistical viewpoint a significant part of the social agglomerate but is kept outside of the state by force, is a dictatorship. Moreover this defeated class is kept in conditions which make it impossible to attempt a reconquest of power because it is denied the rights of association, propaganda, and the press.

It is not necessary to determine from the start who maintains the defeated class in this strict state of subjugation: the very course of the historical struggle itself will tell us. Provided that the class we fight is reduced to this state of a social minority, undergoing this social death pending its statistical one, we will admit for a moment that the acting agent can be either the entire victorious social majority (an extreme

hypothesis which is unrealisable), or a part of that majority, or a solid vanguard group (even if it is a statistical minority), or finally, in a brief crisis, even a single man (another extreme hypothesis, which was close to being realised in only one historical example - that of Lenin, who in April 1917, alone against the entire Central Committee and the old Bolsheviks, was able to read in advance in the march of events and to determine in his theses the new course of the history of the party and of the revolution, just as in November he had the Constituent Assembly dissolved by the Red Guard).

As the Marxist method is not a revelation, a prophecy, or a scholasticism, it achieves first of all the understanding of the way in which the historical forces act and determines their relationships and their collisions. Then, with theoretical research and practical struggle continuing, it determines the characteristics of the manifestation of these forces and the nature of the means by which they act.

The Paris Commune has confirmed that the proletarian forces must smash the old state instead of entering it and taking it over; its means must not be legality but insurrection.

The very defeat of the proletariat in that class battle and the October victory at Leningrad have shown that it is necessary to organise a new form of armed state whose «secret» is in the following: it denies political survival to the members of the defeated class and to all its various parties.

Once this decisive secret has been drawn from history, we still have not clarified and studied all the physiology and the dynamics of the new organ that has been produced. Unfortunately an extremely difficult area, its pathology, remains open.

Above all else the determining negative characteristic is the exclusion of the defeated class from the state organ (regardless of whether or not it has multiple institutions: the representative, executive, judicial and bureaucratic). This radically distinguishes our state from the bourgeois state which pretends to welcome all social strata in its bodies.

Yet this change cannot seem absurd to the defeated bourgeoisie. Once it succeeded in bringing down the old state based on two orders - the nobility and the clergy - it understood that it had made a mistake by only demanding to enter as the Third Estate in the new state body. Under the Convention and under the Terror it chased the aristocrats out of the state. It was easy for it to historically close up the phase of open dictatorship since the privileges of the two orders which were based on legal prerogatives rather than on the productive organisation could rapidly be destroyed and thereby the priest and the noble could rapidly be reduced to simple ordinary citizens.

In this article we have defined what fundamentally distinguishes the historical form of the proletarian dictatorship. In the next article of this series we will examine the relationship between the various organs and institutions through which the proletarian dictatorship is exercised: the class party, workers councils, unions, and factory councils.

In other words we will conclude by discussing the problem of the so-called proletarian democracy (an expression utilised by some texts of the Third International but which it would be good to eliminate) which is supposedly to be instituted after the dictatorship has historically buried bourgeois democracy.

V. The Degeneration of the Proletarian Power in Russia and the Question of the Dictatorship

The difficult problem of the degeneration of the proletarian power can be summarised briefly. In a large country the working class conquered power following the program which called for armed insurrection and the annihilation of all influence of the defeated class through pressure of the proletarian class dictatorship. In the other countries of the world, however, the working class either did not have the strength to initiate the revolutionary attack or else was defeated in the attempt. In these countries, power remained in the hands of the bourgeoisie, and production and exchange continued according to the laws of capitalism which dominated all the relationships of the world market.

In the country where the revolution triumphed, the dictatorship held firm politically and militarily against every counter-attack. It brought the civil war to a close in a few short and victorious years, and foreign capitalism did not engage in a general action to crush it.

A process of internal degeneration of the new political and administrative apparatus began to develop however. A privileged circle began to form, monopolising the advantages and posts in the bureaucratic hierarchy while continuing to claim to represent the interests of the great labouring masses.

In the other countries, the revolutionary working class movement, which was intimately linked to this same political hierarchy, not only did not succeed in the victorious overthrow of the bourgeois states, but progressively lost and distorted the whole sense of its own action by pursuing other non-revolutionary objectives.

* * *

This terrible problem in the history of the class struggle gives rise to a crucial question: how can such a double catastrophe be prevented? The question actually is badly posed. For those who follow the determinist method the question actually is one of determining the true characteristics and laws of this degenerative process, in order to establish when and how we can recognise the conditions which would allow us to expect and pursue a revolutionary course free from this pathological reversion.

Here we will not concern ourselves with refuting those who deny the existence of such a degeneration and who maintain that in Russia there is a true revolutionary working class power, an actual evolution of the economic forms towards communism, and a coordination with the other proletarian parties of the world which will actually lead to the overthrow of world capitalism.

Nor will we concern ourselves here with a study of the socio-economic aspects of the problem, for this would necessitate a detailed and careful analysis of the mechanism of production and distribution in Russia and of the actual relationships which Russia has with foreign capitalist economies.

Instead, at the end of this historical exposition on the question of violence and force, we will respond to those who claim that such an oppressive and bureaucratic degeneration is a direct consequence of infringing and violating the cannons and principles of elective democracy.

This democratic critique has two aspects, with the less radical being in fact the more insidious. The first is overtly bourgeois and is directly linked to the entire world campaign to defame the Russian Revolution. This campaign, which has been going on since 1917, has been led by all the liberals, democrats and social democrats of the world who have been terrorised as much by the magnificent and courageous theoretical proclamation of the method of the proletarian dictatorship as by its practical application.

After everything that has been said we will consider this first aspect of the democratic lamentation to have been refuted. The struggle against it, however, still remains of primary importance today since the conformist demand of what Lenin called «democracy in general» (and which in the basic communist works represents the dialectical opposite, the antithesis of the revolutionary position) is still disgustingly paraded by the very parties who claim to be linked to the present regime in Russia. This very regime, although making dangerous and condemnable concessions to the bourgeois democratic mechanism at home in the area of formal rights, not only continues to be but becomes increasingly a strictly totalitarian and police state.

Therefore we can never insist enough on our critique of democracy in all the historical forms in which it has appeared until now. Democracy has always been an internal method of organisation of the oppressor class, whether this class is old or. new. It has always been a technique, whether old or new, that is utilised in the internal relations among the elements and groups of the exploiting class. In the bourgeois revolutions it was also the necessary and vital environment for the emergence of capitalism.

The old democracies were based on electoral principles, assemblies, parliaments or councils. While deceitfully pretending that their aim was to realise a well-being for all and the extension of the spiritual or material conquests to all of society, their actual function was to enforce and maintain the exploitation of a mass of heathens, slaves and helots, of whole peoples who had been oppressed because they were less advanced or less war-like, and of a whole mass who had been excluded from the temple, the senate, the city and the assemblies.

We can see the reality of the multitude of banal theories based on the principle of egalitarianism: it is the compromise, agreement, and conspiracy among the members of the privileged minority to the detriment of the lower classes. Our appraisal of the modern democratic form, which is based on the holy charter of the British, French, and American revolutions, is no different. Modern democracy is a technique which provides the best political conditions for the capitalist oppression and exploitation of the workers. It replaces the old network of feudal oppression by which capitalism itself was suffocated, but only to exploit in a way which is new and different, but no less intense or extensive.

Our interpretation of the present totalitarian phase of the bourgeois epoch is fundamental in regard to this point. In this phase the parliamentary forms, having played out their role, tend to disappear and the atmosphere of modern capitalism becomes anti-liberal and anti-democratic. The tactical consequence. of this correct evaluation is that any call to return to the old bourgeois democracy characteristic of rising capitalism is opposed to the interests of the working class; it is reactionary and even «anti-progressive».

* * *

We will now take up the second aspect of the democratic critique. This aspect is not inspired by the dogmas of an inter-class and above-class democracy but instead says basically the following: it is well and good to establish the proletarian dictatorship and to do away with any scruples in the repression of the rights of the defeated bourgeois minority; however once the bourgeoisie in Russia was deprived of all rights, the degeneration of the proletarian state occurred because the rules of representation were violated «within» the working class. If an elective system truly functioning according to the majority principle had been established and respected in the base organisations of the proletariat (the soviets, the unions and the political party), with every decision made on the basis of the numerical outcome of a «truly free» vote, then the true revolutionary path would have been automatically maintained and it

would have been possible to ward off any degeneration and any danger of the abusive, suffocating domination by the ignoble «Stalinist clique».

At the heart of this widely accepted viewpoint is the idea that each individual, solely due to the fact that he or she belongs to an economic class (i.e. that he finds himself in particular relationships in common with many others with respect to production) is consequently predisposed to acquire a clear class «consciousness», in other words to acquire that body of ideas and understandings which reflect the interests, the historical path and the future of his class. This is a false way of understanding Marxist determinism because the formation of consciousness is something which, although certainly linked to the basic economic conditions, lags behind them at a great distance in time and has a field of action that is much more restricted.

For example, many centuries before the development of the historical consciousness of the bourgeois class, the bourgeois, the tradesman, the banker, and the small manufacturer existed and fulfilled essential economic functions, but had the mentality of servants and accomplices of the feudal lords. A revolutionary tendency and ideology slowly formed among them however and an audacious minority began to organise itself in order to attempt to conquer power.

Just as it is true that some members of the aristocracy fought for the bourgeois revolution, it is also true that there were many members of the bourgeoisie who, after the conquest of power in the great democratic revolutions, not only retained a way of thinking but also a course of action contrary to the general interests of their own class, and militated and fought with the counter-revolutionary party.

Similarly, while the opinions and consciousness of the worker are formed under the influence of his or her working and material living conditions, they are also formed in the environment of the whole traditional conservative ideology in which the capitalist world envelopes the worker.

This conservative influence is becoming increasingly stronger in the present period. It is not necessary to list again the resources which are available not only for the systematic organisation of propaganda through modern techniques, but also for the actual centralised intervention in the economic life through the adoption of numerous reformist measures and state intervention which are intended to satisfy certain secondary needs of the workers and which in fact often have a concrete effect on their economic situation.

For the crude and uneducated masses, the old aristocratic and feudal regimes needed only the church to fabricate servile ideologies. They acted on the rising bourgeoisie, however, primarily through their monopoly over the school and culture. The young bourgeoisie was consequently compelled to sustain a great and complex ideological struggle which the literature presents as a struggle for the freedom of thought but which in fact concerned the superstructure and a fierce conflict between two forces who were organised to defeat one another.

Today world capitalism in addition to the church and schools, disposes of an endless number of other forms of ideological manipulation and countless methods for forming a so-called «consciousness».

It surpasses the old regimes, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in the fabrication of falsehoods and deceits. This is true not only in that it broadcasts the most absurd doctrines and superstitions but also in that it informs the masses in a totally false way about the countless events in the complexity of modern life.

In spite of this tremendous arsenal of our class enemy we have always maintained that within the oppressed class an antagonistic ideology and doctrine would form and would achieve a greater and greater clarity as the economic development itself sharpens the conflict between the productive forces and the relations of production and as the fierce struggle between different class interests spreads. This perspective is not founded on the argument that given the fact that the proletarians outnumber the bourgeois, the sum total of their individual views and conceptions would prevail over that of the enemy due to their greater numerical weight.

We have always maintained that this clarity and consciousness is not realised in an amorphous mass of isolated individuals. It is realised instead in organisations which emerge from the undifferentiated mass, in resolute minorities who join together beyond national boundaries following the line of the general historical continuity of the movement. These minorities assume the function of leading the struggle of the masses; the greater part of the masses on the other hand are pushed into this struggle by economic factors well before they develop the same strength and clarity of ideas that is crystallised in the guiding party.

This is why a count of the votes cast by the entire working class mass (supposing such a thing were possible) would not exclude an outcome favourable to the counter-revolution even in a situation which would be conducive to a forward advance and a struggle under the leadership of the vanguard minority. Even a general and widespread political struggle which ends with the victorious conquest of power is not sufficient for the immediate elimination of the whole complex of traditional influences of bourgeois ideology. The latter not only continues to survive throughout the whole social structure within the country of the victorious revolution itself, but continues to act from outside with a massive deployment of all the modern means of propaganda of which we have spoken before.

It is, of course, of great advantage to break the state machinery, to destroy all the old structures for the systematic fabrication of bourgeois ideology (such as the church, the school and other countless associations) and to take control over all the major means of diffusing ideas, such as the press, the radio, the theatre, etc. However all this is not enough. It must be completed by a socio-economic condition: the rapid and successful eradication of the bourgeois form of production. Lenin was well aware that the necessity of permitting the continued existence (and in a certain sense the flourishing) of the family management of the small peasant farms meant that a whole area would be left open to the influence of the selfish and mercantile bourgeois psychology, to the anti-revolutionary propaganda of the priest, and in short to the play of countless counter-revolutionary superstitions. The unfavourable relationship of forces, however, left no other choice. Only in conserving the force, strength and firmness of the armed power of the industrial proletariat was it possible to make use of the revolutionary impetus of the peasant allies against the shackles of the agrarian feudal regime and at the same time guard against the danger of a possible revolt by the middle peasants, such as occurred during the civil war under Denikin and Kolchak.

The erroneous position of those who want to see the application of arithmetic democracy within the working class, or within certain class organisations, can thus be traced back to a false appreciation of the Marxist determinism.

We have already shown that it is incorrect to believe that in each historical period each of the opposing classes has corresponding groups which profess theories opposed to the other classes. Instead the correct thesis is that in each historical epoch the doctrinal system based on the interests of the ruling

class tends to be professed by the oppressed class, much to the advantage of the former. He who is a slave in the body is also a slave in the mind. The old bourgeois lie is precisely to pretend that we must begin with the liberation of the intellect (a method which leads to nothing and costs nothing for the privileged class), while instead we must start with the physical liberation of the body.

It is also erroneous to establish the following progression of determinisms with respect to the famous problem of consciousness: influence of economic factors, class consciousness, class action. The progression instead is the reverse: influence of economic factors, class action, class consciousness. Consciousness comes at the end and, in general, after the decisive victory. Economic necessity unites and focuses the pressure and energy of all those who are oppressed and suffocated by the forms of a given productive system. The oppressed react, they fight, they hurl themselves against these forms. In the course of this clash and this battle they increasingly develop an understanding of the general conditions of the struggle as well as its laws and principles, and a clear comprehension of the program of the class struggle develops.

For decades we have been reproached for wanting a revolution carried out by those who are unconscious.

We could have responded that provided that the revolution sweeps away the mass of horrors created by the bourgeois regime and provided that the terrible encirclement of the productive masses by bourgeois institutions which oppress and suffocate them is broken, then it would not bother us in the least if the decisive blows were delivered even by those who are not yet conscious of the aim of the struggle.

Instead, we left Marxists have always clearly and emphatically insisted on the importance of theory in the working class movement, and we consequently have constantly denounced the absence of principles and the betrayal of these by the right opportunists. We have always maintained the validity of the Marxist conception which considers the proletariat even as the true inheritor of modern classical philosophy. Let us explain. The struggle of the bourgeois usurers, colonial settlers and merchants was paralleled by an attack by the critical method against the dogmas of the church and the ideology of the authority of divine right; there was a revolution which appeared to be completed in natural philosophy before it was completed in society. This resulted from the fact that, of those forms which had to be destroyed in order for the capitalist productive forces to develop, not the least difficult to break down was the scholastic and theocratic ideological system of the middle ages. However, after its political and social victory, the bourgeoisie became conservative. It had no interest in directing the weapon of the critique, which it had used against the lies of Christian cosmology, to the area of the much more pressing and human problem of the social structure. This second task in the evolution of the theoretical consciousness of society fell to a new class which was pushed by its own interests to lay bare the lies of bourgeois civilisation. This new class, in the powerful dialectical vision of Marx, was the class of the «wretched artisans», excluded from culture in the middle ages and supposedly elevated to a position of legal equality by the liberal revolution; it was the class of manual labourers of big industry, uneducated and all but illiterate.

The key to our conception lies precisely in the fact that we do not consider the seat of consciousness to be the narrow area of the individual person and that we well know that, generally speaking, the elements of the mass who are pushed into struggle cannot possess in their minds the general theoretical outlook. To require such a condition would be purely illusory and counter-revolutionary. Neither does

this task of elaborating the theoretical consciousness fall to a band or group of superior individuals whose mission is to help humanity. It falls instead to an organism, to a mechanism differentiated within the mass, utilising the individual elements as cells that compose the tissue and elevating them to a function made possible only by this complex of relationships. This organism, this system, this complex of elements each with its own function, (analogous to the animal organism with its extremely complicated systems of tissues, networks, vessels, etc.) is the class organism, the party, which in a certain way defines the class faced with itself and gives the class the capacity to make its own history.

This whole process is reflected in the most diverse ways with respect to the different individuals who statistically belong to the class. To be more specific, we are not surprised to find side by side in a given situation the revolutionary and conscious worker, the worker who is still a total victim of the conservative political influences and who perhaps even marches in the ranks of the enemy, the worker who follows the opportunist currents of the movement, etc.

And we would have no conclusions to automatically draw from a vote among the working class that would indicate the following of each of these various positions - assuming that such a vote was actually possible.

* * *

It is only too well established that the class party, both before and after the conquest of power, is susceptible of degeneration in its function as a revolutionary instrument. It is necessary to search both for the causes of this serious phenomenon of social pathology and for the means to fight it. However it only follows from what has been said above that the method of voting cannot guarantee the correctness of the Party's orientation and directives, regardless of whether this voting is done by militants of the party or by a much wider circle encompassing the workers who belong to the unions, the factory organisations or even the representative organs of a political nature, such as the soviets or workers councils.

The history of the working class movement shows concretely that such a method has never led to any good and has never prevented the disastrous victories of opportunism. In all the conflicts between tendencies within the traditional socialist parties before World War I, the right-wing revisionists always argued against the radical Marxists of the left that they (the right wing) were much more closely tied to the wide strata of the working class than the narrow circle of the leadership of the political party. The opportunist currents had their main support in the parliamentary leaders of the party who disobeyed the party's political directives and demanded a free hand to collaborate with the bourgeois parties. They did so under the pretext that they had been elected by the mass of proletarian voters who far outnumbered the proletarians who belonged to the party and elected the party's political leadership. The union leaders who belonged to the party practised the same collaboration on the union level as the parliamentary leaders did on the political level. They refused the discipline of the class party, using the justification that they represented all the unionised workers who greatly outnumbered the party's militants. In their haste to ally with capitalism (something which culminated in their support for the first imperialist war) neither the parliamentary possibilists nor the union bureaucrats hesitated, in the name of the workerism and labourism they proudly flaunted, to deride those groups who brought forwards the true class politics within the party and to brand these groups as intellectuals and sometimes even as non-proletarians.

The history of Sorelian syndicalism also shows that the method of direct representation of the rank and file worker does not have left results and does not lead to the preservation of a truly revolutionary orientation. At a certain period this school of anarcho-syndicalism had seemed to some to be a true alternative to the degeneration of the social-democratic party which had taken the road of renouncing direct action and class violence. The Marxist groups which later converged in the Leninist reconstruction of the Third International rightly criticised and condemned this seemingly radical orientation. They denounced it for abandoning the only unifying class method which could surmount the narrowness of the individual trade and of the everyday conflicts limited to economic demands. Even if physically violent means of struggle were used, this orientation leads to the denial of the position of revolutionary Marxism, because for Marxism every class struggle is a political struggle and the indispensable instrument of this struggle is the party.

The justness of this theoretical polemic was confirmed by the fact that even revolutionary syndicalism sank in the crisis of the war and passed into the ranks of social patriotism in the various countries.

Now, in regards to the action of the party after the revolutionary victory, we will turn to the major episodes of the Russian Revolution which shed the greatest light and provide us with the best experience.

We reject the critique which claims that the disastrous degeneration of Leninist revolutionary politics into the present Stalinist policies was brought about in the beginning by the excessive predominance of the party and its central committee over the other working class organisations. We reject the illusory viewpoint that the whole degenerative process could have been contained if a vote among the various base organisations had been used as the means to decide both the make-up of the hierarchy and the major changes in the politics of the proletarian state. The problem of the degeneration cannot be comprehended without connecting it to the question of the socio-economic role of the various working class organs in the process of the destruction of the old economy and of the construction of the new.

Unions undoubtedly constitute and for a long period have constituted a basic area of struggle in the development of the revolutionary energy of the proletariat. But this has been possible with success only when the class party has carried on a serious work within the unions in order to shift the concentration of energy from narrow intermediate objectives to general class aims. The trade union, even as it evolved into the industrial union, finds limits to its dynamic because within it there exist different interests between the various categories and groups of workers. There are even greater limits to its action as capitalist society and the capitalist state pass through the three successive historical phases: the prohibition of trade organisations and strikes; the toleration of autonomous trade organisations; and finally the conquest of the trade unions and their imprisonment in the bourgeois system.

Even under a solidly established proletarian dictatorship, the union cannot be considered as an organ which represents the workers in a fundamental and stable way. In this social period conflicts between the various trades in the working class can still exist. The basic point is that the workers only have reason to make use of the union as long as the working class power is compelled to tolerate, in certain sections, the temporary presence of employers; with the disappearance of the latter due to the advance of socialist development, all content of union action is lost. Our conception of socialism is not the substitution of the state boss for the private boss. However if the relationship were such in the transition period, then in the supreme interests of revolutionary politics it could not be admitted as a principle that the employer state must always give in to the economic pressure of the workers' unions.

We won't go further in this involved analysis, for at this point we have already sufficiently explained why we left Communists do not admit that the unionised mass would be allowed to exert an influence on revolutionary politics through a majority vote.

Now let us consider the factory councils. We must remember that this form of economic organisation, which at first appeared to be much more radical than the union, went on to lose always more its pretence of revolutionary dynamism; today the idea of factory councils is common to all political currents, even the fascists. The conception of factory councils as an organisation which participates first in the supervising and later the management of production, and in the end which is capable of taking over, factory by factory, the management of production in its totality, has proved to be totally collaborationist. It has proved to be another way, no less effective than the old syndicalism, of preventing the masses from being channelled in the direction of the great united and centralised struggle for power. The polemic surrounding this question caused a great stir in the young Communist parties when the Russian Bolsheviks were compelled to take firm and even drastic measures to combat the workers' tendency towards autonomous technical and economic management of the factories in which they worked. Such an autonomous management not only impeded the realisation of a true socialist plan but also had the danger of seriously harming the efficiency of the productive machinery - something the counter-revolutionaries were counting on. In fact the factory council, even more so than the union, can act as an exponent of very narrow interests which can come into conflict with the general class interests.

Consequently the factory councils also cannot be considered as a basic and definitive organ of the working class state. When a true communist economy is established in certain sectors of production and circulation - that is to say when we have gone far beyond the simple expulsion of the capitalist owner from industry and the management of the enterprise by the state - then it will be precisely an economy based on autonomous enterprises which have to have disappeared. Once we have gone beyond the mercantilist form of production, the local plant will only be a technical node in the great network guided rationally by a unitary plan. The firm will no longer have a balance sheet of income and expenditures; consequently it will no longer be a firm at all and the producer will no longer be a wage labourer. Thus the factory council, like the union, has natural limits of functioning which prevent it from being, up to the end the real field for class preparation where the proletariat can build its will and capacity to struggle until it completely achieves its final goal. This is the reason why these economic organisations cannot be a body which oversees the party holding state power and which judges whether or not the party has strayed from the basic historical path.

It remains for us to examine the new organisations which were brought to life by the Russian Revolution. These were the workers, peasants and, at the beginning, soldiers soviets.

Some claimed that this system represented a new proletarian constitutional form counterposed to the traditional constitutional forms of the bourgeois state. The soviet system reached from the smallest village to the highest bodies of the state through successive horizontal strata. Furthermore it had the two following characteristics: 1) it excluded all elements of the old propertied classes, in other words it was the organisational manifestation of the proletarian dictatorship, and 2) it concentrated all representative, executive and, in theory, even judicial powers in its nerve centres. It has been said that because of these characteristics the soviet system is a perfect mechanism of internal class democracy which, once discovered, would eclipse the traditional parliaments of bourgeois liberalism.

However, since the emergence of socialism from its utopian phase, every Marxist has known that the invention of a constitutional form is not enough to distinguish the great social forms and the great historical epochs. The constitutional structures are transitory reflections of the relationship of forces; they are not derived from universal principles from which we could deduce an inherent mode of state organisation.

Soviets in their essence are actual class organisations and are not, as some believed, conglomerations of trade or craft organisations. Consequently they do not suffer from the narrowness of the purely economic organisation. For us their importance lies above all in the fact that they are organs of struggle. We do not try to view them in terms of ideal structural models but in terms of the history of their real development.

Thus it was a decisive moment in the Russian Revolution when, shortly after the election of the Constituent Assembly, the soviets rose up against the latter as its dialectical opposite and Bolshevik power dissolved the parliamentary assembly by force. This was the realisation of the brilliant historical slogan «All Power to the Soviets».

However, all this was not sufficient for us to accept the idea that once such a form of class representation is born (and leaving aside here the fluctuations, in every sense, of its representative composition which we are not able to examine here), a majority vote, at whatever moment and turn in the difficult struggle waged by the revolution both domestically and externally is a reliable and easy method for solving every question and even avoiding the counter-revolutionary degeneration.

We must admit that the soviet system, due to the very complexity of its historical evolutionary cycle (which incidentally must end in the most optimistic hypothesis with the disappearance of the soviets along with the withering away of the state), is susceptible of falling tinder counter-revolutionary influence just as it is susceptible of being a revolutionary instrument. In conclusion, we do not believe that there is any constitutional form which can immunise us against such a danger - the only guarantee, if any, lies in the development of the domestic and international relations of social forces.

Since we want to establish the supremacy of the party, which includes only a minority of the class, over the other forms of organisation, it could be possible for someone to object that we seem to think that the party is eternal, in other words that it will survive the withering away of the state of which Engels spoke.

Here we do not want to go into a discussion on the future transformation of the party. Just as the state, in the Marxist definition, withers away and is transformed, from a political apparatus of coercion, into a large and always more rational technical administration, so the party evolves into a simple organisation for social research and study corresponding to the large institutions for scientific research in the new society.

The distinctive characteristic of the party follows from its organic nature. One does not join the party because one has a particular position in the economic or social structure. No one is automatically a party militant because he is a proletarian, a voter, a citizen, etc.

Jurisprudents would say that one joins the party by free individual initiative. We Marxists say otherwise: one joins the party always due to factors born out of relationships of social environment, but these factors can be linked in a more general way to the characteristics of the class party, to its presence in all

parts of the world, to the fact that it is made up of workers of all trades and enterprises and, in principle, even of those who are not workers, and to the continuity of its work through the successive stages of propaganda, organisation, physical combat, seizure of power, and the construction of a new order.

Out of all the proletarian organisations, it is consequently the political party which least suffers from those structural and functional limits which enable the anti-proletarian influences - the germs which cause the disease of opportunism - to force their way in. We have said many times, though, that this danger also exists for the party. The conclusion that we draw is not that it can be warded off by subordinating the party to the other organisations of that class which the party represents - a subordination which is often demanded under false pretexts, other times simply out of naivety with the reason that a greater number of workers belong to other class organisations.

* * *

Our conception of this question also concerns the supposed necessity of internal party democracy. We do not deny that there unfortunately have been numerous and disastrous examples of errors committed by the central leadership of the communist parties. However can these errors be avoided through computing the votes of the rank and file militants?

We do not attribute the degeneration which took place in the Communist Party to the fact that the assemblies and congresses of the militants had little voice with respect to the initiatives taken by the centre.

At many historical turning points we have seen the rank and file smothered by the centre for counter-revolutionary purposes. To this end even the instruments of the state machine, including the most brutal, have been employed. But all this is not the origin of the degeneration of the party but an inevitable manifestation of it, a sign that the party has yielded to counter-revolutionary influences.

The position of the Italian Communist Left on what we could call «the question of revolutionary guarantees» was first of all that no constitutional or contractual provision can protect the party against degeneration even though the party, as opposed to the other organisations we have studied, has the characteristics of a contractual organisation (and we use the term not as it is used in jurisprudence nor even as it was used by J.J. Rousseau). At the base of the relationship between the militant and the party there is an obligation which, in order to ride ourselves of the undesirable adjective «contractual», we can simply call a dialectical obligation. The relationship is double and flows in two directions: from the centre to the base and from the base to the centre. If the action of the centre goes in accordance with the good functioning of the dialectical relationship, it is met by healthy responses from the base.

The celebrated problem of discipline thus consists in establishing a system of limits for the base which is the proper reflection of the limits set for the action of the leadership. Consequently we have always maintained that the leadership must not have the right, in the great turning points in the political situation, to discover, invent and impose pretendedly new principles, new formulations and new guidelines for the action of the party. These sudden shifts make up the history of opportunism. When such a crisis occurs (and this can happen precisely because the party is not an immediate and automatic organisation) it is followed by an internal struggle, the formation of tendencies, and splits. In such a case these are useful developments, just as a fever, for freeing an organism of disease. Nevertheless, «constitutionally» they cannot be accepted, encouraged or tolerated.

There is no rule or recipe for preventing the party from falling into the crisis of opportunism or for preventing it from necessarily reacting by forming factions. However we have the experience of many decades of proletarian struggle which enables us to establish some necessary, optimum conditions of which the research, the defence and the realisation must be the constant task for our movement. We conclude by laying down the most important of these.

1). The party must defend and advocate all the clarity and continuity of the communist doctrine throughout its successive historical applications. It must not tolerate the proclamation of principles which are in even partial conflict with its theoretical cornerstones.

2). In every historical situation the party must openly proclaim the complete content of its economic, social, and political program, above all in regards to the question of power, its conquest by means of armed force, and its exercise through dictatorship.

Those dictatorships which degenerate into regimes of privileges for a small circle of bureaucrats have always been accompanied by hypocritical ideological proclamations that are masked behind basically populist slogans, sometimes democratic, sometimes nationalist in nature, and by the pretension of having the support of the popular masses. The revolutionary communist party on the other hand does not hesitate to declare its intention of attacking the state and its institutions and of holding the defeated class under the despotic weight of the dictatorship, even when it admits that only an advanced minority of the oppressed class has reached the point of understanding these necessities of the struggle. «Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims» (the Manifesto). Only renegades pride themselves on a supposed ability to attain these aims while cleverly hiding them.

3). The party must observe a strict organisational rigor: it does not accept the idea of increasing its ranks by making compromises with groups or grouplets, or worse still of bargaining to win over the membership of the rank and file by making concessions to alleged leaders.

4). The party must work to instil clear historical understanding of the antagonistic nature of the struggle. Communists demand the initiative of attack against a whole world of rules and regulations, and traditions. They know that they constitute a danger for the privileged classes. They call the masses to the offensive and not to the defensive against the pretended danger of losing supposed gains and improvements won under capitalism. Communists do not lend and lease their party for causes not their own and for non-proletarian objectives such as liberty, country, democracy and other such lies. «Proletarians have nothing to loose but their chains».

5). Communists renounce the whole gamut of tactical expedients which were advocated under the pretext of hastening the process of winning over large strata of the masses to the revolutionary program. Such expedients are the political compromise, the alliance and united front with other parties, and the various slogans concerning the state which were used as substitutes for the dictatorship of the proletariat (such as workers' and peasants' government, progressive democracy).

Communists recognise, historically, that the use of these tactical means is one of the main factors which hastened the decomposition of the proletarian movement and communist soviet rule. They maintain that those who deplore the opportunist syphilis of the Stalinist movement but who at the same time champion the tactical weapons of the opportunist enemy are more dangerous than the Stalinists themselves.

Marginal note

The work Force, Violence, and Dictatorship in the Class Struggle, which we have published in five parts, deals with the questions of the use of force in social relationships and the characteristics of the revolutionary dictatorship according to the correct Marxist interpretation. We did not intentionally go into the question of the organisation of the class and the party, however in the final part of the discussion on the causes of the degeneration of the dictatorship, we were led straight to this point since many people have attributed the degeneration to errors in internal organisation and to the violation of a democratic and elective process within both the party and the other class organisations.

In refuting this thesis, however, we have neglected to mention an important polemic which took place in the Communist International in 1925-26 on the subject of changing the organisational base of the Communist Party to factory cells or factory nuclei. The Italian Left was practically alone in resolutely opposing this change and in insisting that the organisational base must remain territorial.

This position was exhaustively expounded at the time, however the central point was this: the organic function of the party, a function which no other organisation can fulfil, is to lead the struggle from the level of the individual economic struggle on the local and trade basis to the united, general proletarian class struggle which is social and political. Such a task, consequently, cannot be seriously undertaken by an organisational unit which includes only workers of the same trade or concern. This milieu will only be receptive to narrow trade interests, the central directives of the party will seem as something coming from above, something foreign, and the party officials will never meet with the rank and file on an equal footing and in a certain sense they will no longer belong to the party since they are not employed by a concern.

Territorial groups by nature, however, place workers of every trade and workers employed by different employers on the same level as the other militants from social strata which are not strictly proletarian - and the party openly accepts the latter as rank and file members, and initially only as rank and file members, if necessary keeping them in quarantine for some time before calling them, if such a thing is warranted, to organisational positions.

It had been claimed that the factory cell would provide a closer link between the party organisation and the great masses. However we demonstrated at the time that the concept of factory cells contained the same opportunist and demagogic defects as right-wing workerism and Labourism and counterposed the party officials to the rank and file in a true caricature of Lenin’s conception of professional revolutionaries.

The Left replaced the idiotic majoritary criterion, which is copied after bourgeois democracy, with a higher, dialectical criterion which hinges everything on the solid link of both the rank and file militants and the leadership to the strict and obligatory continuity of theory, program and tactics. It rejected any idea of demagogically wooing those wide layers of the masses which are so easily manoeuvrable. The Left’s conception of the organisation of the party is, in reality, the only one which can provide protection against the bureaucratic degeneration of the leading strata of the party and against the suffocation of the party’s rank and file by the leadership, both of which lead to a situation where the enemy class gains a devastating influence.

The Revolutionary Workers Movement and the Agrarian Question (1947)

The exploitation of man by man in the domain of manufacturing industry arose in modern society with the emergence of capitalism, when the technical possibilities of associated labor began to be exploited. The worker was expropriated of the product of his labor and part of his labor power was taken from him and formed the profit of his employer. A simple schema like this cannot represent the relation between worker and employer in the domain of agriculture, where the revolution that is still underway has not substantially modified productive techniques, but only the juridical relations between socially defined persons. The basis of the agrarian economy is the occupation of land, at first established by the military power of strong tribes or groups or of military leaders who invaded the territories of other peoples or who settled in unpopulated regions. In reality, in order for the landlords to be able to avail themselves of human labor power, another prerequisite for the seizure of land by means of brute force is an economy based on the slave labor of conquered peoples. But in modern society, in which we are presently interested, slavery had already been abolished by the time the capitalist economy began to emerge. Feudal society was no longer a slave society.

The occupation of the land, which was not only preserved in the feudal regime but actually constituted the basis of that regime, is perfectly accepted and juridically sanctioned in the fully developed capitalist regime. In practical terms this means that the owner of a vast expanse of agricultural land, although he does not work on these lands, obtains from them the land rent, without thereby being obliged to modify the productive technique of the workers that he exploits by introducing the resource of an associative form of activity.

In this way, large landholdings can exist without necessarily constituting single large enterprises; the latter is an institutional form wherein each worker has specialized tasks. There are large agrarian businesses. They have the character of capitalist enterprises except applied to agriculture; they involve an extensive incorporation of industrial capital in the land (such as machines, animals, various tools, etc.) and employ wage workers (agricultural laborers) who are pure proletarians. The owners of these big agricultural enterprises could be either the owners of the land itself, or large-scale rural leaseholders. Theoretically, a large industrial agrarian enterprise could also be superimposed on small-scale agrarian enterprise, if it is convenient for the capitalist to lease a large number of contiguous small private properties.

With regard to the ownership of very large tracts of land, this could prevail—and does prevail today—even in large capitalist countries, superimposed on small farm parcels, when the large landowner (the latifundist) has his land divided into small parcels, in each one of which a peasant family lives and works with primitive technology. In such a case, the worker is not totally expropriated of his product like the wage worker, but yields to the exploitation of the landlord a large part of his product, in kind (various types of crops) or in money (sharecropping or leaseholds). The sharecropper or the tenant farmer can therefore be considered a semi-proletarian. There are also, in the purely modern bourgeois regime, small landholdings connected to small agricultural businesses.

The small-scale peasant landowner is a manual worker and generally has a quite low standard of living. But he is not a proletarian, because the entire product of his labor belongs to him; nor is he exactly a

semi-proletarian, since he does not have to surrender any part of his product to another person. However, in the interplay of economic forces, he feels the impact of the demands of the privileged classes by way of high taxes, indebtedness to finance capital, etc. His social position is paralleled by that of the artisan although his legal position is different, being theoretically in the same category as the large landowner. In reality, capitalism, in order to rid itself of medieval obstacles, did not need to infringe upon the juridical institutions that affected real property; to the contrary, it adopted, almost to the letter, the framework of Roman law according to which, in theory, the same article of the legal code applies to parcels of land of less than an acre as well as to vast plantations.

What capitalism needed to destroy were those aspects of the feudal system that were of Germanic provenance, a system that made the small peasant exploited on the large estate an intermediate figure between the slave and the free laborer.

The “glebe serf”, besides having to endure veritable extortionate demands in delivering his quotas to the landlord and the church, was bound to his place of work. Capitalism had to free him from this servitude just as it had to liberate the impoverished artisans from the shackles of the thousands of laws and rules governing the guilds, so that both, transformed into men free to sell their labor power anywhere, could constitute the reserve armies of production based on wage labor.

The shattering of these juridical bonds constituted the bourgeois revolution. It is of course true that the latter, which on the other hand, in theory, did not abolish the artisan class, left intact the principle of agricultural production based on landholdings, and did not consist, from the point of view of legislation, in a redistribution of private landed property.

There can be no doubt that, among the various forms of agricultural enterprises mentioned above, the one that is most compatible with capitalist industry is the large unified agricultural business, and the one that is least compatible with it is the small landholding; these can be juridically divided into two types: the “minifundio” and the “latifundio”.

It is not correct to define the latifundio as a survival of the feudal regime, since it survived intact after the violent and radical abolition of all feudal bonds. It may or may not have a tendency to fragmentation, just as small parcels may or may not have a tendency to be re-concentrated into large estates or modern large-scale agricultural enterprises. But such phenomena unfold, in the framework of the modern bourgeois regime, as a consequence of technical factors and economic trends.

What role does the cycle of transformation of agricultural production play in the clear condemnation of industrial capitalism set forth in the historical or communist schema, according to which the exploitation of labor power will be abolished with the conquest of rule over society by the workers?

With regard to the modern large agricultural business, the latter will rapidly be subjected to the same fate as manufacturing industry due to the fact that it is based on the technique of associated labor.

The agricultural wage laborers of these large enterprises, although they are burdened by the social and political handicap of not being concentrated together in large modern conglomerations, will march alongside the industrial proletariat on the road to the formation of revolutionary class potential.

The semi-proletarians, that is, the sharecroppers and leaseholders, although they cannot have the same degree of class consciousness, can expect to reap great social advantages from the revolution of the

industrial proletariat, since the latter, although it will support in every stage of development the predominance of associative forms of labor and the concentration of small enterprises into larger ones, will be the only class that can radically abolish for the first time in history the system of private ownership of the land, at the same time as it abolishes industrial exploitation.

This does not mean that the small sharecropper or leaseholder will become landowners, but that they will be freed from the obligation to pay the tribute extracted from their labor power, in the form of money or payments in kind, that the landowners previously received. In other words, the revolution of the industrial proletariat will be capable of immediately abolishing the principle of land rent; furthermore, thanks to one of many dialectical relations that intervene in the succession of social and historical forms, it will be capable of abolishing the principle of land rent much more rapidly and completely than that of the profit of industrial capital.

As for the small landowner, the question is theoretically quite different, insofar as the land rent of his parcel presently accrues to his benefit and is not distinguished legally from the fruit of his own labor power. There can be no doubt that a revolution in this domain will only take place during a later stage, since all the small landholdings previously administered by sharecroppers, lessees or the small landowners themselves, will be consolidated into large socialized agricultural operations much more rapidly than this could have been done within the framework of the bourgeois economy.

Thus, one can by no means present the agrarian reflection of the proletarian revolution as an episode of redistribution or repartition of the land, nor as the conquest of the land by the peasants. The slogan, “small property instead of big property” does not make any sense. The slogan, “small agrarian business instead of big agrarian business” is 100% reactionary. With regard to this point, it is necessary to clarify which stages of this cycle can be completed prior to the downfall of bourgeois power. It is a classical opportunist error to tell the rural masses that an industrial capitalist regime, no matter how advanced it may be, can abolish land rent. Land rent and industrial profit are not distinctive aspects of two different and opposed historical eras. They coexist perfectly well not only in the classical understanding of bourgeois law, but also in the economic processes of the accumulation of finance capital.

Despite the substantial differences that we have demonstrated up to this point that distinguish the two fields of production, land rent and profit have a common origin in the principle of the extraction from the worker of a part of his labor power and in the commercial character of the distribution of the products of industry and agriculture. In this manner, the slogan of socialization of land rent without a revolution of the working class is pure idiocy worthy of that other idiocy reflected in the slogan of the socialization of monopoly capital within the framework of the private economy.

Another opportunist position is that it is necessary to await the concentration of the agrarian economy into large enterprises before we can speak of a revolution that would socialize both industry and agriculture. Such a conception is defeatist, since the commercial nature of the bourgeois economy and its evolution within the framework of ever more speculative and exchange-oriented forms allow us to foresee that private capital will not be advanced on a large scale to land improvement business ventures, whose profits will be small and will furthermore require a long term delay prior to realizing the payoff compared to the colossal industrial and banking capitalist business deals.

Now, the replacement of the small enterprise (whether it is unencumbered or enclosed by latifundia) by big business cannot take place without radical technological transformations. And these transformations

will be all the more slowly introduced where, for natural reasons, they will prove to be difficult (irregular topography, shortages of water, infertility of the soil, etc.). Only an economy of a social character will be capable of mobilizing the enormous masses of productive forces needed for such a transformation.

Finally, the slogan of the distribution of the latifundia to the peasants in the bourgeois regime also makes no sense, as it attempts to promise an expropriation without indemnification, which is contrary to the institutions of the bourgeois state, and is purely demagogic in the periods when neither the State nor the capitalist class have mobilize the liquid capital and productive resources necessary for the elimination of some of the technical characteristics of the worst examples of the latifundia, such as the lack of housing, roads, canals, and potable water, as well as the presence of epidemic malaria, etc.

There can be no doubt that the agrarian program of the workers revolution will include, parallel to the suppression of all land rent, a temporary redistribution of the croplands at the level of management, insofar as this will enable a uniform application of the labor power of that part of the peasant class that cannot be socially established among the workers of the collective enterprises.

In any event, this new redistribution will affect not the ownership but the distribution of management of the surface of the land and will not be able to assume, in modern capitalist countries, the social or historical dimension it assumed in Russia in 1917, where the conquest of power by the industrial proletariat not only achieved the first suppression of the principle of land rent but also the suppression of the feudal agrarian regime, which had continued to be practically in full force in the Czarist empire after the abolition of glebe serfdom promulgated in 1861.

In the typical capitalist country, the revolutionary industrial working class will embrace without restrictions the agricultural worker of the large enterprises and in this way prevent the regression of the rural laborer to the condition of the small peasant. It could consider the semi-proletarian sharecroppers and leaseholders as allies; tolerating their aspiration to the free use of their land, something that only the revolution can achieve. Only with great caution and as a temporary measure could it expect any positive support from the small peasant landowners who have not yet been ruined and proletarianized by capitalism. It is even possible that, in periods of crisis of the industrial apparatus due to war and defeat, one could expect that the majority of the small rural landowners, exploiting the economic crisis thanks to the high prices of agricultural products and seeing their social position become more stable, and also in view of their incapacity as a class to weather long-term historical cycles, could support the policies of the conservative parties.

Appeal for the International Reorganization of the Revolutionary Marxist Movement (Incomplete translation) (1949)

The organisation of the working class of all countries of the world is, as a result of a series of splits and the spread of defeatism, dominated by two forces.

The first of these is the traditional form of democratic socialism. Based on peaceful relationships between classes, these organisations support a programme of social and political collaboration with the bourgeoisie, and plan to defend the workers' interests by legal means within the framework of the

bourgeois constitution. They suggest that private enterprise will gradually change to socialism, and on principle reject the use of violence and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The second section is formed by those parties which follow the government in power in the USSR. It heralds the USSR as a Workers State with a policy modelled on revolutionary communism as defined by Marx and Lenin, and consistent with the great victory of the October Revolution.

This section of the proletarian movement pretends, in theory, not to reject the tactics of insurrection, dictatorship and terrorism. At the same time however, it says that it is convenient in capitalist countries to utilise those propaganda slogans, demands and tactics which can be shared with the property owning and non proletarian classes. Among these shared beliefs can be exampled: national welfare, the safety of the fatherland and the possibility of peaceful co-existence between classes with opposed interests, within the framework of a parliamentary democracy.

Such a social democratic policy could only be applied when certain conditions are satisfied. There would have to be peace between the government of the Soviet Union and the bourgeois governments. The workers of the world would have to admit that the existence of the Soviet Union was the premise and the promise of world socialism, and that therefore in safeguarding Russian power they were guaranteeing themselves against future capitalist exploitation. Both the workers and the capitalists would have to acknowledge that for an unlimited period the Soviet Union could co-exist with the capitalist powers in a normal and peaceful manner. The presumption of such conditions is summed up by the bourgeois democrats in the hackneyed formula of «non- intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign States» and by the new slogan of «peaceful competition» between socialism and capitalism.

From time to time the rank and file of the working class has rebelled against these obvious contradictions in this assessment of the long-standing political position; until now these rebellions have been limited and uncertain but they will without doubt gain strength.

This constant propaganda is increasingly less successful in hiding these contradictions. It is skilfully directed to deliberately confusing the long-term, with the immediate objectives, the tactical expedients with the principled positions, and is chosen according to the particular social setting.

The plan of convincing the capitalist countries that they can very well let the Soviet regime survive without making a military attack or engineering a social upheaval, can only mean convincing them that it is not a working class State and therefore no longer anti-capitalist. Such a policy emphasises the true state of affairs.

To convince the workers in capitalist countries that they need not organise their forces for an insurrection and the overthrow of the economic, administrative and political system of their country, may help to recruit members from the social stratas where the social democrats are successful, but it has no effect on the more advanced workers. However, this policy is combined with the perspective that a third World War can lead to the conquest of power by the proletariat, thus diverging from the teaching of Marx and Lenin who envisaged this role being fulfilled by civil war. When a third World War breaks, the stalinists promise the advanced workers that, whichever side starts it, they will urge a guerilla war, and they support this vain promise by saying that these «partisans» will be able to rely not only on their own forces but also on the parallel action of a perfect modern military machine.

The other section of their followers which of course forms the huge majority, are made up of workers having no revolutionary consciousness; artisans small landowners, shopkeepers and middle class manufacturers, white collar workers and civil servants, intellectuals and professional politicians. To this section the stalinists continually put forward proposals which go as far as offering a permanent united front not only with the propertied classes, but also with the bourgeois parties which they themselves classify as reactionary and right wing. They also promise them a future of peace, both internal and world-wide; of democratic tolerance towards any political party, organisation or creed; of economic progress without conflict or expropriation of the wealthy, and of equal welfare for all social stratas. It is increasingly difficult now even for them to justify, in the eyes of the masses, the existence in the Soviet Union and her satellites of a harsh totalitarian police state, controlled by stalinists through a rigid one-party system.

This degeneration of the proletarian movement has gone further than that of the revisionist and chauvinistic opportunism of the Second International and it will last longer. We can fix the beginning of this modern opportunism, at the latest, in 1928; the opportunism of the Second International reached the culminating point of its cycle in the years 1912-1922, though its origins went back much further than 1912 and its consequences went well beyond 1922.

First symptoms of reaction to stalinism

Recently there have been signs of impatience of stalinist opportunism, both from militants and from groups which have appeared on the political scenes of different countries, advocating the return to the doctrine of Marx and Lenin and the theses of the 3rd International at its first four Congresses. These latter denounce the Stalinists for their complete betrayal of the original policy.

However most of these splits cannot be regarded as a useful regrouping on a genuine class, basis even of a small vanguard of the proletariat. Many of these groups, as a result of their lack of theoretical work and because of their class origin, show in the very nature of their criticism of stalinist activity both past and present, that they are more or less directly influenced by the political schemes originating from the imperialist centers of the West and by the hysterical and hypocritical propaganda of liberalism and humanitarianism.

Such groups are more harmful in that they may divert unwary militants than because they are the result of the underground work of secret agents of imperialism.

However, fundamentally, the historical responsibility for the possible victory of various types of defeatism in the revolutionary movement rests entirely on the stalinist opportunists. It is they who have in their work approved of many bourgeois ideologies and theories, and have tried to prevent the working class movements from being autonomous, independent, and ready to defend themselves, although these attributes were so often stressed by Marx and Lenin.

This confused and unfavourable course of the proletarian struggle, coincides with the irresistible growth of highly concentrated industrialisation, which is taking place, as much in the old industrial centres as in the extension of industry to the whole world. It therefore aids the offensive waged by the United States against the masses of the world. The United States is the greatest pillar of imperialism and, as with all large concentrations of metropolitan capital, forces of production and power, it tends to forcefully exploit and oppress the world masses by breaking down all social and territorial obstacles. The stalinists

have shifted the struggle from international objectives and have confined themselves to the defence of precise national objectives delimited by the political and military aims of the Russian centre. As a result they will be less and less able to lead either the international or the national struggle, and will become more and more tied up with western imperialism, as was openly shown by the war alliance.

The Marxist position has always been that the foremost class enemies are the great powers of the highly overindustrialised and super colonial countries, which can only be overthrown by the proletarian revolution. In accordance with the Marxist viewpoint, the communists of the Italian Left today address an appeal to the revolutionary workers' groups of all countries. They invite them to retrace a long and difficult route and to regroup themselves on an international and strictly class basis, denouncing and rejecting any group which is influenced even partly or indirectly by the policies and philistine conformism emanating from the State controlled forces throughout the world.

The reorganisation of an international vanguard can only take place if there is absolute homogeneity of views and orientation; the International Communist Party proposes to comrades of all countries the following basic principles and postulates.

I. Reaffirmation of the weapons of the proletarian revolution: violence - dictatorship - terror

For revolutionary marxists the knowledge of acts, of repression, cruelty or violence towards individuals or groups, even if these acts were authorised or controllable, is not in itself a decisive element in the condemnation of stalinism or of any other regime. Manifestations of repression even cruel repression are an inseparable part of all societies based on the division into classes. Marxism was born out of the rejection of the so-called values of a civilisation based on class struggle, of the negation of the rules of «fair play» by which the opposing classes are supposed to practice: self discipline in readiness for the day when they will confront one another in a death struggle. No mutilation, slurs cast on individuals, genocide, either legal or illegal, can be fought by ascribing them to the individual or to those who direct him not only by a revolutionary eviction of all class division. In the present phase of capitalism characterised by increasing atrocities, cruelty and super-militarism, only the most stupid revolutionary movement would limit its methods of action with conditions of formal kindness.

II. Complete rupture with the tradition of war alliances, partisan fronts and «national liberations»

Stalinism was first irrevocably condemned just because it abandoned these fundamental principles of communism by throwing the proletarians into a fratricidal war which separated them into two imperialist camps, and strongly reinforced the shameful propaganda issued by the camp to which it had become allied. This camp was no better than that facing it, but it disguised its imperialist greed which was exposed decades ago by marxist-leninism criticism, by its delusion that its respect for «civilised» methods of war made it different from its adversary. It pretended that if it had to bomb, to «atomise», to invade, and finally after prolonged agony to use hanging, it would not be in order to defend its own interests but in order to restore the «moral values» of civilisation of human liberties so gravely threatened.

When, in 1914 this same disgraceful lie saw the traitors of the 2nd International proclaim the patriotic alliance against the imaginary ogre of teutonic or tsarist «barbarism», Leninism was the answer.

It was this fraud that was the basis for the western imperialists entering the war against the new nazi or fascist barbarism, and the same betrayal formed the alliance concluded between the State of Russia and

the imperialist States, first with Nazis themselves, and then between the workers and the bourgeois parties with a view to winning the war.

Today history has proved these lies and betrayals. The Russians accuse the Americans of being aggressors or fascists, a charge returned by the Americans, who admit that, had they been able to use the A bomb, not ready in 1941, to massacre Europe, they would have done so, instead of using the armies composed of mobilised Russian workers for the same task.

It is true that Marxism looks for and has always looked for the origin of all conflicts between States, in the increasing struggle between groups and factions of the ruling classes and from this it draws its deductions and gains its foresight. But any conception which opposes a civilised wing of capitalism to a barbaric wing of the sane system is a real negation of marxism. Indeed from a determinist point of view, it may well be that proletariat gains more from the victory of the attacking party using the roughest methods of combat than otherwise.

For human communities to pass beyond barbarism the development of productive techniques was indispensable; but man has had to pay for this passage by subjecting himself to the countless infamies of class civilisation, and the suffering arising from the exploitation of slavery, serfdom and industrialisation.

It is therefore a fundamental condition for the rebuilding of the international revolutionary movement that the traditions of chauvinistic politics shown in the support of the 1914-18 and the 1940-45 war alliances, popular fronts, guerilla resistance and national liberation, are equally condemned.

III. Defence of pacifism and federalism between the states historically denied

The guiding line of the marxist position on the possibility of a new war can be sought in Lenin. According to him wars of the great powers since the time of the Paris Commune are imperialist wars as the historical period in which there were wars and insurrection systematising the national boundaries of capitalist countries was over. Therefore with the occurrence of war all class alliances, all suspension of class opposition and pressure, with the war in mind, constitutes a betrayal of the proletarian cause. For Lenin, also, the revolt of the coloured masses in the colonies against the imperialists & the nationalist movements in underdeveloped countries in this modern phase of capitalism have a revolutionary significance only if the class struggle in the industrialised sectors is never interrupted, and never loosens its tie with the international objectives of the proletarian. organisation. Whatever may be the foreign policy of a State, the real internal enemy of the working class of each country is its government.

Seen in this perspective and reinforced by the formidable confirmation given by the evidence in World War 2, the many explicit forecasts in the theses and resolutions of the Third International at the time of Lenin's death, the period of imperialist wars can only end with the downfall of capitalism.

The revolutionary party of the proletariat must therefore deny all possibility of a peaceful settlement of the imperialist conflicts. It must energetically fight against the lies which promise that federation, leagues and associations between States will avoid conflicts by the means of an international armed force to repress «those who would provoke them».

Marx and Lenin, although aware of the rich complexity of the historical relationship between wars and revolutions, nevertheless condemned as idealist and bourgeois frauds, all fallacious distinctions between «the aggressor» and «the aggressed» in wars between States. Similarly the revolutionary

proletariat should know that all State institutions are only designed as a repressive force in order to conserve capitalism and their armed forces are but a class police and a counter-revolutionary guard.

Real International Communism is therefore characterised by a total refusal of any ambiguous propaganda based on the defence of pacifism and the stupid slogan of condemnation and punishment of the «aggressor».

IV. Condemnation of common social programmes and political fronts with non working classes

It is a tradition of leftwing opposition in many groups, dating back to the first tactical errors of the Third International to reject as incorrect the methods of agitation, rather badly defined as «bolshevik».

In working towards the final confrontation between the proletariat and the ruling class for the formation of a workers State, and a worldwide red dictatorship and for political terror and economic expropriation of all privileged classes, there must be a programme exclusively and fully communist. It is not possible to keep silent at certain moments and during particular situations, especially once the elimination of all feudal institutions is completed and irrevocable.

It is an illusion to think that one can conquer the masses more quickly by substituting for a class position, orders for popular agitation. Equally it is a defeated illusion to confidently suppose that the leaders of the manoeuvre are not themselves deluded by it, although this is often proclaimed, at best it is nonsense. Every time that the pivot (always said to be transitory) of a political manoeuvre has been a united front with opportunist parties, the demand for democracy, peace non-class popularism or even worse a national and patriotic solidarity has been the result. It has not been a case of setting up a clever camouflage which abandoned at the right moment would have revealed an army of soldiers of the Revolution prepared to fire on the temporary allies of yesterday after weakening the enemy front.

On the contrary it has always happened that the masses, both militants and leaders have become utterly incapable of class action, and their organisations and their rank and file, progressively disarmed and domesticated through such ideological and functional preparation, have become fitted to act as instruments and the best tools of the capitalist class.

These historical conclusions are no longer based only on doctrinal criticism but from the terrible historical experience, so dearly paid for, of thirty years of bankrupt efforts.

Therefore a revolutionary party will never again attempt to gain mass support by demands likely to be independently made by the non-proletarians and a cross section of classes.

This particular basic criteria does not apply to the immediate and specific demands which arise from the concrete antagonism of interests between wage-earners and employers in the economic sphere. It is however in opposition to the classless or interclass demands, especially political ones whether they are made by one nation or internationally. This criteria, flowing from a criticism of the politically united front of proletarians, of the slogan workers government, and of popular and democratic fronts, establishes a boundary between the movement which we support and that which calls itself the Fourth International of the Trotzkyists. Our movement is separated in the same way from all neighbouring versions which under a different title renew the slogan of revisionist degeneration «the object is nothing, the movement is all», and thus reveals itself as superficial agitation deprived of all contents.

V. Proclamation of the capitalist character of the Russian social structure

The way in which the economy, legislation and administration of the Soviet Union has developed over the last thirty years give historical proof that the workers revolution can be submerged not only in a bloody civil war as was the case in Paris in 1871 but also by progressive degeneration. This is equally illustrated by the ruthless repression, and extermination of the revolutionary bolshevik kernel which paid dearly for having allowed the party to be transformed from an iron vanguard to an amorphous mass incapable of controlling its own legislature or executive. The monetary and mercantile character of the greater part of the Russian economy, which is in no way contradicted by the State control of important services and industries, also existing in several big capitalist countries, presents us not with a workers State menaced by degeneration or in the course of it, but by a completely degenerated State in which the proletariat is no longer in power.

Power has passed to the hands of a hybrid and shapeless coalition of internal interests of the lower and upper middle classes, semi-independent

businessmen and the international capitalist classes. Such a combination is contradicted only in appearance by the existence of a police controlled and commercial iron curtain.

VI. Conclusion

Consequently a war which seems superficially (as all wars do) to arrest co-operation of the privileged classes of various countries in administrating the world will not be a revolutionary war in the leninist sense; that is a war for the protection and diffusion of proletarian power throughout the world. Such an historical possibility, which is not today on the agenda, would never include justifying the political and military co-action in any country. Above all, this is because revolutionary States, if any, could find no allies in the capitalist camps, as was obviously the case at the end of World War 1. If this possibility did arise a strong international communist party would put the strength of all sections against the power of the ruling classes in order to stop military «punitive» expeditions organised by world capitalism against the revolutionary countries. It would mobilise the workers so that they used their arms against those who armed them.

In all cases where the offensive is less developed, and the struggle of lesser potential, it would be even more important that any revolutionary movement constantly maintained a universal anti-capitalist and anti-State orientation. The communists know that to stop capitalists indulging in punitive expeditions against the proletariat they must destroy the capitalist class, and that this cannot be done unless the vanguard of the working class is everywhere kept prepared for war.

Disarmament of class consciousness is always, therefore, a betrayal, wherever it takes place and even if it only be temporary, or merely ideological, or organisational or material. The centre of the communist movement must not succumb to it, even where the discipline is firmly established that the choice of timing and form of action over all the front is left to the centre. Any party or group which accepts such disarmament especially if it calls itself a workers'party, whether communist or socialist, is the first enemy to fight and quell. It is its very existence and function that holds back the overthrow of the capitalist system foreseen by Marx and Engels and awaited with conviction by all revolutionary marxists.

The completely contrary strategy which was applied during the last war by the residue of the Communist International and which led to its shameful self-liquidation was undertaken so that the western governments should not be hindered in their war efforts but it has only had the effect of

strengthening the western imperialist power. Too late the Russian government and military circles admit that this is more of a menace than Germany, even now, when their objectives are overtly national.

While fascism and barbarism has launched a new but no less false and sinister attack, revolutionary workers forming a vanguard, must continue to draw their forces together; for a combat in which they will expect neither help nor ammunition from existing military forces. They must work in the hope and the certainty that the crisis and downfall of capitalism, expected in vain for 150 years will strike at the heart of the highly industrialised States, the hitherto unvanquished black guard of the world.

Class Struggle and the “Bosses’ Offensive” (1949)

Yesterday

Mistakes in the practice of the proletarian struggle and the ruinous deviations from it, a feature of the First World War period as well as the Second and this postwar period, are closely tied to the muddling up of the cardinal points of the Marxist method.

Marx coordinated the forecast of the revolutionary workers' assault with the economic laws of capitalist development.

Those that revised marxism wanted to find in the defects of the system, strengths that have delayed our revolution for a century. On the basis of the new conditions of transport and world communication, Marx had expected a faster development of it than that of the bourgeois revolution. They pretend therefore that the economic laws are false and that the most recent developments in the bourgeois regime have denied the following central thesis: there is always more wealth which accumulates at one pole, and more poverty at the other.

They've cited, for fifty years, figures for the increase of wage rates, for the increase in the level of variety of products consumed by industrial workers, the results of the enormous machinery of welfare reforms that have the tendency to act against the fall into absolute hunger of the labourers thrown out of the cycle of the waged activity, by misfortune, illness, old age or unemployment. On the other side, they pretend that the extension of the functions of the central machine of the state, its pretension to control abuses and excesses of capitalist speculation, the distribution to all of benefits and of social and collective services is equivalent to replacing socialist demands.

In the revisionist vision, everything tends to show the progressive "possibility" of an always better distribution of the fruits of production amongst those that participate in it, bogging down powerful socialist longings in the quagmire of a campaign of slimy philanthropy for the stupid expression of a "social justice" proper to a theoretical and literary baggage existing before Marx broke it into pieces.

From its Arcadian idyll, capitalism was transported into the horrors of the tragedy of the mad race of monopolies and imperialism, that ended, in the first place, in the war of 1914. And it is obvious that as long as it persists, lives and grows, there grows and spreads to the same extent suffering and massacres, which is reflected in a vigorous return of the workers' parties to radical positions and to the battle that aims for the destruction and not the reform of the bourgeois social system.

After the new test, theoretically even more decisive, of World War II, the years that lie ahead pose the serious problem of a lack of revolutionary reaction from the methods of proletarian action in the world.

The general law of capitalist accumulation is exposed by Marx in Volume 1 of Capital, Chapter 25. The first paragraph explains that the progress of accumulation tends to increase the level of wages. The spread of capitalist production on a large scale, as it took place in the English example between the 15th and the first half of the 18th Century, and all over the world during the second half of the 18th Century, made " a rise of wages take place" with a demand for a greater number of wage workers. It's a waste of time trying to refute Marx with the fact that the wages of the slaves of capital didn't fall! Indeed, immediately after these words, Marx writes: "The more or less favourable circumstances in which the wage-working class supports and multiplies itself, in no way alter the fundamental character of capitalist production.". (Volume 1, Chapter 25, Section 1).

And this fundamental character, which the general law is about, is not determined according to Marx only through the worker-boss relation, but through the relation between the two classes. The composition varies continually. In the bourgeois class, the accumulated wealth concentrates while dividing itself between an always smaller number of hands and especially in an ever smaller number of big enterprises. The final point of this perspective is clearly expressed: " In a given society the limit would be reached only when the entire social capital was united in the hands of either a single capitalist or a single capitalist company " (ibid.) Engels adds in a note that in 1890 this prediction for 1974 was verified by "the most recent American and English trusts". Kautsky, the key Marxist from then on, repeats twenty years after that the phenomenon had spread thorughout the capitalist world. Lenin develops in this way in 1915 the complete theory of imperialism. The Marxist school has materials to complete the classic text with these words "... or also from the capitalist nationaliser state, that has at its head Hitlers, Attlees or Stalins".

On the other side of the social trench Marx follows, in this central analysis, as in all his work, not the oscillation of commodities, but the composition of the non-propertied population and its variable distribution in the industrial reserve army. And he constructs his general law in the sense that, with the diffusion and the accumulation of capitalism, whatever becomes of the level of pay of the wage workers temporarily employed in the enterprises, the absolute and relative number of all those that remain in reserve increases and these don't even have the products of their own work.

In the fourth part of the same chapter, he manages to enunciate the law, known as the law of increasing misery: "But the greater this reserve army in proportion to the active labour-army, the greater is the mass of a consolidated surplus-population, whose misery is in inverse ratio to its torment of labour. The more extensive, finally, the lazarus-layers of the working-class, and the industrial reserve army, the greater is official pauperism". (ibid.). Misery and pauperism are, for the Philistine economist, the fact of not having to eat. According to the Catholic monk mentioned by Marx (ibid.), charity sorts it out, according to the modern conquistadors of America, it is the UNRRA. Misery for Marx is what makes, by the incessant "expansion and contraction" of the bourgeois enterprise, the Lazarus proletarian enter and rise from the tomb of everyday lack of means, and this misery grows because the number of those who find themselves trapped within the alternative: die in labour for capital or die from hunger, increases tremendously.

The essential argument of Marx's revisionists was that he had begun in this matter, to revise the Marx of 1848 while writing "Capital". The proof that they have never understood anything, is that in "Capital",

Marx cites in this passage his previous work to the "Manifesto" itself, "The Misery of Philosophy" written against the "The Philosophy of Misery" of Proudhon of 1847. He notes just before the phrase "This antagonistic character of capitalistic accumulation", "These relations only produce bourgeois wealth, that is to say the wealth of the bourgeois class, while continually annihilating the wealth of the members making up this class and while constantly producing a ceaselessly growing proletariat". (ibid., Footnote 25 - in French).

It is a central point of marxism, and even the most central, and it is more that ever up and running in the historic course of 1847-1874-1949.

The proletarian is the destitute, that is to say the propertyless, the without-reserves and not the badly paid. The sentence is formulated in a text of Marx's in 1854 which says that the more a country has proletarians the more it is rich. Marx defines the proletarian as follows: the waged employee who produces the capital and valorises it, and that capital throws on to the pavement as soon as he becomes superfluous to the requirements of "Mr. Capital". With his sharp wit, Marx laughs at an author who speaks of the "proletarian of the primitive forest". In fact, the inhabitant of this place is not a landlord, nor a proletarian, "because if he was, it would mean that the forest exploits him instead of him exploiting it".

The place of the worst barbarism is that modern forest that makes use of us, this forest of chimneys and bayonets, machines and weapons, of strange inanimate beasts that feed on human flesh.

Today

The situation of all the without-reserves, reduced to such a state because, dialectically, they are themselves a reserve, has been aggravated terribly by the experience of the war. The hereditary character of membership of economic classes implies that to be without-reserves is even more serious than to be without life. After the passage of flames of the war, after carpet bombing, members of the working class, no less than at the time of all other disasters, lose not only, most likely, their present job, but see even that minimum reserve of mobile property that constitutes the parts of a rudimentary household destroyed. Titles of possession partly survive all material destruction, because they are the social rights sanctioned by the exploitation of other people. And to write again in letters of fire the Marxist law of antagonism, there is the other observation accessible to all, that the industry of the war and destruction is the one that brings the biggest profits and the biggest concentrations of wealth in the least numerous hands. For the others who lose nothing, there is the industry of reconstruction and the forest of business and the Marshall plan and ERP whose big Jackals are the worthy supreme Administrators.

The wars have therefore thrown, unambiguously, millions and millions of men into the ranks of those who no longer have anything to lose. They have given revisionism the knock-out blow. The word of radical marxism must resound in a terrifying manner: proletarians, in the communist revolution, have nothing to lose but their chains.

The revolutionary class is the one that has nothing to defend and that cannot believe anymore in victories with which it is deceived in the inter-war periods.

The war should have given a place to the initiative and to the offensive of those that have nothing, against the class that has and that dominates everything. On the contrary, it was fraudulently presented

as a springboard for actions of the dominant class aiming to take from the proletariat non-existent benefits and out of date gains.

The praxis of the revolutionary party was exchanged for a praxis of defense, of protection and of demands for economic and political "guarantees" that supposedly have been gained for the proletarian class which were in fact precisely guarantees and gains of the bourgeoisie.

The Manifesto had engraved this central point, not only in its final sentence, the result of an analysis of the whole social complex that years of struggles and experiences had developed, but also in an another of those that Lenin defined as forgotten passages of marxism.

"The proletarians cannot become masters of the productive forces of society, except by abolishing their own previous mode of appropriation, and thereby also every other previous mode of appropriation. They have nothing of their own to secure and to fortify; their mission is to destroy all previous securities for, and insurances of, individual property." (Communist Manifesto, Part I).

For Italy, it was the end for the revolutionary movement when - on the order of still-living Zinoviev, who paid very dearly for this irremediable blunder - they threw all their forces into the defense of "guarantees" such as parliamentary freedom and respect for the Constitution.

The character of the action of communists is initiative, and not the reply to so-called provocations. The class offensive, not the defensive. The destruction of guarantees, not their preservation. In the great historic sense, it is the revolutionary class that threatens, it is it that provokes: and it is it that must prepare the Communist Party, and not the plugging, here and there, of supposed leaks in the old tub of bourgeois order, that should, on the contrary, go straight to the bottom.

The problem of the return of the workers of all countries to the line of class struggle depends on recovering the link between the critique of the capitalism and the methods of revolutionary struggle.

As long as the experience of the disastrous mistakes of the past has not been applied, the working class won't escape the hateful protection of those that claim to save it from the supposed threats and provocations that could emerge tomorrow and that they present as intolerable. For at least a century the proletariat has had in front of it and above it that which it cannot tolerate and which, as time passes, will become, according to Marx's law, more and more intolerable.

On the Dialectical Method (1950)

The purpose of this brief text is to stimulate interest in the well-known concepts of the dialectical method employed by Marx in his economic and historical works. It is intended to serve as an intermediate step towards more extensive research, which must come to terms with a theme that is rather unfortunately denominated as Marxist Philosophy; the philosophical dimension of Marxism. Such a title would contradict the clear declaration by Engels: “…modern materialism is essentially dialectic, and no longer needs any philosophy standing above the other sciences…. That which still survives, independently, of all earlier philosophy is the science of thought and its laws — formal logic and dialectics. Everything else is subsumed in the positive science of nature and history.”

In a decisive change of course it was claimed that, just as the phenomena of material nature have been addressed by means of experimental research and no longer with the evidence of revelation and speculation, thus replacing “natural philosophy” with science, the same procedure should be followed with respect to the facts of the human world: economics, sociology, and history are approached via the scientific method, eliminating any premise involving transcendent and speculative judgments.

Because scientific and experimental research would be meaningless were they to be limited to the discovery of results without their transmission and communication, the problems of exposition are just as important as those relating to research. Philosophy could be a product of individual reflection, at least formally; science is a collective activity and reality.

The method utilized for the coordination and presentation of data, with the use of language as well as other more modern symbolic mechanisms, therefore constitutes a general discipline for Marxists as well.

This method, however, diverges substantially from that of the modern bourgeois schools which, in their critical struggle against religious and scholastic culture, came to discover dialectics. In them, and above all in Hegel, the dialectic exists, it is found and discovered in the human spirit, with acts of pure thought, and its laws, with all their ramifications, preexist in the context of the external world, whether the latter is considered in its natural or its historical dimension.

For the bourgeois materialists the material natural world exists prior to the thought that investigates and discovers it; but they were unable to extend this insight to the same level of comprehension with regard to the human sciences and history that was attained by Hegel, and to understand the importance of perpetual change in the material world itself.

The study we referred to above (the one that is not entitled ‘the philosophy of Marxism’), as we have already pointed out in The Elements of Marxist Economics, could be called: Marxism and the Theory of Knowledge.

Such a study would, on the one hand, have to further develop the basic themes articulated by Engels in Anti-Dühring and by Lenin in Materialism and Empiro-Criticism, in connection with the scientific discoveries subsequent to the appearance of these two classics: on the other hand, it would have to oppose the dominant tendency in contemporary thought which, induced by class reasons to fight against the determinist dialectic in the social sciences, attempts to rely on the recent achievements in physics to reject determinism in general.

It is therefore necessary, above all, for Marxist militants to get to know the value of the dialectic. The dialectic asserts that the same laws apply to both the presentation of the natural and the historical processes. It is necessary to reject any idealist assumptions, as well as any pretense to discover in the minds of men (or in the mind of the author of the “system”) irrevocable rules that have precedence over research in any field. It means recognizing, in the causal order, the fact that the material and physical conditions for the life of man and of society continuously determine and modify the way man thinks and feels. But it also means seeing, in the action of groups of men in similar material conditions, forces that influence the social situation and change it. This is the real meaning of Marx’s determinism. No apostle or enlightened individual, but only a “class party”, can in particular historical conditions discover, not in the mind, but in social reality, the laws of a future historical formation that will destroy the present one.

In all the famous pronouncements of “the theory that seizes the masses and becomes a material force”—“the proletariat is the heir of classical German philosophy”—“to change the world instead of explaining it as the philosophers have done for centuries”—the realist and positive content of the method is essential, and it is consistent with this content to ruthlessly reject the following thesis: that it is possible by means of purely mental operations to establish laws to which both nature and history are “forced” to submit.

There is thus nothing mysterious or eschatological in the passage from necessity to revolutionary will, the transition from the cold analysis of what has happened and is happening to the call for “violent struggle”.

This old and familiar misconception is eliminated in the light of those same texts and proclamations on the course of history in the research and the studies of Marx and Engels; the clarity and logical consistency of their edifice is vindicated; and the latter finds further support, in the light of the most recent discoveries, in the natural and social worlds, which today more than ever before have escaped the clutches of metaphysical pedantry and idealist romanticism, and are more explosive—and revolutionary—than ever.

We shall therefore sketch out a few notes on all this, of an elementary nature.

The notes that follow reflect an attempt to grasp a well-known passage of Capital, the last paragraph of the last chapter, where the “negation of the negation” is cited in order to support the transition, individual property-capitalism-socialism, a passage that became the object of such a lively polemic exchange between Engels and Dühring.

1. Dialectics and Metaphysics

Dialectics means connection, or relation. Just as there is a relation between one thing and another, between one event and another in the real world, so too is there a relation between the (more or less imperfect) reflections of this real world in our thought, and between the formulations that we employ to describe it and to store and to practically enjoy the fruits of the knowledge that we have thereby acquired. As a result, our way of explaining, reasoning, deducing and deriving conclusions, can be guided and ordered by certain rules, corresponding to the appropriate interpretation of reality. Such rules comprise the logic that guides the forms of reasoning; and in a wider sense they comprise the dialectic that serves as a method for connecting them with the scientific truths we have acquired. Logic and dialectic help us to follow a road that is not false if, after starting from our way of formulating certain results of the observation of the real world, we want to be able to enunciate other properties besides those we have just deduced. If such properties are experimentally verified, one could say that our formulas and the way we employed them were sufficiently accurate.

The dialectical method is different from the scientific method. The latter, the stubborn legacy of the old fashioned way of formulating thought, derived from religious concepts based on dogmatic revelation, presents the concepts of things as immutable, absolute, eternal, founded on a few first principles, alien to one another and having a kind of independent life. For the dialectical method, not only is everything in motion, but in motion all things reciprocally influence each other, and this also goes for their concepts, or the reflections of these things in our minds, which are “connected and united” (among themselves). Metaphysics proceeds by way of antinomy, that is, by absolute terms that are opposed to

one another. These opposed terms can never mix or touch, nor can anything new emerge from their unity that is not reduced to the simple affirmation of the presence of one and the absence of the other and vice versa.

To provide an example, in the natural sciences stasis is counterposed to motion: there can be no conciliation between these two things; by virtue of the formal principle of contradiction, that which is at rest does not move, and that which is moving is not at rest. But the Eleatic School under Zeno had already exposed the fraud of such a distinction that seems so certain: the arrow in motion, while it passes one point of its trajectory, remains at that point, and therefore is not moving. The ship is moving with respect to the shore, while for the passenger walking on the ship this is not the case: the latter is motionless with respect to the shore, and is therefore not moving. These so-called sophisms were demonstrations of the possibilities of reconciling opposites: stasis and motion; only by breaking down motion into many elements composed of points of time and space would it be possible for infinitesimal mathematics and modern physics not blinded by the metaphysical method to resolve the problems of non-rectilinear and non-uniform motion. Today motion and stasis are considered to be relative terms, and neither absolute movement nor absolute stasis has any meaning.

Another example: for the astronomy of metaphysics all the heavenly bodies beyond the sphere of fire are immutable and incorruptible, and their dimensions, form and movement will remain eternally unchanging. Terrestrial bodies are on the other hand changeable and corruptible in a thousand ways. There is no reconciliation between the two opposed parts of the universe. Today we know instead that the same developmental laws rule for the stars and for the earth, which is a “piece of heaven” without thereby earning any mysterious titles of nobility. For Dante the influence of the incorruptible planets on the vicissitudes of corruptible humanity was a major topic of inquiry, while for modern science the mutual influences between the earth and the other parts of the universe are matters for everyday observation, although it does not believe that the peregrinations of the stars decide our fate.

Finally, in the human and social realm metaphysics introduces two absolute supreme principles: Good and Evil, acquired in a more or less mysterious way in everyone’s consciousness, or personified in unearthly beings. We have previously referred to the relativism of moral concepts, to their variability and to how they change depending on time, place and class situation.

The scientific method with its absolute identities and contradictions generates crude errors, since it is traditionally rooted in our way of thinking, even if we are not aware of it. The concept of the antipodes long seemed absurd, they laughed in Columbus’s face when he sought the Orient by going west, always in the name of the formal contradiction in terms. It is thus a metaphysical error to seek to resolve human problems in one of either two ways, as is done for example by those who counterpose violence and the State: either one declares oneself in favor of the State and forviolence; or against the State and against violence. Dialectically, however, these problems are situated in the context of their historical moment and are simultaneously resolved with opposed formulas, by upholding the use of violence in order to abolish violence, and by using the State to abolish the State. The errors of the authoritarians and the errors of the libertarians are in principle equally metaphysical.

2. The Idealist Dialectic and the Scientific Dialectic

The introduction of the dialectic can nonetheless be understood in two very different ways. First enunciated by the most brilliant cosmological schools of Greek philosophy as a method to acquire

knowledge of nature that did not depend on aprioristic prejudices, this form of dialectic succumbed in the later schools to the acceptance of the authority of the Aristotelian corpus, not because Aristotle did not respect the value of the dialectic as a way to interpret reality, but because the scientific decline and mysticism that prevailed in the later periods fossilized and immobilized the Aristotelian discoveries.

It is often said that the dialectic re-emerged in the schools of modern critical philosophy and was brought to fruition in Hegel, from whom Marx appropriated it. But the dialectic of these philosophical schools, although they successfully achieved the liberation of the use of reason from the formal and verbal obstacles of scholasticism, was based on the assumption that the laws of the construction of thought serve as the foundations for the real construction of the world. Human science first looked in the minds of men for the rules with which the revealed truths must be connected to each other; it then went on to categorize, on the basis of such a schema, all the ideas of the external world. Logic and dialectic could then establish and carry out their formulations on the basis of a purely mental labor: all science depended on a methodology of discovery within the brain of man, or, strictly speaking, within the brain of the individual author of the system. This pretension is justified by the sole argument that, in science, the factor of the external elements to be studied is inevitably connected with the factor of human personality, from which all science is therefore conditioned. In conclusion, the dialectical method with an idealist premise also has a metaphysical character, even if it claims to call its purely mental constructions by the name of science rather than revelation, or critique rather than absolute apriorisms, or the immanence of the possibilities of human thought rather than its transcendence, and this also applies to the evidence of religions and spiritualist systems.

For us the dialectic is valid as long as the application of its rules is not contradicted by experimental controls. Its use is certainly necessary, since we must also address the discoveries of every science with the instrument of our language and our reasoning (supplemented by mathematical calculations; for us, however, the mathematical sciences are not based on pure properties of thought, but on the real properties of things). That is, the dialectic is a tool of explanation and elaboration, not only of polemic and didactics; it serves the purpose of defending against errors generated by the traditionalist methods of reasoning and in order to achieve the result, which is quite difficult, of not inadvertently introducing into the study of questions arbitrary data based on preconceptions. But the dialectic is itself a reflection of reality and cannot claim to be itself the source of reality or to force reality to obey its strictures. Pure dialectics will reveal nothing to us by itself, but it does possess an enormous advantage with respect to the metaphysical method because it is dynamic, while the latter is static; it films reality rather than photographing it. I do not know much about an automobile if I only know that its speed at any one time is 60 km/hour, if I do not know whether it is accelerating or slowing down. I would know even less if I were to know only the place it occupied in a snapshot. But if I also know that it is moving at 60 km/hour; if it is accelerating from 0 to 120 after a few seconds it will go a very long distance; if it is braking it will stop after going a few more meters. The metaphysics that gives me the where and the when of the phenomenon knows nothing compared to the dialectic that has provided me with the dependence between the where (space) and the when (time), which is called velocity; in other words, the dependence between velocity and time (acceleration). This logical process corresponds in functional mathematical theory to successive derivations.

If I am familiar with the dialectic I avoid two foolish statements: the automobile is moving, therefore it will go very far within a short time; the automobile is moving slowly, therefore within a short time it will still be nearby. I would, however, be just as naive as the metaphysician if, as result of my taste

for engaging in the dialectic, I were to conclude: the automobile is moving, therefore within a short time it will be nearby and vice versa. The dialectic is not the sport of paradox; it asserts that a contradiction may contain a truth, not that every contradiction contains a truth. In the case of the automobile the dialectic warns me that I cannot conclude on the basis of simple ratiocination, if I lack other data: the dialectic is not an a priori replacement for data, but compels us, when they are lacking, to deduce them from new experimental observations: in our case, a second measurement of velocity carried out at some subsequent moment. In the field of history one is reasoning like a metaphysician if one were to say: the Terror, given the means it employed, was a reactionary movement; it would, however, be a terrible dialectician who would judge the Thiers government, for example, as revolutionary by virtue of its violent repression of the communards.

3. The Negation of the Negation

We shall now return to the negation of the negation. In the metaphysical method there are two opposite but fixed principles, and by negating one you get the other; if you then negate the second principle, you return to the first principle: two negations equal an affirmation. For example: Spirits are good or evil. Tom denies that Lucifer is an evil spirit. I deny what Tom says: I therefore affirm that Lucifer is an evil spirit. This obscures the vicissitudes of the myth of Jehovah, the “vile demiurge”, who cast Satan into Hell and usurped the throne of heaven, a primitive reflection in men’s thought of an overthrow of powers and values.

From the dialectical point of view, during the course of negations and affirmations, the terms have changed their nature and their position, and by negating the primary negation one no longer returns to the primary affirmation, pure and simple, but arrives at a new result. For example: in Aristotelian physics every object tends to find its place, and therefore heavy objects fall downward; rising air and smoke are not heavy. Having gotten this false idea into their heads, the Peripatetics said an infinite number of foolish things in an attempt to explain the motion of the pendulum, which goes up and down in each oscillation. When the question was instead posed dialectically it was much more accurately explained. (But to do this, thinking was not enough; it was necessary to experiment, as Galileo did.)

Heavy objects move downward. Objects that do not move downward are not heavy: then is the weight of the pendulum heavy or is it not? This was the difficulty of the Aristotelians, for this question violated the sacred “principle of identity and contradiction”. If instead one were to say that heavy objects accelerate downward, these objects would also be able to go in an upward direction, subject to a subsequent deceleration. The pendulum has a known velocity, which increases on its downward course and diminishes while it is in its upward course. First we negated the direction of motion, and then we negated the idea of acceleration. We have however taken a step forward not only by acquiring the right to assert that the pendulum is always a heavy object, but above all by discovering that heaviness is not the cause of motion, but of acceleration, a discovery that forms the basis of modern science thanks to the work of Galileo. The latter, however, did not reach this conclusion by practicing the dialectic, but by measuring the motion of pendulums: he made use of the dialectic only for the purpose of breaking the formal and verbal connection with the ancient dicta.

Having arrived at a negation of a negation it is not necessary to think we have returned to the starting point, but that we must consider, thanks to the dialectic, that we have reached a new point: where and precisely what this point is, is not known by the dialectic, but can only be established by positive and experimental research.

4. Categories and “A Priori Forms”

Before we illustrate the negation of the negation in the social example that we have found in Marx’s text, we should point out one more thing about the arbitrary nature shared by metaphysics and a dialectic based on idealist assumptions.

Starting from the assumption that we know the external world only as a result of psychic processes, whether this refers to physicalism, or the doctrine that bases knowledge in the senses, or to pure idealism that bases knowledge in thought (which goes as far as to conceive, in certain systems, of the external world as a projection of subjective thought), all traditional philosophies maintain that the system of things that can be known, or concrete science, is premised on certain rules of thinking, which are located purely in our ego. These first principles, which appeared to be indisputable precisely because they were indemonstrable, were called categories. In the Aristotelian system (the difference between this meaning of the term and the current use of the term class or category is strikingly clear) there were ten categories: substance, quantity, quality, relation, space, time, position, property, action and passion; phrased in terms of the interrogatories: What is it made of? How big is it? What is its quality? In what relation does it stand with others of its kind? Where is it? When is it there? What is its position? What are its attributes? What is it doing? What is it suffering? (or, what action is being inflicted on it?). For example: a man is, in terms of substance, alive and thinking; he is 1.80 meters tall; he is of the white race; he weighs more than another man; he is in Athens; he lives in the year 516; he is seated; he is wearing armor; he is speaking; he is being observed by his assistants.

The Aristotelian categories were later modified and reduced in number. Kant depicted them somewhat differently, always defining them as “a priori forms” of thinking with which human intelligence can and must elaborate all data of experience. According to Kant, experience is impossible if it is not referred to the two “a priori institutions”, that is, to the idea of space and the idea of time, which are preexistent in our minds in every datum of experience. But subsequent discoveries of modern science have successively destroyed these various “a priori” systems, and have done so irremediably, although modern science is far from having provided a satisfactory answer for every problem, the lack of which was compensated for by fabricating “a priori forms”. Hegel was already capable of saying that quality can be reduced to quantity (a man is white rather than black because the analysis of his pigmentation shows one amount of pigment instead of another). Kant would have been quite impressed by how the physicists (Einstein’s theory of relativity) treat space and time as a single magnitude, or how, of a common accord, they refer the verdict concerning the marriage or the divorce of the two irreducible categories to some positive experiments of physics and astronomy, leaving it to Mrs. Intelligence to become accustomed to the final verdict.

Marx rejected the cold empiricism of those thinkers who only claim to be collecting the data of the external world, in the form of so many separate and isolated discoveries, without attempting to systematize them, and without knowing how to ask whether what they have gathered together are reliable results of subjective reality or only dubious impressions that are inscribed on the fabric of our senses. Such a method, to which bourgeois thought retreated after its first audacious systematizations, as was the case also in the economic field, adapts to the conservatism of whoever is in power and defends their privileges against any overly corrosive analyses. Marx nevertheless attributed great social importance to it, as he was not completely satisfied with the materialism of the French Encyclopedists, who, despite their revolutionary vigor and their unrelenting attacks on religious prejudices, did not

break free of metaphysics and were incapable of generating any other socialism than that of the utopians, which was defective in the historical sense. Furthermore, Marx, despite having drawn upon the results of the German systems of critical philosophy, broke, as he and Engels mentioned on many occasions, with their idealist content that hardly touched upon social problems, a break which dates to around 1842. Pure German criticism shared with the materialism on the other side of the Rhine the effort to dispel religious fantasies and to liquidate all dogmatic and transcendent elements by defining the rational possibilities of man; it also possessed,besides these qualities, the goal of overthrowing metaphysics as well as a general perspective concerning the movement of things and facts; but it possessed less of the power to historically generate a revolution against the old feudal world of Germany, compared to the formidable role played by the political followers of Voltaire, Rousseau and D'Alembert. On the east bank of the Rhine the bourgeois class was incapable of making the transition from theory to action; Hegel's system was used for nothing but pre-bourgeois and reactionary purposes; Marxism cut this thread, advocating the replacement of the bourgeoisie by a new class, because the bourgeoisie had exhausted its doctrinal possibilities and completely lacked any revolutionary character.

Having thus reestablished the authentic position of Marxism with respect to the schools that preceded it, we shall now demonstrate that its reservations with regard to concrete empiricism (above all that of the English) and metaphysical materialism (above all that of the French) by no means signifies an endorsement of the abstract criticism of the Germans, and of their confused investigations of a priori forms.

With regard to this issue, we need only recall Marx's critique of Proudhon, in The Poverty of Philosophy (1847), regarding Proudhon's hybrid Hegelianism-Kantianism. The categories of thought and of the mind are casually subjected to ridicule, together with Proudhon's pretension of being a (German) philosopher. Marx derisively makes fun of the empiricism and the critical philosophy mentioned above in this manner: "If the English have transformed men into hats, the Germans have transformed hats into ideas!"

What follows, in the "First Observation", can be described as both a splendid exposition and a radical critique of Hegel's dialectical method, which Marx reduces to a useless "applied metaphysics". The empiricist leaves the individual and the fact isolated in their sterility. The critical philosopher, by way of abstraction, plummets from the simple datum to all the elements and their limits, and in the end is reduced to the "pure logical category". "If all that exists, all that lives on land, and under water, can be reduced by abstraction to a logical category – if the whole real world can be drowned thus in a world of abstractions, in the world of logical categories – who need be astonished at it?"

We cannot reproduce the entire passage and provide a commentary here. It is enough to point out that, in dialectical materialism, "logical categories" and "a priori forms" get the same treatment that the entities of the supernatural world, the saints and the spirits of the deceased received at the hands of the thinkers of the revolutionary bourgeoisie.

5. The Negation of Capitalist Property

In the passage we quoted at the end of our study of Marxist Economics, Dühring wanted to catch the author in a contradiction, since the new form that will replace capitalist property is first called "individual property" and then "social property".

Engels correctly reestablished the meaning of these expressions by distinguishing between property in terms of products, or consumer goods, and property in terms of the instruments of production.

The application of the dialectical schema of the negation of the negation proceeds clearly in Marx. Before recapitulating it we would first like to add a little more clarification regarding the meaning of the terms employed. For us Marxists, terminology has great importance, whether because we are always passing from one language to another, or because due to the requirements of polemic or propaganda we must often apply the language belonging to diverse theories.

We must therefore pause to examine three terminological distinctions: instrumental goods versus consumer goods; the ownership versus the use of the former and of the latter; and the distinctions that obtain between private property, individual property and social property.

The first distinction applies even to the economy of common ownership. The products of human activity are either used for direct consumption, like food or clothing; or else they are employed in other constructive operations, like a shovel or a machine. The distinction is not always easy to make, and there are mixed cases; therefore everyone understands when we distinguish between products that are consumption goods and those which are instrumental goods or tools.

It would be best not to use the term property to define the ownership of the consumption good at the moment of its use, even if we were to qualify the term with reference to its aims: personal, individual. This ownership of the consumption good encompasses the relation by which a person satisfies his hunger with food in hand and no one keeps him from putting it in his mouth. Not even in the juridical sciences is such a relation to a good defined as property, but as possession. Possession can be palpable and material, or it may be a right defined by law, but it always implies “having something in one’s grasp”, the physical disposal of something. Property is the relation by which one has disposal of a thing, without that thing having to be in one’s physical possession, by means of legal title: which derives from a piece of paper and a social norm.

Property stands in the same relation to possession as action at a distance, in physics, stands in relation to action by contact, to direct pressure. Just as in the term ‘possession’ a juridical value also supervenes, we can apply a similar test, by the use of this practical concept of being able to eat a piece of bread or to put on our shoes, to the use of the term “disposal” (since the term “disposition” has the connotation of training and of order, which belongs to another field).

We shall reserve the use of the term property for the instrumental goods: tools, machines, workshops, factories, land, etc. Applying the term property to the power of disposal, for example, of one’s own clothing or pencil, the Manifesto says that the communists want to abolish bourgeois property, not personal property.

The third distinction: private, individual, social. The right to something, private power over something, over a consumable or instrumental good (and previously, also over people and the activities of other men) means a right that does not extend to everybody, but is reserved to only some people. The term private literally has a negative denotation; not the faculty of enjoying a thing, but that of depriving others—with the support of the law—of its enjoyment. The regime of private property is the one in which some are owners, and many more are not owners. In the language of the time of Dante

outhouses were known as “uman privati”, places where it is normal that only one occupant should reign, a good symbol of the fragrant ideologies of the bourgeoisie.

Individual property does not have the same meaning as private property. The person, or the individual, is conceived by shrewd thinkers as a bourgeois person, a bourgeois individual (The Manifesto). But we have a regime of individual property only when every individual can obtain ownership over anything, which in the era of the bourgeoisie was no longer the case, despite the hypocrisy of the laws, neither with regard to instruments of production, nor with regard to consumer goods.

Social property, or socialism, is the system in which there is no longer a fixed relation between any good and a particular person or individual. In this case it would be preferable not to speak ofproperty at all, since the adjectival form of the word refers to a single subject rather than to the generality [in the Romance languages—translator’s note]. Thus, we hear people speak all the time about national property and state property, and we Marxists speak, in order to make ourselves understood, about social, collective and common property.

We shall now continue with a discussion of the three social and historical stages presented in the form of a summary by Marx at the end of the first volume of Capital.

Let us set aside the preceding eras of slavery and full-blown territorial feudalism in which, instead of a relation of property between men and things, the personal relation between man and man prevailed.

First stage. A society based on small-scale production, artisanal for manufactured goods, peasant farming for agriculture. With regard to each worker, whether engaged in manufacturing or farming: what relation does this worker have vis-à-vis the tools he uses in the pursuit of his trade? The peasant is the owner of his small plot of land; the artisan is the owner of his simple tools. As a result, the worker has both disposal of and ownership of his instruments of production. What relation does each worker have with respect to the products of his fields or his workshop? He disposes of them freely; if they are consumption goods he uses them as he wishes. Then we may say correctly: individual ownership of instruments of production, personal disposal over the products.

Second stage. Capitalism. Both of the above forms are negated. The worker no longer has free disposal of the land, the workshop or the instruments of production. The instruments of production were transformed into the private property of a handful of industrialists, the bourgeoisie. The worker no longer has any right to the products, even if the latter take the form of consumption goods, which have likewise been transformed into the property of the landlord or factory owner.

Third stage. Negation of the negation. “The expropriators are expropriated”; but not in the sense that the capitalists are expropriated of the workshops and fields in order to re-establish a generalized individual property in the instruments of production. This is not socialism; it corresponds to the formula of “every man an owner” of the petit bourgeoisie, and today of the PCI [Communist Party of Italy--translator's note]. The instruments of production are transformed into social property, because the “acquisitions of the capitalist era are preserved” which have made production into a “social” reality. They will cease to be private property. But what about consumption goods? These are placed by society at the general disposal of all the consumers, in other words, of any individual.

In the first stage, then, each individual was an owner of small quantities of instruments of production, and each individual had at his disposal consumer goods and products. In the third stage each individual

is prohibited from private ownership of the instruments of production, which are by their nature social, but he is assured of the opportunity—which capitalism had deprived him of—of always having free disposal of consumption goods. This means that, with the social ownership of machines, factories, etc., there has been a renascence—but in a completely different form—of the "individual property" of each worker with respect to a portion of the consumer goods that once existed in the pre-capitalist artisanal-peasant society, a relation that is no longer private, but social.1

The two negations have not led us again to the starting point of the economy, to scattered, atomized production, but far beyond it and to a higher level, to the communist management of all goods, in which, at last, the terms property, goods, and personal share no longer have any meaning.

6. The Theory of Knowledge

For the purposes of our methodological investigation Engels' refutation of Dühring is of signal importance, now that we have clarified Marx's sketch of historical transcendence.

"It is only at this point, after Marx has completed his proof on the basis of historical and economic facts," that Marx characterizes "the process as the negation of the negation … after he has proved from history that in fact the process has partially already occurred, and partially must occur in the future, he in addition characterises it as a process which develops in accordance with a definite dialectical law." He does not claim "that the negation of the negation has to serve here as the midwife to deliver the future from the womb of the past" nor does he want "anyone to be convinced of the necessity of the common ownership of land and capital (which is itself a Dühringian contradiction in corporeal form) on the basis of credence in the negation of the negation".

To conclude, the dialectic is of use to us (as Marx says in the Preface to Capital), whether it is a question of explaining how analytical research is consolidated, or destroying the obstacles posed by traditional theoretical forms. Marx's dialectic is the most powerful destructive force. The philosophers toiled to construct systems. The dialectical revolutionaries destroy by force the consolidated forms that block the road to the future. The dialectic is the weapon for destroying barriers that, once shattered, also break the spell of the eternal immutability of the forms of thought, which are revealed to be constantly changing, and are expressed in the revolutionary transformation of social forms.

Our cognitive methodology must lead us to the opposite pole of a statement that we shall quote from no less a decisive source than Benedetto Croce, in a passionate attack on works popularizing dialectical materialism published by Stalinist sources. "The dialectic has a place only in the relation between mental categories and is meant to resolve the ancient and acrimonious, and seemingly almost desperate dualism between value and non-value, true and false, good and evil, positive and negative, being and non-being."

For us—to the contrary—the dialectic has a place in those representations that are subject to continuous change, with which human thought reflects the processes of nature and narrates its history. These representations are a group of relations, or transformations, which are accessible to a method that is by no means any different from the one that is valid for the understanding how two domains of the material world influence one another.

When "modern" conservative thought tried to combine the powers of empiricism and criticism in a common denial of the possibility of knowledge of the laws of both nature and human society, it was

Lenin who responded by calling attention to this counterrevolutionary deception and quickly provided the remedy.

The current order of power in Russia, linked to the conformism of established positions, lacks any possibility of carrying on this struggle, in the scientific world as well: the smug defense and offense offered by the Marxist school in the field of theory is threatened with destruction by the desperate counterattack of the world capitalist intelligentsia and its vast propaganda apparatus, if new foundations are not constructed for radical party work, free to direct the flame of the dialectic to the seams that hold together the artificial structures of privilege and the metaphysical faith in infallible novelties.

The doctrine of the communist revolution requires neither priest nor Mecca.

The Filling and Bursting of Bourgeois Civilization (1951)

The floods in the Po valley and the confused debate over their causes and over the responsibility of organisations and public bodies that did not know how to carry out protection work, with all the disgusting mutual accusations of “speculating” on misfortune, puts into question one of the most widespread false opinions shared by all the contenders. This is that contemporary capitalist society, with the corresponding development of science, technology and production, places the human species in the best possible position to struggle against the difficulties of the natural environment. Hence the contingent fault of the government or of Party A and B, which lies in not knowing how to exploit this magnificent potential at hand, and in the erroneous and culpable administrative and political measures. Hence the no less classic: “Move over, I want to take over now!”

If it is true that the industrial and economic potential of the capitalist world is increasing and not diminishing, it is equally true that the more virulent it is, the worse the living conditions of the human mass are in regards to natural and historical cataclysms. Unlike the periodic spates of rivers, the spate of frenetic capital accumulation knows no perspective of a “decrease”, of a falling curve from the hydrometer readings, but only the catastrophe of the river banks bursting.

Yesterday

The relationship between the thousands of years long development of man’s production technique and relations with the natural environment is very close. Primitive man, like an animal, gathered and ate wild fruit using a simple grasping action and, like an animal, fled headlong from the disruption of natural phenomena that threatened his life. As the artificial production of products for consumption and the accumulation of reserves of these products and of tools forced him to settle, so too they forced him to defend himself from such threats as the weather[1] and natural devastation. Such a defence, not unlike that against other groups competing for the best site, or predators on the accumulated reserve, could only be collective. From these collective needs arose, as we have seen many times, class division and exploitation by rulers.

In Marx “the capitalist mode of production ... is based on the dominion of man over nature.”[2] It also presupposes the war of nature on man. A too generous and lavish nature would not be the favourable environment which capitalism could spring from.

“It is not the mere fertility of the soil, but the differentiation of the soil, the variety of its natural products, the changes of the seasons, which form the physical basis for the social division of labour... It is the necessity of bringing a natural force under the control of society, of economising, of appropriating or subduing it on a large scale by the work of man’s hand, that first plays the decisive part in the history of industry. Examples are, the irrigation works in Egypt, Lombardy, Holland, or in India and Persia where irrigation by means of artificial canals, not only supplies the soil with the water indispensable to it, but also carries down to it, in the shape of sediment from the hills, mineral fertilisers. The secret of the flourishing state of industry in Spain and Sicily under the dominion of the Arabs lay in their irrigation works... One of the material bases of the power of the state over the small disconnected producing organisms in India, was the regulation of the water supply. The Mahometan rulers of India understood this better than their English successors. It is enough to recall to mind the famine of 1866, which cost the lives of more than a million Hindus in the district of Orissa, in the Bengal presidency.”

It is well known that similar famines have raged recently, despite the tremendous potential of world capitalism... The struggle against nature generates industry; man lives on two sacred Dantesque elements, nature and art (the third is God). Capitalism generates the exploitation of man from industry. The bourgeoisie will not be revolted by violence against God, nature and art.

Very modern high capitalism shows serious cases of retreat in the struggle to defend against attacks by the forces of nature on the human species, and the reasons are strictly social and class ones, so much so as to invert the advantage derived from the progress of theoretical and applied science. Let us wait then to blame it for having increased the rainfall intensity with atomic explosions or, tomorrow, with having “messed about” with nature so much as to risk making the earth and its atmosphere uninhabitable and even to make the skeleton explode by priming “chain reactions” of all the elements in nuclear complexes. For now let us establish a social and economic law for the parallel between its greater efficiency in exploiting labour and the life of men and the ever decreasing efficiency in the rational defence against the natural environment, in the widest sense.

The earth’s crust is modified by geological processes which man increasingly learns to distinguish and decreasingly attributes to mysterious wishes of angry forces and which, within certain limits, he learns to correct and control. When, in pre-history, the Po valley was a huge lagoon through which the Adriatic Sea lapped the foothills of the Alps, the first inhabitants, who evidently were not lucky enough to beg “amphibious craft” from self-interested American charity, occupied pile-dwellings rising above the water. It was a “terramara” civilisation of which Venice is a distant development; it was too simple for a “reconstruction business” to be based on it with contracts to supply timber! The pile-dwellings did not collapse during floods: modern brick houses do. However, what means exist today to build raised houses, roads and railways! They would suffice to protect the population. Utopia! The sums do not tally, while the account of 200 billion lire for repair works and reconstruction is quite in order.

In the past, the building of the first embankments dates back to the Etruscans. The natural process of mountainside degradation and the transport of material suspended in river waters from the mountains at flood time has formed a huge, fertile lowland region over the centuries. This convenience assured the settlement of agricultural peoples. The subsequent populations and regimes continued to raise high

embankments along the banks of the large rivers, which were insufficient to stop huge cataclysms when the river shifted its course. The shift of the Po near Guastalla onto a new course, which was until then the lowest reach of the Oglio, dates from the fifth century.

In the thirteenth century, the great river abandoned the southern distributory of the huge delta, the present-day secondary "Po di Volano", in the reach near its mouth and adopted the present course from Pontelagoscuro to the sea. The frightening "shifts" have always been from south to north. A general law assumes a tendency for all the world's rivers to migrate northwards for geophysical reasons. However, in the case of the Po, this law is evident due to the great difference between its north and south bank tributaries. The former rise in the Alps and have clear water either because they pass through large lakes, or because they do not have a maximum regime during periods of heavy rainfall, but instead during the springtime melting of glaciers. Therefore these rivers do not carry mud and sand deposits into the course of the main river when in flood. However, from the south, from the Apennines, the short and torrential right bank tributaries with their huge variations between maximum and minimum flow pour down the debris of mountain erosion, filling in the right bank section of the Po's channel, which every so often escapes this damming by turning North.

Chauvinism is not required to know that the science of river hydraulics arose from this problem: for centuries the problem has been posed of the utility and functioning of embankments, or the connection with the problem of the distribution of irrigation water via canals, and finally of river navigation. After the Roman works, information is available about the first canals in the Po valley in 1037. After the victory of Legnano,[3] the Milanese built the Naviglio Grande to Abbiategrasso, which was made navigable in 1271. With this arose capitalist agriculture, the first in Europe, and the great hydraulic works were undertaken by state bodies: from the canals and basins of Leonardo, who also provided norms for the river regimes, to the Cavour Canal, begun in 1860.

The construction of embankments to contain rivers raised a major problem: that of raised rivers. While the Alpine rivers, such as the Ticino and Adda, run largely between natural banks, the right bank tributaries and the Po below Cremona are raised: this means that not only the water level, but also the bed of the water course is higher than the surrounding countryside. The embankments save it from being flooded and a collector canal runs parallel to the river to collect local water which it carries to the river downstream: these are the great reclamation works, and as they approach the sea, the transfer of water to the river is performed mechanically so that the districts which are below not only the river, but also the sea, are kept dry. The entire Polesine is a huge low-lying area. Adria is 4 meters above sea level. Rovigo is 5 meters: there the Po's bed is higher and the Adige's even more so. Clearly a breach in the embankments would turn the whole of Rovigo province into a huge lake.

There is a major debate among hydrologists as to whether the rise in the beds of such rivers is progressive. French hydrologists said yes a century ago while the leaders of Italian hydrology opposed them, and the matter is still discussed in congresses today. Nevertheless, one cannot deny that the river load and its deposition extends the mouth out to sea, even if this does not collect in the final reaches of the river's bed. Because of this incessant process, the gradient of the bed and the water surface can only decrease and, according to hydrological law, the speed of the current equally falls: hence the need to raise embankments seemed historically endless and unavoidable. The disastrous nature of the breaches occurring is also progressive.

The availability of modern mechanical means has contributed in this field to extending the method of exploiting large areas of the most fertile land, keeping them dry by continuous pumping. The risk to the tenants and workers worries a profit economy, but the damage caused when the works fall can be balanced against the fertilisation by the invading mud on the one hand and the economic factor on the other: carrying out works is always good capitalist business.

The classic reclamations by alluviation were widespread in the modern period along the entire Italian lowland coast: river water was alternately allowed to flood into and deposit in the great basins, the level of which rose slowly with the double advantage of not letting useful and fertile soil wash out to sea and of providing ever greater security from flooding and future danger. This rational system was found to be too slow for the requirements of capital investment. Another tendentious argument was and is drawn from the continuously rising population density which cannot permit a loss of fertile land. So almost all the old polders, carefully surveyed with precision by the hydrologists of the Austrian, Tuscan and Bourbon regimes, have been destroyed.

Clearly, if today one had to choose from the various radical solutions to these problems, not only would one clash with the incapacity of capitalism to look to the distant future as regards the handing down of installations from generation to generation, but one would also clash with the strong local interests of farmers and industrialists who have an interest in not having various zones eroded and who play on the attachment of poor people to their inhospitable homes. Since a while back, new solutions have been proposed to create “lateral channels” for the Po.

This type of study is always unpopular because the results forecast are uncertain, something which creates great annoyance in business circles. One solution, on the right, consists in a cut from Pontelagoscuro to the valleys or lagoons of Comacchio: the artificial canal would cut about one third off the length of the present river course to the sea. Such a solution clashes with the big investments in Ferrarese reclamation works and with fish farming, so it would be resisted. But the solutions with more foresight and which perhaps are more in conformity with natural processes call for the reuniting of the Po and Adige courses between which lies the lower Polesana, creating in its Thalweg,[4] presently criss-crossed by small water courses, a huge collector and, perhaps, in the final count, a side canal for one if not both rivers would encounter no less resistance.

In the bourgeois period, such a study does not lead to positive research, but to two “policies”, right and left, as regards the Po, with the related conflict between speculating groups.

Today

There is discussion as to whether the present catastrophe, in which some have already seen the natural formation of a large stable swamp and a shifting of the Po’s course with the total destruction of the north bank, is due to exceptional rainfall and the complicity of natural causes, or to the inexperience and the error of men and directors. Indisputably the succession of wars and crises have caused decades of neglect in the difficult service of technical inspection and embankment maintenance, dredging of river beds where necessary and the systematisation of high mountain basins, the deforestation of which caused greater and more rapid rain water run-off during high water and greater flows of suspended material to the river courses on the plain.

With the bad trend that now prevails in science and official technical organisation, it is even difficult to collect and to compare udometric data (amount of rainfall on various dates in the basin which feeds the river) and hydrometric data (water levels at the hydrometers, maximum flow) with those of the past. Offices and scientists with self-respect now offer replies in line with political requirements and reasons of state, that is, according to the effect that they will have, the figures having been massaged in every possible way. One can also well believe the current of criticism which states that not even the observation stations destroyed during the war have been replaced, and it is also credible that our present technical bureaucracy works with old maps, passed along copy by copy, dragging along slowly over the drawing tables of the lazy technical personnel, and that it does not update the surveys with new altitude surveys, which are difficult, and with operations of geodetic precision, which allow one to collate the various data of the phenomenon. It lives in masses of maps which are in line with approvals given in circulars in terms of format and colour, but do not give a tinker's cuss for physical reality. The figures handed out here and there for the popular press don't add up, but it is too easy to blame the journalists who know all about nothing.

It therefore remains to be seen — and those movements with wide support and plentiful means could well try to do this — if the intensity of rainfall really was the highest in a century of observation: it is correct to doubt it. The same goes for the hydrometer readings for the maximum levels and flows: it is easy to say that the historical maximum was recorded at Pontelagoscuro at 11,000 cubic meters per second but now has presently risen to 13,000. In 1917 and 1926 there were very large maxima of much lesser consequence, always in spring, up to 13,800 cubic meters per second passing through Piacenza.

Let us say without dwelling further on the matter that the rainfall was certainly not of unheard of proportions and the chief responsibility for the disaster lies in the long lack of necessary services and in the omission of maintenance and improvement works, which is related to the smaller public budget for such works and the way money was spent compared to the past.

It is a matter of providing a cause for these facts, which must be a social and historical cause, and it is puerile to bring up again the "bad management" of those who were or are at the helm of the Italian ship of state. Besides, this is not a uniquely Italian phenomenon, but occurs in all countries. Administrative chaos, thieving, the penetration of speculation into public decision making are now denounced by the conservatives themselves, and in America they have been related to public disasters: even there ultra-modern cities in Kansas and Missouri have fallen victim to badly regulated rivers.[5]

Two mistaken ideas underlie a critique like the one we have just mentioned. One is that the struggle to return from the fascist dictatorship within the bourgeoisie (the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie has existed since it won freedom) to the external multiparty democracy had as its aim a better administration, whereas it is clear that it had to lead, and has led, to a worse administration. This is the fault common to ALL shades in the great block of the CLN.[6]

The other incorrect idea is the belief that the totalitarian form of the capitalist regime (of which Italian fascism was the first great example) gave overwhelming power to the state bureaucracy against the autonomous initiatives of enterprises and private speculation. On the contrary, this form is vital for capitalism's survival and that of the bourgeois class at a certain stage. It concentrates counter-revolutionary powers in the state machine, but renders the administrative machine weaker and more open to manipulation by speculative interests.

Here we need a historical sketch of the Italian administrative machine from the epoch of the achievement of national unity. Initially it worked well and had strong powers. All the favourable conditions contributed to this. The young bourgeoisie had to pass through the heroic phase and to make sacrifices in order to seize power and to affirm its interests. Therefore the individual elements were still prepared to offer their all and were less attracted by immediate hidden gain. Further resolute enthusiasm was needed to liquidate the resistance of the old powers and of the rusted state machines of the various parts into which the country was originally divided politically.

There was no notable division into parties as the sole party of the liberal revolution governed (virgin in 1860, old slag in 1943) with the clear acquiescence of the few republicans and with the workers' movement yet to appear. The swindles began with the bi- party transformismo of 1876.[7] The skeleton of the bureaucracy coming from Piedmont following close on the heels of the military forces of occupation enjoyed a real dictatorship over the local elements and the aristocratic, and clerical, opponents were repressed by emergency powers... as they were guilty of anti- liberalism. Under such conditions, a young, conscientious and honest administrative machine was constructed.

The bureaucracy suffered a twin attack on its uncorrupt dominance with the capitalist system's development in depth and extension. The great entrepreneurs of public works and of productive sectors aided by the state emerged in the economic field, while in the political field, the spread of corruption to parliamentary business became such that every day "the people's representatives" intervened to impinge on the decisions of the executive system and general administration, which previously had functioned with scrupulous impersonality and impartiality.

Public works, which previously had been put in place by the most competent, who were naively pleased to have a regular salary as government functionaries, and who were wholly independent in their judgements and advice, began to be imposed by the executioners: we mean the classical Carrozoni[8] began to do the rounds. The machine of state expenditure became decreasingly useful for the community, but all the more financially burdensome.

This process accelerated during the Giolittian period[9], but nevertheless increasing economic prosperity made the damage less obvious. This system, as its political masterpiece, slowly entangled the emerging workers' party. Precisely because Italy has an abundance of labour power and a lack of capital, all sides call on the state to provide work, and the MP who seeks votes in an industrial or agricultural constituency does the rounds of the ministries hunting for the panacea: public works.

After the First World War, the Italian bourgeoisie, even though they came out "winners", saw the favourable wind of the heroic period change too drastically and so there was fascism. The concentration of the policing strength of the state along with the concentration of the control of almost all the economic sectors simultaneously allowed it to avoid the explosion of radical revolts among the masses and to assure free speculative manoeuvring for the well-off class, on condition that the latter formed itself into a single class centre within the framework of government policy. Every medium or small employer was compelled to make reformist concessions, called for during the long struggle of the workers' organisations which (as usual) they destroyed, stealing their programme, so that while a high degree of capitalist concentration was favoured, the internal situation was pacified. The totalitarian form allows capital to set in motion the reformist trick of the previous decades, latching on to the class collaboration proposed by the traitors of the revolutionary party.

The leadership of the state machine and abundant special laws were clearly placed in the service of business initiatives. The technical legislation — to return to our starting point, dealing with rivers — which around 1865 had produced several masterpieces, was now reduced to a total hotchpotch open to all possible manoeuvres, the functionary being reduced to a puppet of the large firms. The hydrological services were precisely those clashing with the famous idea of private initiative. They require a single institution and full powers — they had a very long tradition. Jacini wrote in 1854. The civil problem of the waters found in Giandomenico Romagnosi an immortal writer of treatises.[10] All in all, bourgeois administration and technology had even then class goals, but they were serious, while today they are mere bagatelle.

This led to the bad trend which has caused the degradation and not the improvement of the hydraulic defences in the Paduan plain, starting from a process not concerning just one party or nation, but the centuries long ups and downs of a class regime.

In short, if once the bureaucracy, independent but not omnipotent, laid out its project on the drawing board and then called in bids from public works “enterprises”, compelling them, refusing even the offer of a cup of coffee, to complete them rigorously, thus at most the selection of the funded works was made according to general principles, today the relationship is inverted. The weak and servile technical bureaucracy lets the enterprises themselves draw up the plans and approves them almost unseen, and the enterprises obviously select the profitable works and drop the delicate operations which require more diligence and offer less chance of repetition in the future.

This does not happen because of morality, nor even because in general the functionary gives way to competition and large bribes. It is that if a functionary resists, not only does his workload increase ten-fold, but also the interests against whom he clashes mobilise against him with decisive party influence in the higher echelons of the ministry that employs him. Once the most capable technician gained promotion, now it is the one most able to move in such a system.

When single party fascism gave way to the multi-party system unknown even in Giolittian Italy, even in the constitutional model of perfect England, and so on (where we have never had ten parties declaredly ready to govern according to the constitution, but at most two or three), things went from bad to worse. They were supposed to restore the experts and the honest men with the Allied armies. What a silly hope so many had: the new changing of the guard has produced the worst of all guards, as on the Po embankments.

It is symptomatic enough in diagnosing the present phase of the capitalist regime that a senior official in the Ministry of Works let slip that the flood surveillance services worked well right up to the fatal moment: the only moment for which they are paid a regular salary. This is the style of modern bureaucracy (for some the new ruling class! Ruling classes arrive with gaping mouths, but not with a failing heart).

No less interesting is what Alberto de Stefani wrote, entitled “The Management of the Po”.[11] After outlining the history of measures taken, he cited the judgement of authors in technical journals: “One can never insist too much on the need to react against the system of concentrating the activity of the offices exclusively, or nearly so, on the projection and execution of major works.”

De Stefani did not see the radical implication of such a critique. He deplored the neglect of conservation and maintenance of existing works, while new works were being planned. He cited other passages: “One spends tens of billions (and tomorrow hundreds) for extensions after systematically grudging and withholding those small amounts required for maintenance and even to close breaches.”

That seems to have happened on the Reno. An economist of De Stefani’s calibre scrapes by with saying: “We have too little conservative spirit due to too much uncontrolled fantasy.”

Is it thus perhaps a factor of national psychology? Never: of capitalist production. Capital has become incapable of the social function of transmitting the labour of the present generation to the future ones, utilising the labour of past generations in this. It does not want maintenance contracts, but huge building deals. To enable this, huge natural cataclysms are insufficient — capital creates human ones with ineluctable necessity, and makes post-war reconstruction “the business deal of the century”.

These concepts have to be applied to the critique of the base, demagogic position of the Italian so-called workers’ parties. When speculation and capitalist enterprise are given the capital to invest in hydraulic works which is now committed to armaments, capitalist enterprise (except to cause a crisis among the pseudo- reds of the metallurgical centres, if the business were really to be undertaken) will use that capital in the same way: cheating and speculating at one thousand percent, raising their glasses high to the coming if not of the next war, then of the next flood.

The huge river of human history also has its irresistible and threatening swellings. When the wave rises, it washes against the two retaining embankments: on the right the conformist one, of Conservation of existing and traditional forces; along it priests chant in procession, policemen and gendarmes patrol, the teachers and cantors of official lies and state-schooling prate.

The left bank is that of the reformists, hedged with “people’s” representatives, the dealers in opportunism, the parliamentarians and progressive organisers. Exchanging insults across the stream, both processions claim to have the recipe to maintain the fast- flowing river in its restrained and enforced channel.

But at great turning points, the current breaks free and leaves its course, “shifting” like the Po at Guastalla and Volano onto an unexpected course, sweeping the two sordid bands into the irresistible flood of the revolution which subverts all old forms of restraint, moulding a new face on society like on the land.

Footnotes

[1] Publisher’s note — it actually says “meteore” (meteorites) in the original Italian. We cannot believe that Bordiga and his comrades could have been stupid enough to write this — even humans today cannot defend themselves against meteorites, and it is not just because of the irrationalities of the capitalist system! We therefore have assumed that a mistake was made and the original intent was to make some reference to “meteorologico” (meteorological) phenomena.

[2] Capital, Vol I, Chapter 16 (The English edition of 1887). The following quotation is from the same section

[3] In 1176 the Lombard Communes defeated the Emperor Barbarossa at Legnano.

[4] Line where opposite slopes

[5] Floods in June and July in Kansas and Missouri caused dozens of deaths and left many homeless.

[6] Comitato di Liberazione Nazionalea the antifascist front towards the end of the second world war, going from the Communist Party to the monarchists.

[7] On 18 March 1876, the last “destra” government fell and the “sinistra”, based on regional interests, took over. There was, however, little political difference as the two parties transformed into two almost identical schools of thought.

[8] Platonic and wasteful body or enterprise, especially public.

[9] Roughly 1901 to 1914.

[10] La proprieta fondaria e la poulazione agricola in Lombardia (Milan, 1854 - not 1857 as in the original). Stefano Jacini (1872-91) agronomist, head of the Inchiesta Agraria e sulle condizioni della classe agricola (1884). Minister of public works under Cavour (1860) and again in 1864 and 1867. Gian Domenico Rornagnosi (1761-1835) jurist and philosopher. Considered to be the main inspiration behind the juridical and administrative system adopted by the Kingdom of Italy (1861-1946).

[11] Alberto De Stefani was the Minister of Finance and the Treasury from 1922 to 1925 when he was removed after pressure from financial and industrial groups. He remained a fascist and was tried after the war for this, being acquitted. The article quoted was published in Il Tempo (Rome) on 21 November 1951. It reiterates what he had previously written when still a minister: “As one reads on, one will see the path taken since the Kingdom’s foundation to the present of the various legislative attempts, of citizens’ sacrifices and their real value, of the excellence of provision and execution, of the defectiveness and deviations which the interest of the state and nation sometimes had to suffer because of the upper hand gained by political or particular or special interests.” (L’azione dello Stato per le Opere Pubbliche 1862-1924, Rome 1925 p. vii)

Proletarian Dictatorship and Class Party (1951)

I

Every class struggle is a political struggle (Marx).

A struggle which limits itself to obtaining a new distribution of economic gains is not vet a political struggle because it is not directed against the social structure of the production relations.

The disruption of the relations of production peculiar to a particular social epoch and the overthrow of the rule of a certain social class is the result of a long and often fluctuating political struggle. The key to this struggle is the question of the state: the problem of "who has power?" (Lenin).

The struggle of the modern proletariat manifests and extends itself as a political struggle with the formation and the action of the class party. The specific features of this party are to be found in the following thesis: the complete development of the industrial capitalist system and of bourgeois power which issued from the liberal and democratic revolutions, not only does not historically exclude but prepares and sharpens more and more the conflict of class interests and its development into civil war, into armed struggle.

II

The communist party, as defined by this historical foresight and by this program, accomplishes the following tasks as long as the bourgeoisie maintains power:

a) it elaborates and propagates the theory of social development, of the economic laws which characterise the present social system of production relations, of class conflicts which arise from it, of the state and of the revolution;

b) it assures the unity and historical persistence of the proletarian organisation. Unity does not mean the material grouping of the working class and seeming working class strata which, due to the very fact of the dominance of the exploiting class, are tinder for the influence of discordant political leaderships and methods of action. It means instead the close international linking-up of the vanguard elements who are fully orientated on the integral revolutionary line. Persistence means the continuous claim of the unbroken dialectical line which binds together the positions of critique and struggle successively adopted by the movement during the course of changing conditions;

c) it prepares well in advance for the class mobilisation and offensive by appropriately employing every possible means of propaganda, agitation and action, in all particular struggles triggered off by immediate interests. This action culminates in the organisation of the illegal and insurrectional apparatus for the conquest of power.

When general conditions and the degree of organisational, political and tactical solidity of the class party reach a point where the general struggle for power is unleashed, the party which has led the revolutionary class to victory through the social war, leads it likewise in the fundamental task of breaking and demolishing all the military and administrative organs which compose the capitalist state. This demolition also strikes at the network of organs, whatever they may be, which pretend to represent the various opinions or interests through the intermediary of bodies of delegates. The bourgeois class state must be destroyed whether it presents itself as the mendacious interclassist expression of the majority of citizens or as the more or less open dictatorship wielded by a government apparatus which pretends to fulfil a national, racial or social-popular mission; if this does not take place, the revolution will be crushed.

III

In the phase which follows the dismantling of the apparatus of capitalist domination, the task of the political party of the working class is as vital as ever because the class struggle - though dialectically inverted - continues.

Communist theory in regard to the state and the revolution is characterised above all by the fact that it excludes all possibility of adapting the legislative and executive mechanism of the bourgeois state to the

socialist transformation of the economy (the social-democratic position). But it equally excludes the possibility of achieving by means of a brief violent crisis a destruction of the state and a transformation of the traditional economic relationships which the state defended up to the last moment (the anarchist position). It also denies that the constitution of a new productive organisation can be left to the spontaneous and scattered activity of groups of producers shop by shop or trade by trade (the syndicalist position).

Any social class whose power has been overthrown, even if it is by means of terror, survives for a long time within the texture of the social organism. Far from abandoning its hopes of revenge, it seeks to politically reorganise itself and to re-establish its domination either in a violent or disguised way. It has turned from a ruling class into a defeated and dominated one, but it has not instantly disappeared.

The proletariat - which in its turn will disappear as a class alongside all other classes with the realisation of communism - organises itself as a ruling class (the Manifesto) in the first stage of the post-capitalist epoch. And after the destruction of the old state, the new proletarian state is the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The precondition for going beyond the capitalist system is the overthrow of bourgeois power and the destruction of its state. The condition for bringing about the deep and radical social transformation which has to take place is a new proletarian state apparatus, capable of using force and coercion just as all other historical states.

The presence of such an apparatus does not characterise communist society but instead it characterises the stage of its construction. Once this construction is secured, classes and class rule will no longer exist. But the essential organ of class rule is the state - and the state can be nothing else. Therefore communists do not advocate the proletarian state as a mystical creed, an absolute or an ideal but as a dialectical tool, a class weapon that will slowly wither away (Engels) through the very realisation of its functions; this will take place gradually, through a long process, as the social organisation is transformed from a system of coercion of men (as it has always been since the dawn of history) into a comprehensive, scientifically built network for the management of things and natural forces.

IV

After the victory of the proletariat, the role of the state in relationship to social classes and collective organisations exhibits many fundamental differences as compared with its role in the history of the regimes that spring from the bourgeois revolution.

a) Revolutionary bourgeois ideology, prior to its struggle and final victory, presented its future post-feudal state not as a class state but as a peoples state based on the abolition of every inequality before the law, which it presented to be sufficient to assure freedom and equality for all members of society.

Proletarian theory openly asserts that its future state will be a class state, i.e. a tool wielded by one class as long as classes exist. The other classes will be excluded from the state and outlawed in fact as well as in principle. The working class having achieved power "will share it with no one" (Lenin).

b) After the bourgeois political victory and in keeping with a tenacious ideological campaign, constitutional charters or declarations of principles were solemnly proclaimed in the different countries as a basis and foundation of the state. They were considered as being immutable in time, a definitive

expression of the at last discovered immanent rules of social life. From then on, the entire interplay of political forces was supposed to take place within the insuperable framework of these statutes.

During the struggle against the existing regime, the proletarian state is not presented as a stable and fixed realisation of a set of rules governing the social relationships inferred from an idealistic research into the nature of man and society. During its lifetime the working class state will continually evolve up to the point that it finally withers away: the nature of social organisation, of human association, will radically change according to the development of technology and the forces of production, and man's nature will be equally subject to deep alterations always moving away more and more from the beast of burden and slave which he was. Anything such as a codified and permanent constitution to be proclaimed after the workers revolution is nonsense, it has no place in the communist program. Technically, it will be convenient to adopt written rules which however will in no way be intangible and will retain an "instrumental" and temporary character, putting aside the facetiousnesses about social ethics and natural law.

c) Having conquered and even crushed the feudal apparatus of power, the victorious capitalist class did not hesitate to use the force of the state to repress the attempts of counterrevolution and restoration. However the most resolute terroristic measures were justified as being directed not against the class enemies of capitalism but against the betrayers of the people, of the nation, of the country, and of civil society, all these hollow concepts being identified with the state itself and, as a matter of fact, with the government and the party in power.

The victorious proletariat, by using its state in order to "crush the unavoidable and desperate resistance of the bourgeoisie" (Lenin) will strike at the old rulers and their last supporters every time they oppose, in a logical defence of their class interests, the measures intended to uproot economic privilege. These social elements will keep an estranged and passive position vis-à-vis the apparatus of power: whenever they try to free themselves from the passivity imposed upon them, material force will subdue them. They will share no "social contract", they will have no "legal or patriotic duty". As veritable social prisoners of war (as in fact were the former aristocrats and clergymen for the Jacobean bourgeoisie) they will have nothing to betray because they will not be requested to take any ridiculous oath of allegiance.

d) The historical glitter of the popular assemblies and democratic gatherings hardly disguised the fact that, at its birth, the bourgeois state formed armed bodies and a police force for the internal and external struggle against the old regime and quickly substituted the guillotine for the gallows. This executive apparatus was charged with the task of administering legal force both on the great historical level and against isolated violations of the rules of appropriation and exchange characteristic of the economy founded on private property. It acted in a perfectly natural manner against the first proletarian movements which threatened, even if only instinctively, the bourgeois form of production. The imposing reality of the new social dualism was hidden by the game of the "legislative" apparatus which claimed to be able to bring about the participation of all citizens and all the opinions of the various parties in the state and in the management of the state with a perfect equilibrium and within an atmosphere of social peace.

The proletarian state, as an open class dictatorship, will dispose of all distinctions between the executive and legislative levels of power, both of which will be united in the same organs. The distinction between the legislative and executive is, in effect, characteristic of a regime which conceals and protects the

dictatorship of one class under an external cloak which is multi-class andmulti-party. "The Commune was a working, not a parliamentary body" (Marx).

e) The bourgeois state in its classical form - in coherence with an individualist ideology which the theoretical fiction universally extends to all citizens and which is the mental reflection of the reality of an economy founded on the monopoly of private property by one class - refused to allow any intermediate body other than elective constitutional assemblies to exist between the isolated individual subject and the legal state centre. Political clubs and parties that had been necessary during the instructional stage were tolerated by it by virtue of the demagogic assertion of free thought and on the condition that they exist as simple confessional groupings and electoral bureaux. In a later stage the reality of class repression forced the state to tolerate the association of economic interests, the labour unions, which it distrusted as a "state within the state". Finally, unions became a form of class solidarity adopted by the capitalists themselves for their own class interests and aims. Moreover, under the pretext of legally recognising the labour unions, the state undertook the task of absorbing and sterilising them, thus depriving them of any autonomy so as to prevent the revolutionary party from taking their leadership.

Labour unions will still be present in the proletarian state in so far as there still remains employers or at least impersonal enterprises where the workers remain wage earners paid in money. Their function will be to protect the standard of living of the working class, their action being parallel on this point to that of the party and the state. Non-working class unions will be forbidden. Actually, on the question of distribution of income between the working class and the non-proletarian or semi-proletarian classes, the worker's situation could be threatened by considerations other than the superior needs of the general revolutionary struggle against international capitalism. But this possibility, which will long subsist, justifies the unions' secondary role in relation to the political communist party, the international revolutionary vanguard, which forms a unitary whole with the parties struggling in the still capitalist countries and as such leads the proletarian state.

The proletarian state can only be "animated" by a single party and it would be senseless to require that this party organise in its ranks a statistical majority and be supported by such a majority in "popular elections" - that old bourgeois trap. One of the historical possibilities is the existence of political parties composed in appearance by proletarians, but in reality influenced by counterrevolutionary traditions or by foreign capitalism's. This contradiction, the most dangerous of all, cannot be resolved through the recognition of formal rights nor through the process of voting within the framework of an abstract "class democracy". This too will be a crisis to be liquidated in terms of relationships of force. There is no statistical contrivance which can ensure a satisfactory revolutionary solution; this will depend solely upon the degree of solidity and clarity reached by the revolutionary communist movement throughout the world. A century ago in the West, and fifty years ago in the Czarist Empire, Marxists rightly argued against the simple-minded democrats that the capitalists and proprietors are a minority, and therefore the only true government of the majority is the government of the working class. If the word democracy means power of the majority, the democrats should stand on our class side. But this word both in its literal sense ("power of the people") as well as in the dirty use that is more and more being made of it, means "power belonging not to one but to all classes". For this historical reason, just as we reject "bourgeois democracy" and "democracy in general" (as Lenin also did), we must politically and theoretically exclude, as a contradiction in terms, "class democracy" and "workers' democracy".

The dictatorship advocated by marxism is necessary because it cannot be unanimously accepted and furthermore it will not have the naiveté to abdicate for lack of having a majority of votes, if such a thing were ascertainable. Precisely because it declares this it will not run the risk of being confused with a dictatorship of men or groups of men who take control of the government and substitute themselves for the working class. The revolution requires a dictatorship, because it would be ridiculous to subordinate the revolution to a 100 % acceptance or a 51 % majority. Wherever these figures are displayed, it means that the revolution has been betrayed.

In conclusion the communist party will rule alone, and will never give up power without a physical struggle. This bold declaration of not yielding to the deception of figures and of not making use of them will aid the struggle against revolutionary degeneration.

In the higher stage of communism - a stage which does not know commodity production, money nor nations and which will also witness the death of the state - labour unions will be deprived of their "reason to be". The party as an organisation for combat will be necessary as long as the remnants of capitalism survive in the world. Moreover, it may always have the task of being the depository and propagator of social doctrine, which gives a general vision of the development of relationships between human society and material nature.

V

The marxist conception, that of substituting parliamentary assemblies with working bodies, does not lead us back into "economic democracy" either, i.e. into a system which would adapt the state organs to the workplaces, to the productive or commercial units, etc., while excluding from any representative function the remaining employers and the individuals still owning property. The elimination of the employer and the proprietor only defines half of socialism; the other half, the most significant one, consists of the elimination of capitalist economic anarchy (Marx). As the new socialist organisation emerges and develops with the party and the revolutionary state in the foreground, it will not limit itself to striking only the former employers and their flunkies but above all it will redistribute the social tasks and responsibilities of individuals in quite a new and original way.

Therefore the network of enterprises and services such as they have been inherited from capitalism will not be taken as the basis of an apparatus of so-called "sovereignty", that is of the delegation of powers within the state and up to the level of its central bodies. It is precisely the presence of the single-class state and of the solidly and qualitatively unitary and homogeneous party which offers the maximum of favourable conditions for a reshaping of social machinery that be driven as little as possible by the pressures of the limited interests of small groups and as much as possible by general data and by their scientific study in the interests of the collective welfare. The changes in the productive mechanism will be enormous; let us only think of the program for reversing the relationships between town and country, on which Marx and Engels insisted so much and which is the exact antithesis to present trends in all countries.

Therefore, the network modelled after the work place is an inadequate expression which repeats the old Proudhonist and Lassalian positions that Marxism long ago rejected and surpassed.

VI

The definition of the type of links between the organs of the class state and its base depends first of all upon the results of historical dialectics and cannot be deduced from "eternal principles", from "natural law", or from a sacred and inviolable constitutional charter. Any further details in this regard would be mere utopia. There is not a grain of utopianism in Marx, Engels stated. The very idea of the famous delegation of power by the isolated individual (elector) thanks to a platonic act emanating from his freedom of opinion must be left to the foggy realms of metaphysics; opinions in actuality are but a reflection of material conditions and social forms, and power consists of the intervention of physical force.

The negative characterisation of the proletarian dictatorship is clearly defined: the bourgeois and semi-bourgeois will no longer have political rights, they will be prevented by force from gathering in groups of common interests or in associations for political agitation; they will never be allowed to vote, elect, or delegate others to any post or function whatsoever. But even the relationship between the worker - a recognised and active member of the class in power - and the state apparatus will no longer retain that fictitious and deceitful characteristic of a delegation of power, of a representation through the intermediary of a deputy, an election ticket, or by a party. Delegation means in effect the renunciation to the possibility of direct action. The pretended "sovereignty" of the democratic right is but an abdication, and in most cases it is an abdication in favour of a scoundrel.

The working members of society will be grouped into local territorial organs according to their place of residence, and in certain cases according to the displacements imposed by their participation in a productive mechanism in full transformation. Thanks to their uninterrupted and continuous action, the participation of all active social elements in the mechanism of the state apparatus, and therefore in the management and exercise of class power, will be assured. To sketch these mechanisms is impossible before the class relationships from which they will spring have been concretely realised.

VII

The Paris Commune established as most important principles (see Marx, Engels, Lenin) that its members and officials would be subject to recall at any time, and that their salary would not exceed the wage of an average worker. Any separation between the producers on the periphery and the bureaucrats at the centre is thus eliminated by means of systematic rotations. Civil service will cease being a career and even a profession. No doubt, when put into practice, these controls will create tremendous difficulties, but it was long ago that Lenin expressed his contempt for all plans of revolutions to be carried out without difficulties! The inevitable conflicts will not be completely resolved by drawing up piles of rules and regulations: they will constitute a historical and political problem and will express a real relationship of forces. The Bolshevik revolution did not stop in front of the Constituent Assembly but dispersed it. The workers', peasants' and soldiers' councils had risen. This new type of state organs which burst forth in the blaze of the social war (and were already present in the revolution of 1905) extended from the village to the entire country through a network of territorial units; their formation did not answer to any of the prejudices about the "rights of man" or the "universal, free, direct and secret" suffrage!

The communist party unleashes and wins the civil war, it occupies the key positions in a military and social sense, it multiplies its means of propaganda and agitation a thousand-fold through seizing buildings and public establishments. And without losing time and without procedural whims, it establishes the "armed bodies of workers" of which Lenin spoke, the red guard, the revolutionary police.

At the meetings of the Soviets, it wins over a majority to the slogan: "All power to the Soviets!". Is this majority a merely legal, or a coldly and plainly numerical fact? Not at all! Should anyone - be he a spy or a well-intentioned but misled worker - vote for the Soviet to renounce or compromise the power conquered thanks to the blood of the proletarian fighters, he will be kicked out by his comrades' rifle butts. And no one will waste time with counting him in the "legal minority", that criminal hypocrisy which the revolution can do without and which the counterrevolution can only feed upon.

VIII

Historical facts different from those of Russia in 1917 (i.e. the recent collapse of feudal despotism, a disastrous war, the role played by opportunist leaders) could create, while remaining on the same fundamental line, different practical forms of the basic network of the state. From the time the proletarian movement left utopianism behind, it has found its way and assured its success thanks not only to the real experience of the present mode of production and the structure of the present state, but also to the experience of the strategic mistakes of the proletarian revolution, both on the battlefield of the "hot" civil war where the Communards of 1871 gloriously fell and on the "cold" one which was lost between 1917 and 1926 - this last was the great battle of Russia between Lenin's International and world capitalism supported in the front lines by the miserable complicity of all the opportunists.

Communists have no codified constitutions to propose. They have a world of lies and constitutions - crystallised in the law and in the force of the dominant class - to crush. They know that only a revolutionary and totalitarian apparatus of force and power, which excludes no means, will be able to prevent the infamous relics of a barbarous epoch from rising again - only it will be able to prevent the monster of social privilege, craving for revenge and servitude, from raising its head again and hurling for the thousandth time its deceitful cry of Freedom!

Theory and Action in Marxist Doctrine (1951)

I – The Reversal of Praxis in Marxist Theory

FROM THE REPORT

1. Ideological disorder within many of the international groups which condemn Stalinism and claim to be holding the revolutionary Marxist line. Uncertainty of such groups as to what they call analysis and perspective: modern development of capitalist society; opportunities for a revival of the proletariat's revolutionary struggle.

2. It has become apparent to everybody that the great wars, the great domestic conflicts and bourgeois totalitarianism have spelled the end of the reformist interpretation of Marxism .

3. In the meantime, since the worsening social and political tension has not been accompanied by a strengthening but rather by a total degeneration of the ex-revolutionary parties, the following question arises: does there need to be a revision of the Marxist and Leninist prospect according to which World

War I and the Russian revolution would result in a world-wide flaring up of the proletarian struggle for power?

FOREWORD

At the Rome meeting of April 1st 1951, the report on The reversal of praxis in Marxist theory was brought to a close with the presentation of eight Tables with an accompanying commentary.

The comments which follow are written with a view to allowing a more effective utilization of those eight Tables in their visual exposition of social dynamics according to the fundamental ideologies; ideologies that the proletariat has definitively liquidated on the theoretical plane, but which, unfortunately, it still has to deal with on a practical level.

Marx and Engels write in The German Ideology, 1846, (Part I, section A):

"Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process. If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process".

"In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life. In the first method of approach the starting-point is consciousness taken as the living individual; in the second method, which conforms to real life, it is the real living individuals themselves, and consciousness is considered solely as their consciousness".

"This method of approach is not devoid of premises. It starts out from the real premises and does not abandon them for a moment. Its premises are men, not in any fantastic isolation and rigidity, but in their actual, empirically perceptible process of development under definite conditions. As soon as this active life-process is described, history ceases to be a collection of dead facts as it is with the empiricists (themselves still abstract), or an imaginary activity of imaginary subjects, as with the idealists".

Hence historical-dialectical materialism, in contrast to all conceptions of an enlightenment or idealist stamp, does not view ideology, i.e., the mystified and inverted representation of real relationships, as the product of an error – an error which needs to be corrected in order to open the eyes of the blind - but rather as the indispensable outcome of a real process corresponding to material relations; the very relations, that is, which ideology portrays in a distorted way. Such a distortion, in its turn, necessarily derives from the historical position of the social forces which express themselves by means of ideology,

and which impose it on the social body; the dominant ideology always being that of the dominant class. The Marxist conception likewise rejects the enlightenment idea of "conscious trickery" by ideologist-chiefs (the "smart priests"), since the same representation of ideology – inevitably fantastic since it is just a sublimation of a historically transient state of things – is actually imposed as a necessary program and superstructure of necessary social factors and transformations. Thus, for instance, bourgeois ideology is founded on the actuallyconquered freedom of workers from feudal ties in legal and property terms; and the bourgeoisie cannot repudiate this without repudiating itself.

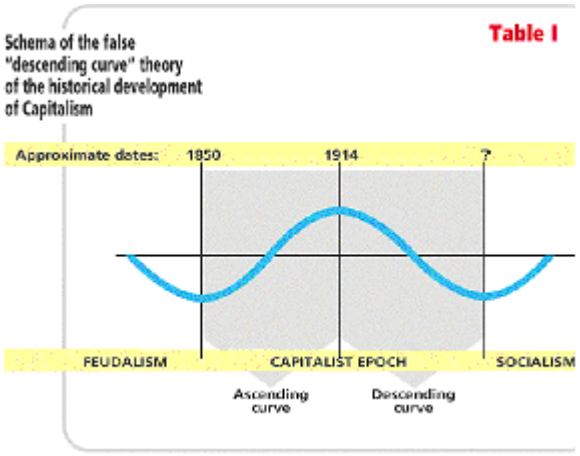
As with classes, ideology also undergoes the dialectical transformation antiformism-reformism-conformism, as described in our text Tracciato d'impostazione. The proletariat, as the last remaining class, has the historical role of eliminating itself along with all other classes. It does not possess an ideology which can assume a reformist and conformist character, leading to a super-historical fixation of its rule, but rather it possesses a revolutionary science, which is already a science of the species; not only because the proletariat represents the future (as was the case in thepast for other classes), but also because this future must inevitably give rise to a species-based society, free of classes and the related conflicts – a qualitative leap from classist prehistory to fully human history.

The contraposition of Marxism to the succession of past ideologies which still today, in varying degrees, exert their influence is therefore rigorously historical and dialectical: which does not rule out, in fact it actually implies, that the global science with which Marxism identifies itself can reconstruct the real processes underlying the ideological frameworks on its own, revealing how ideology mystifies contemporary reality, regardless of any individual or collective "knowledge".

Having provided this brief summary, let's move on to explain the eight Schemes, and the correct way of applying them.

TABLES I e II

THE SUCCESSION OF THE FORMS OF PRODUCTION



COMMENTARY ON TABLE I

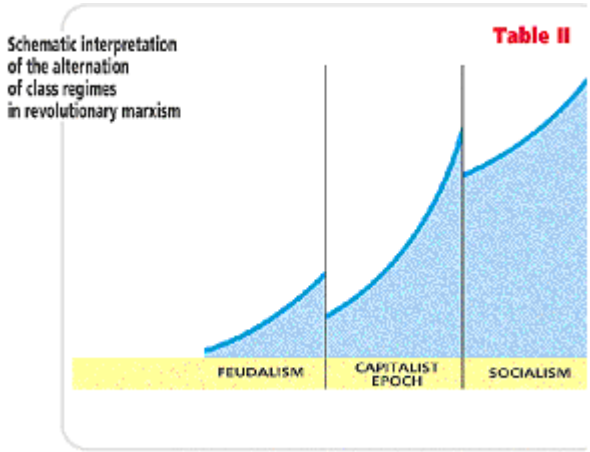
1. Faced with the present confused state of revolutionary ideology, organization, and action, it is a false remedy to count on an inevitable, progressive decline of capitalism, a process allegedly already underway, and at the end of which the proletarian revolution supposedly lies waiting. In fact, the curve of capitalism has no descending branch (Summary, 1).

4. The theory of the descending curve of capitalism is totally wrong and engenders the inappropriate question as to why, if capitalism is declining, the revolution isn't advancing. The theory of the descending curve represents the historical development as a sinusoid: each regime, for example, the bourgeois regime, starts with an ascending stage, reaches an apex, then starts to decline to a minimum; following which another regime starts its ascent. Such a view is that of gradualist reformism: no jolts, shocks or jumps (Report, 4).

The frequent claim that capitalism is in its descending branch and will not be able to rise again contains two errors: one fatalist and the other gradualist.

The first error involves the illusion that when capitalism completes its descent socialism will arise of its own accord, without upheavals, struggles and armed clashes; without party preparation.

The second error, expressed by the fact that the direction of the movement is slightly curved, is tantamount to admitting that there are elements of socialism which can gradually penetrate the fabric of capitalism.



COMMENTARY ON TABLE II

The Marxist view can be represented (for sake of clarity and simplicity) as a series of continuous curves ascending to peaks (singular points or cusps in geometry) followed by sudden, almost vertical, descents; after which, from below, a new social regime, another historically ascending branch, appears (Report, 5).

Marx did not envisage a growth of capitalism, followed by a decline, but rather the concurrent dialectical enhancement of the mass of productive forces that capitalism controls and of their unlimited accumulation and concentration, occurring at the same time as the antagonist reaction of the dominated forces i.e., the proletarian class. The general productive and economic potential rises until the equilibrium is upset, and an explosive, revolutionary phase occurs; then, in the course of an extremely short and intense period, the old forms of production collapse and the forces of production decline, paving the way for a new arrangement and for a new and more powerful arising.

In conformity with this view – the only one which can be considered truly Marxist – all the phenomena of the present imperialist stage, for over a century now, have been entirely predictable: in economy – trusts, monopolies, State planning, nationalization; in politics – strict police regimes, military superpowers, etc. (Report, 6).

No less clear is the position which holds that the proletarian party shouldn't counter this modern situation with gradualist demands, and proposals for the recuperation and rebirth of liberal, tolerant forms.

The contrary error of the proletarian movement, and particularly of the Third International, lay in its failure to adequately confront the enormous power of capitalism with a comparable revolutionary tension.

The explanation of this second collapse of the class movement, even worse than the social-patriotism of 1914, leads to the difficult issues of the relationship between economic impulses and revolutionary struggle, between the masses and the party that must lead them (Report, 7).

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO CONCEPTIONS

The difference between the two conceptions represented in Tables I and II is expressed, in surveyors' language, as follows: in the first graph, or the opportunists' graph (Bernstein-type revisionists, emulators of Stalin, pseudo-Marxist revolutionary intellectuals), there is a continuous curve which at every point "allows a tangent", that is, it proceeds by imperceptible variations of intensity and direction. The second graph, in which there has been an attempt to make a simplified representation of the much deprecated "theory of catastrophes", shows that within each period there are points, or as they are known in geometry: "cusps" or "singular points". At such points the geometrical continuity, hence the historical gradualness, vanishes, the curve not only "has no tangent", but at the same time "allows all tangents" – as in the famous week which Lenin refused to let slip through his fingers.

We should point out that the generally upward direction of the second graph refers to the historical fact that over the course of the great revolutionary historical crises there has been a continuous increase in the material mass of productive forces; the intention is not to support idealistic visions of infinite human progress.

TABLES III TO VII

SCHEMES OF SOCIAL DYNAMICS ACCORDING TO RULING CLASS IDEOLOGIES

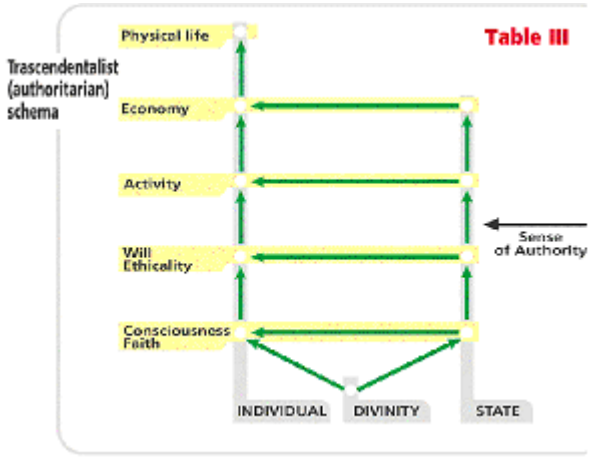
Below are reproduced the Schemes representing social dynamics according to the main ideologies. On various different levels, the proletariat's revolutionary movement has always, and still has today, to settle accounts with these ideologies (see Foreword), and counter them with the Marxist Scheme of the Reversal of Praxis (Table VIII).

In one Note to the Report is stated a distinction between the Schemes which describe conceptions that are either completely antithetical to Marxism (Tables III and IV) or, worse still, which are aberrant with respect to Marxism, insofar as they ambiguously claim to refer only to a part, or some, of its basic postulates (Tables V, VI, VII).

TABLES III AND IV

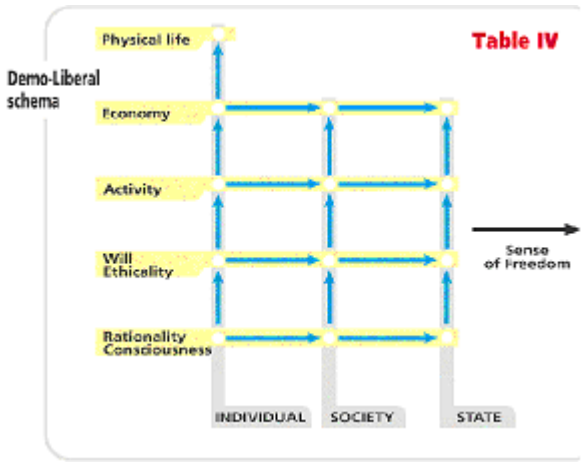
Tables III and IV are presented together because, despite their differences, they share many common denominators.

In the transcendentalist and demo-liberal Schemes, even if in the one the sense of Authority flows from the State towards the Individual, whilst in the other Liberty flows from the Individual towards Society and the State, for both it is the Idea (emanating from the Divinity in one Scheme, and dispersed among all the individual components of the human collectivity in the other) that conditions and determines human actions. In both Schemes we move logically from Consciousness (understood in the first as Faith, in the second as Rationality) to Will (understood in both Schemes as Ethicality), to Activity, Economy, and physical Life.



COMMENTARY ON TABLE III

Typical of revealed religions (authoritarian), feudalism and theocratic absolutism; adopted also by modern capitalist society. This conception appeals to a Divinity who in the very act of creation infused men with a spirit, which, being found in each individual, warrants equality "before God" – at least in the celestial world – and guarantees a behaviour inspired by common principles of a divine origin. The State in its turn, by controlling the Consciousness and Activity of individuals, allows the development of spiritual and physical life within its hierarchical order, which mirrors the "divine" plan revealed in the Holy Scriptures.



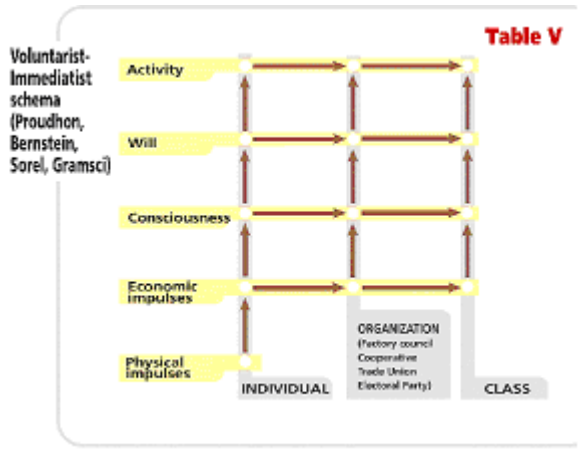
COMMENTARY ON TABLE IV

Demo-liberal Scheme is common to quite distinct ideological expressions, notably, the various strands of Enlightenment thinking (empiricism, sensism, mechanistic materialism), Kantian criticism, Hegel's objective and dialectical idealism, positivism, neo-idealism, libertarianism (Stirner, Bakunin) and reformist immediatism. Here we have the purest absolutization of the "democratic principle" based on the Ego, which, both conceived of as the single individual or as the "spirit of the people", "collective will", etc., possesses in itself, in its innermost being, the norms of its behaviour (this may lead, as with the anarchists, to the State being rejected as non-representative of the collective will, and it being substituted with "social opinion", or similar abstractions which perform the same role as the "ethical" State in classical bourgeois thought, and from which they are, after all, direct derivations). Moral life, Economic life, the Will to act in the external environment are considered as the expression of the forces of Consciousness and Rationality proper to the "human spirit" present in every Individual ("equality before the law"). The State, and the social organization in general is conceived, therefore, as a projection, and at the same time a guarantee, of individual freedom, "it is the ethical reality of the Idea".

TABLES V, VI AND VII

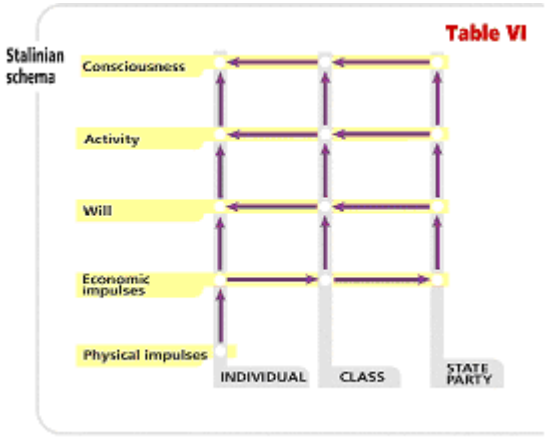
These, too, exhibit similar features.

Underlying the construction of the voluntarist-immediatist, stalinian and fascist Schemes, are Physical and Economic impulses, and owing to this shared feature they are opposed to the two previous idealist Schemes. But both groups have in common the precedence and pre-eminence of Will over Activity, as concerns the Individual and the Class (or else People or Nation in the Fascist conception). Another common feature of the three voluntarist Schemes (incidentally, the Proudhon, Sorel, Bernstein, Gramsci Scheme is individualist as well; and in that it is even worse that the other two) is the parallel succession of Economic impulses, Will, Activity and Consciousness one finds between Party and State (immediate Organization) on the one hand, and between Individual and Class (People or Nation under Fascism) on the other, making it impossible for the Party to achieve a scientific theory of social phenomena.



COMMENTARY ON TABLE V

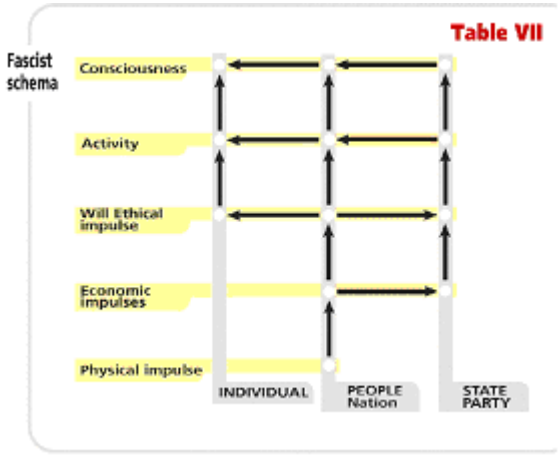
Voluntarist-intermediatist Scheme, typical of the petty-bourgeois, corporatist view, and therefore of those forms which are opportunist (proudhonism, anarcho-syndicalism, workerism, ordinovism, council socialism) and reformist (laborism, etc.),. Clearly it fits within the liberal conception, of which it represents a variation. Here the Individual, ever at the heart of the process, acquires consciousness of the Physical and Economic impulses which are the substratum of his existence: such Consciousness once acquired determines Will, and this in turn conditions Action. Economic and political Organization in this Scheme is the result of the convergence of individual consciousness: the Class is, in turn, the result of the combination and connecting up of a network of immediate Organizations (it is therefore a notion devoid of any sense of historical direction – or even of the class in itself and for itself in the Marxist sense of the expression).



COMMENTARY ON TABLE VI

Scheme of the ideology consequent upon Stalin's counterrevolution. For this Scheme, too, it is the Individual who attains Consciousness, after however his Action has been brought about as a result of free "choice", a decision (Will). Characteristic is the Party/State assimilation: but since the Economic impulses (interests) arriving, via the Individual and Class, at the Party/State are utilized by this pseudo "binomial" to perform its decision-making and leadership duties (Will) and to determine practical

orientations (Activity) and theoretical positions (Consciousness), it is obvious that the Party part of the "binomial" loses out, and survives only as a "justification of the State".

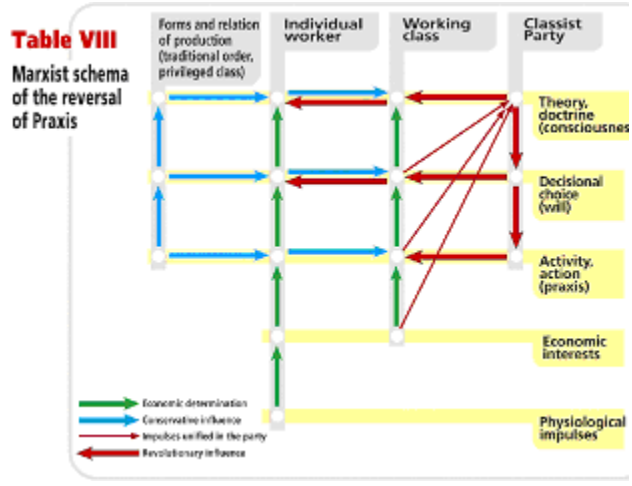


COMMENTARY ON TABLE VII

Fascism is by definition eclectic. It doesn't have a doctrine of its own, and yet it expresses ideologically its role as unifier of the capitalist (imperialist) forces, achiever of the reformist program, and mobiliser of the "middle classes". And it is not fortuitous that its conception is very similar to Stalinism. Like Stalinism, fascism is unable to relinquish certain essential bourgeois postulates such as the legal equivalence of individuals, the "will of the people", and the "popular" character of its rule. The point of departure becomes , however, not the individual subject, but the "Nation", the "People", or even the "Race", which assimilate physical motivations at the outset (see the national-socialist concept of "blood and soil") and express themselves in the State. The Individual is conceived as a "passive receptor" of the Nation/People's Ethical impulses, and of the Party/State's voluntarist and activist impulses.

TABLE VIII

SCHEME OF REVERSAL OF PRAXIS



COMMENTARY ON TABLE VIII

The correct Marxist praxis asserts that the consciousness of both the individual and the mass follow action; and that action follows the thrust of economic interest. Only within the class party does consciousness, and, in given circumstances, the decision to act, precede class conflict (Summary, 3).

Some groups devalue the function of the party and deny its indispensable role in the revolution. They thus relapse into workerist positions, or, worse still, have hesitations about the use of State power in the revolution. Such views need to be discarded. On an equally wrong track are those who consider the party as a grouping of conscious elements but fail to see its necessary connection with the physical class struggle, and its character as a product, as well as a factor, of history (Report, 8).

Tackling this question leads to the reestablishment of the interpretation of Marxist determinism as it stood when first enunciated, putting in their right place the behaviour of the single individual under the pressure of economic stimuli and the function of collective bodies such as the class and the party (Report, 9).

It is useful here to delineate the Marxist reversal of praxis in a schematic way. Within the individual, physical needs give rise to economic interest, and to almost automatic action to satisfy those needs; only afterwards do acts of will occur, and possibly consciousness and theoretical knowledge. Within the social class the process is the same, the difference being that forces which are conjoined are always enormously enhanced. In the party, the contribution made by all the individual and class influences which flow into it from below are shaped into the means of establishing a critical and theoretical view, and a will to act, which makes it possible to instill into individual proletarians and militants an explanation of situations and historical processes, and an ability to make correct decisions about actions and struggles (Report, 10).

Thus, whilst determinism denies the individual the possibility of achieving will and consciousness prior to action, the reversal of praxis does allow it within the party, and only within the party, as a result of a general historical elaboration. However, although will and consciousness can be attributed to the party, it is not the case that the party is formed by a concurrence of the consciousness and will of individual members of a group; and nor can such a group be in any way considered as free of the determining physical, economic and social factors weighing on the class as a whole(Report, 11).

Therefore, the so-called analysis which alleges that all the conditions for the revolution are in place but a revolutionary leadership is lacking is meaningless. It is correct to say that an organ of leadership is indispensable, but its arising depends on the general conditions of struggle themselves, and never on the cleverness or bravery of a leader or vanguard.

Such clarification of the relationships between economic/social and political events, must represent the basis for understanding the problem of the relations between revolutionary party and economic and trade union action (Report, 12).

Only in the Marxist Scheme is the sequence of Activity, Will and Consciousness, in both the Individual and the Class, found to be completely reversed in the Party. The Party's knowledge of social facts incorporates past, present and future, and attains the level of scientific theory; thus it is capable of exerting Will and taking Action

The purpose of the Scheme is merely to simplify the concepts of economic determinism. Within each Individual (consequently within the individual proletarian, too) it is not theoretical Consciousness which

determines the Will to act on the external environment but exactly the opposite, as shown in the Table by the upward pointing arrows : the impulsion of Physical need, via Economic interests, results in an unconscious Action; only much later is the action criticized and theorized, due to the intervention of other factors.

A combination of individuals, placed in the same economic circumstances, behaves similarly (as shown in the Table by the upward pointing arrows), but the concomitance of stimuli and reactions creates the basis for a clearer Will and, after that, Consciousness. These are only specified precisely in the class party, which brings together only a part of the class, but which elaborates, analyzes and strengthens the very wide experience drawn from all the various different impulses, stimuli and reactions. Only the party is able to reverse the direction of praxis. It possesses a Theory and therefore has knowledge of the way events unfold. The party, within specified limits, and depending on circumstances and relations of force, can take Decisions and initiatives, and influence the course of the struggle (as shown in the Table by the downward pointing arrows).

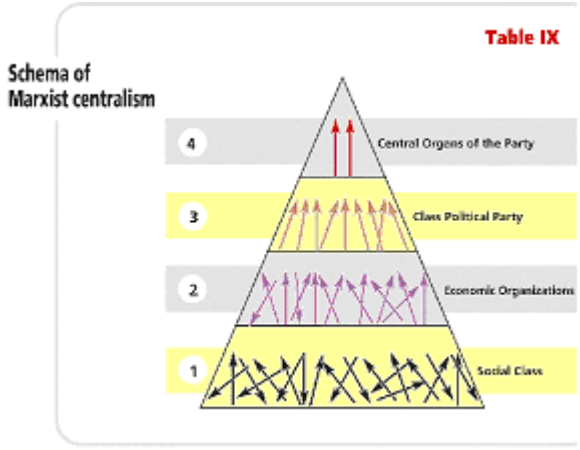
The arrows going from left to right represent the influences of the traditional order (forms of production); the arrows going from right to left show the revolutionary influences which oppose them.

The dialectical relationship resides in the fact that the revolutionary party is a conscious and voluntary factor of events, inasmuch as it is also the result of them, and of the conflict these events contain between the old forms of production and the new productive forces. Such a theoretical and active function of the party would, however, come to nothing if it were to sever its material links with the social environment, and with the primeval, material and physical class struggle.

THE TABLE IX

SCHEME OF MARXIST CENTRALISM

At the second meeting on September 1st, 1951 (Naples), after a reminder about the eight Tables discussed and on the fundamental themes summed up within them at the first meeting (Rome), there was introduced a ninth Table, entitled "The Scheme of Marxist Centralism". Attached to it there was a short, but sufficient, commentary explaining how it worked, and on the meaning of the Communist Left clear-cut position on the matter.



COMMENTARY ON TABLE IX

1. The individuals which make up the class are driven to take action in different directions. Some of them, if consulted and free to decide, would act in the interests of the opposing, dominant class.

2. The action of trade union members tends to be opposed to the interests of the Master's class, but in an immediate way, lacking the capacity to converge into a unique action and aim.

3. The militants in the political party, who are the result of the work within the class and its organizations, are prepared to take action along the unique, revolutionary resultant.

4. The leading organs of the party, emanating from its base, act in a revolutionary direction that is in keeping and continuity with its theory of organization and tactical methods.

The stance of the Left consists in the simultaneous struggle against two deviations:

a) The base, as long as it is democratically consulted (workerism, labourism, social-democratism), is entitled and sufficient to decide on what action the center takes.

b) The supreme center (political committee or party leader) is sufficient to decide on what action the party and the masses take (Stalinism, Cominformism), and has the right to discover "new forms" and "new courses".

Both deviations lead to the same result: the base is no longer the proletarian class, but rather the people, or the nation. According to Marx and Lenin, the ensuing direction is in the interest of the bourgeois ruling class.

CONCLUSION

The positions we have highlighted using the nine Tables correspond, in the form of written texts, to the 1922 Rome Theses and the 1926 Lyons Theses. They are invariable positions of revolutionary Marxism, and not clothes to be changed with each passing season. They do not express personal opinions, nor introduce changes to a theory that belongs to the working class and that was born, fully formed, along with it. What we are in the presence of are not personal documents; they are party texts.

II - Revolutionary Party and Economic Action

FROM SUMMARY

2. The second opportunist international historical crisis, marked by the collapse of the Third International, is to be ascribed to intermediatism; which holds that transitory, general political goals needed to be interposed between the bourgeois and the proletarian dictatorships. But the notion that we can avoid intermediatism by renouncing the specific economic demands of proletarian groups is also a mistake.

4. According to all the traditions of Marxism and of the Italian and International Left working and struggling inside the proletarian economic organizations is one of the indispensable conditions for

successful revolutionary struggle; along with the pressure of the productive forces on production relations, and with the correct theoretical, organizational and tactical continuity of the political party.

5. If it is true that during the various phases of the bourgeois historical course – revolutionary, reformist and anti-revolutionary – the dynamics of trade union activity have undergone profound changes (prohibition, tolerance, subjection), this doesn't alter the fact that it is organically indispensable for a layer of organizations to exist between the proletarian masses and the minority that joins the party; such organisms, politically neutral but accessible to workers alone, must be resurrected as the revolution approaches.

Before we pass on to examine what has changed in the union field in the period after the World Wars and totalitarianism, it is worth recalling the Italian Communist Left's previous stance on the Trade Union question.

1. Even before the Italian party was constituted, two key tactical issues were discussed at the Second Congress of the International in 1920: parliamentary action and trade-union action. The delegates of the anti-electionist current would now marshal against the so-called left-wing, which supported splitting the unions and giving up the attempt to conquer trade unions led by opportunists. All things considered, these currents situated the centre of revolutionary action in the trade unions and not in the party, and wanted them pure of bourgeois influence (Dutch tribunists, German KAPD, American Syndicalists, Shop Stewards, etc).

2. From then on the Left waged a bitter struggle against these movements analogous to the "Ordine Nuovo" group of Turin, which saw the revolutionary task as consisting in emptying the trade unions to the advantage of the movement for factory councils, with the latter interpreted as the framework of the economic and State organs of the proletarian revolution initiated under full-blown capitalism. These movements thus seriously confused the instruments with the timing of the revolutionary process.

3. The trade union and parliamentary questions are on an entirely different plane altogether. Parliament is clearly the organ of the bourgeois State which claims to represent all classes in society, and all revolutionary Marxists agree that it is impossible for it to form the basis for any other power than that of the bourgeoisie. The question is whether the use of parliamentary mandates can serve the aims of pro-insurrection and pro-dictatorship propaganda and agitation. Those opposed to this view would assert the view that, even given this restricted aim, our representatives would produce the opposite effect by participating in a bourgeois political organism.

4. Given that the trade unions are professional and economic associations, they will always bring together individuals of the same class, no matter who leads them. It is quite possible that those proletarians organized within them will elect representatives who are not just moderate but totally bourgeois, and that the unions will come directly under the sway of capitalist influences. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the trade unions are composed exclusively of workers and thus it will never be possible to say of them what we say about parliament, namely, that it is only susceptible to a bourgeois direction.

5. In Italy, before the foundation of the Communist Party, socialists refused to work in the catholic or republican unions. Later on, at the time of the great Confederazione Generale del Lavoro led mainly by

reformists and of the Unione Sindacale led by anarchists, communists would declare, unanimously and unhesitatingly, that they wouldn't be setting up new unions but instead would work inside and conquer the aforementioned ones and indeed work towards their unification. In the international field, the Italian party would unanimously support not only work in all the national social-democratic unions, but also the existence of the Red International Union (Profintern), which saw the Amsterdam Centre as unconquerable because of its links, by way of the International Labor Office, with the bourgeois League of Nations. The Italian Left was violently opposed to the proposal to liquidate the Profintern in order to constitute one single Trade Union International, still asserting, nonetheless, the principle of unity and internal conquest of the unions and national federations.

6. a) Proletarian union activity has caused significant changes in bourgeois policy over successive historical phases. The early revolutionary bourgeoisies prohibited any form of economic association as an attempt to reconstitute the illiberal regime of the mediaeval corporations, and any strike was violently suppressed, therefore, all early trade union movements took on revolutionary aspects. The Manifesto would soon announce that all economic and social movement lead to political movements: that there key importance lies in the ensuing extension of proletarian associations and coalitions, whilst their merely economic conquests are precarious and do not impair class exploitation.

b) In the following period, the bourgeoisie would come to understand the necessity of tackling the social question, and, with the precise aim of warding off the revolutionary solution, it would tolerate and legalize the unions and recognize their activity and demands; during this entire phase there were no wars and there was a relative increase in welfare up to 1914. Throughout this period, the work carried out in the unions was the fundamental element in developing strong socialist parties, who could clearly get large movements underway by applying the union lever.

The collapse of the Second International showed that the bourgeoisie had gained a decisive influence over a large part of the working class by means of its relations and compromises with the parliamentary and union chiefs, who almost everywhere dominated the party structures.

c) During the resurgence of the movement which followed the Russian Revolution and the ending of the imperialist war, it was precisely a matter of drawing conclusions from the disastrous failure of the previous trade-unionist and political outlook. There was the attempt to draw the world proletariat onto revolutionary terrain by removing the political and parliamentary traitors through party splits, and by ensuring that the new communist parties were able to eject bourgeois agents from the largest proletarian organizations. This was highly successful in several countries, and capitalism would discover that in order to impede the revolutionary offensive it had to strike back violently, and outlaw not just the parties but also the unions within which the parties were working. Nevertheless, through all the complex vicissitudes of these bourgeois totalitarianisms, outright abolition of the union movement was never adopted. On the contrary, the constitution of a new union network was advocated and put into effect, fully controlled by the counter-revolutionary party, and, in one way or another, declared to be a single and unitarian body, wholly faithful to the administrative and State mechanism.

Even where, after the Second World War, for purely contingent reasons, capitalist totalitarianism appeared to have been substituted by democratic liberalism, the union dynamic previously set in motion continued to move uninterruptedly towards State control and insertion into the official administrative organisms. Fascism – dialectical accomplisher of the old reformist demands – put into effect the legal recognition of the union; in this way the union could be the office holder of collective contracts with the

employers, laying the way open for the entire union organization to end up effectively imprisoned through being completely tied to the bourgeois class power.

Such an outcome is crucial for the defense and conservation of the capitalist regime precisely because influencing and making use of the associational framework of trade union organizations is an indispensable stage for every revolutionary movement led by the communist party.

7. Clearly, these radical changes in the unions weren't only due to the political strategy of the antagonistic classes and their parties and governments, they were also significantly linked to the changed nature of the economic relations between employer and wage-laborer. In the early union struggles, when the worker tried to confront the monopoly of production with a monopoly of labor-power, the sharpness of the conflict derived from the fact that the proletarian had absolutely no resources except his daily wage. During a time when the worker was deprived of any reserve fund of consumer goods, every struggle became literally a matter of life and death.

The Marxist theory of increasing immiseration is confirmed by the continuous increase in the number of pure proletarians and by the closely related expropriation of the last reserves of layers of the proletarian and middle-classes, a process which is sped up a hundredfold by wars, destruction, monetary inflation and so on. Whilst increasing immiseration is undoubtedly still the general trend, and whilst it is true that in many countries the unemployment figures are enormous and proletarians are just plain massacred, nevertheless, we can see that wherever industrial production flourishes, a whole range of reformist assistance and providential measures exist for the employed worker. These constitute a new type of economic reserve representing a small stake in wealth, and this makes the position of the worker in those areas in a certain sense analogous to the artisan and small peasant. The wage-laborer thus has something to lose, and this makes him hesitant, and even opportunist when union struggles break out and worse still when there are strikes and rebellions. This was a phenomenon remarked on by Marx, Engels and Lenin with regard to the so-called labor aristocracy.

8. Apart from the question of whether or not in such and such a country the revolutionary communist party should participate in the work of given types of union, the elements of the question recapitulated so far lead to the conclusion that any prospect of a general revolutionary movement will depend on the presence of the following essential factors: 1) a large, numerous proletariat of pure wage-earners, 2) a sizeable movement of associations with an economic content including a large part of the proletariat, 3) a strong revolutionary class party, which, composed of a militant minority of workers, must have been enabled, in the course of the struggle to oppose, broadly and effectively, its own influence within the union movement to that of the bourgeois class and bourgeois power.

The factors which have led to establishing the necessity for each and every one of these three conditions, the effective combination of which will determine the outcome of the struggle, were arrived at: a) by a correct application of the theory of historical materialism, which links the basic economic needs of the individual to the dynamics of the great social revolutions, b) by a correct interpretation of the proletarian revolution as regards the problems of the economy, politics, and the State, c) by the lessons derived from the history of all the organized movements of the working class - as much from the degenerations and defeats as from the outstanding achievements and victories.

The general line of the perspective outlined here does not rule that there will be all kinds of different situations arising in the course of the modification, dissolution, and reconstitution of associations of the

union type; all those associations, that is, which arise in various countries, either linked to the traditional organizations which once upon a time declared themselves as based on the class struggle approach, or else more or less tied to the most diverse methods and social tendencies, even conservative ones.

Doctrine of the Body Possessed by the Devil (1951)

It is vital to be quite clear about the question of state capitalism in order to reset the compasses that have lost their bearings.[1]

We have managed to gather many contributions to this question from the range of traditional concepts of the marxist school that show that state capitalism is not only the latest aspect of the bourgeois world, but that its forms, even complete ones, are very old and correspond with the very emergence of the capitalist type of production. They served as the main factors in primitive accumulation and long preceded the fictitious and conventional environment of private enterprise, of free initiative and other fine things which are found far more in the field of apology than in the real world.

As we have already said, there are many groups in the camp of the left communist anti-stalinists who do not see things in this way. We say to them, on the basis of earlier texts, for example: “Wherever it may be, wherever there is the economic form of the market, capitalism is a social force. It is a class force. And it has the political state at its disposal.”[2]

And let us add the formula which, for us, expresses very well the most recent aspects of the world economy: “State capitalism is not a subjugation of capitalism to the state, but a firmer subjugation of the state to capital.”

These groups, however, find the terms of the first thesis were: “correct until 1900, the epoch of the opening of imperialist expansion and, as such, remain up to date, but are incomplete when the evolution of capitalism gave to the state the function of taking over the final moments of such an evolution from private initiative.”

And they continue by saying that we will be late-comers in the world of economic “culture” if we fail to understand that where this thesis fails to fit in with history, it ceases to be marxist, and if we do not request the addition of the study of the state economy to Marx’s analysis, taking this from texts written by the powerful personality of the economist Kaiser.[3] A bad habit! A text which seeks to establish given relations between things and facts is checked against things and facts and not against the signature on the book, which is based on the more or less powerful or powerless personality of the author.

Personalities? Stick them up your Kaiser as far as we are concerned! And if in 1950 the idol of private enterprise is corroded, we well know that Sir Karl reduced this to minute fragments a good century ago: you see we know this because we are stubborn late-comers, lazy in reading the latest books...

In Marxism, the concept of private initiative does not exist: look down at the compass dial, not up to heaven like the person who hears paradoxes (paradox — something which common sense says is incorrect when it is very much correct).

We have said in thousands of speeches of propaganda that the socialist programme is for the abolition of private property of the means of production, which is borne out by Marx'sCritique of the Gotha Programme and Lenin on Marx. We said property and not private economy. The precapitalist economy was private, or individual. Property is a term which does not indicate a purely economic relationship, but also a legal one and brings into discussion not just the productive forces, but also the relations of production. Private property means private right sanctified by bourgeois legal codes: it brings us to the state and to power, a matter of force and violence in the hands of a class. Our old and valid formula means nothing if it does not already contain the concept that in order to overcome the capitalist economy, the juridical and state structure corresponding to it must also be overcome.

These basic concepts should suffice to reject the insidious content of the following thesis: the social programme is enacted when individual property becomes state property, when the factory is nationalised.

Let us be quite clear, the groups with which we are in dispute do not state that state capitalism is already socialism, but fall into saying that it is a third and new form between private capitalism and socialism. They say in fact that there are two distinct periods: that in which "the state has more of the older policing function than that of involvement in the economy", and that in which "it gives the maximum power to the exercise of force specifically to protect the economy centralised in it". We say that in these two formulae, which are more or less faithfully reproduced, and even more so the two historical periods, that capitalism is the same, the ruling class is the same, and the historical state is the same. The economy is the entire social field in which production and distribution occur and includes the men participating in this: the state is a specific organisation acting in the social field, and the state in the capitalist period has always had the function of policeman and protector of the interests of a class and a type of production corresponding historically with this class. The state concentrating the economy within itself is an incongruous formula. For marxism, the state is always present in the economy — its power and legal violence are economic factors from first to last. One can best explain it this way: in certain cases, the state, with its administration, assumes the management of industrial concerns; and if it assumes the management of all of them, then it will have centralised the management of the concerns, but not of the economy. Especially so long as distribution takes place with money prices (that these are fixed officially does not matter) the state is a firm among firms, a contractor among contractors; all the worse in that it considers asfirms each of its national enterprises, as with the Labourites, Churchillians and Stalinists. Getting away from this situation is not a question of administrative measures, but a problem of revolutionary force, of class war.

The problem is posed better in an interesting bulletin published by the comrades of the "Groupe français de la gauche communiste internationale"[4] of which — with great pleasure — we do not know the names and personalities. Sensible questions are asked on the problem which deserve further development, and the problem is posed in contrast to the vision of the noted Chaulieu group, which is influenced by the theory of "decadence" and of the transition from capitalism to barbarism which inspires in them, however, the same horror as that of the "bureaucratic" regimes. A theory in which one does not know what on earth the compasses are indicating until they prattle about marxism. There are elements in the internal bulletin of our movement[5] on thedecadence of capitalism where we deal with the false theory of the descending curve. Without any haughtiness scientifically speaking, it is only foolishness to tell a story which reads: Oh capitalism, grab us, swindle us, reduce us to a worn out old

dog not worth a kick in the ribs, we will quickly recover — all this just means that you are decaying. Just imagine that it is decaying...

As for barbarism, it is the opposite of civilisation and so of bureaucracy. Our barbarian ancestors, lucky them, did not have organisational apparatuses based (old Engels!) on two elements — a defined ruling class and a defined territory. There was the clan, the tribe, but still not the civitas. Civitas means city and also state. Civilisation is the opposite of barbarism and means state organisation, therefore necessarily bureaucracy. More state means more civilisation means more bureaucracy, while class civilisations follow one upon the other. This is what marxism says. It is not the return to barbarism, but the start of supercivilisation, which is duping us everywhere, that the monsters of contemporary state super-organisations dominate. But let us leave the members ofSocialisme ou barbarie to their existential crisis. The bulletin we quoted refutes them in an article with the correct title: Deux ans de bavardage: Two years of chattering — No chattering here, please note!

Let us come to the balanced formula with which the French comrades formulated the question — the definition of the ruling class of the state capitalist countries, the exactitude or insufficiency of the definition: capitalism heir to the liberal revolutions.

The conclusion presented by this group is correct: stop presenting the bureaucracy as an autonomous class, perfidiously warmed-up within the proletariat, and instead consider it as a huge apparatus linked to a given historical situation in the world-wide evolution of capitalism. Here we are on the right track. The bureaucracy, which all class societies have known, is not a class, it is not a productive force, it is one of the “forms” of production appropriate to a given cycle of class rule. In certain historical phases it appears to be the protagonist on the stage — we too were about to say in the phase of decadence — they are in fact pre-revolutionary phases and those of maximum expansion. Why call the society ready for the midwife of the revolution, the obstetrician who will give birth to the new society, decadent? The pregnant woman is not decadent, but the sterile one is. Chaulieu sees the inflated belly of capitalist society and mistakes the inadequate skill of the obstetrician confronted with the swollen uterus with the imaginary infertility of the pregnant woman. They accuse the Kremlin bureaucracy of giving us a still-born socialism due to their abuse of power, while the fault lies in not having taken up the forceps of the revolution to open up the belly of Europe-America, driven by flourishing capital accumulation, and having made a useless effort on an infertile womb. And perhaps only on an infertile womb, inverting the battle for grain with the battle for seed.[6]

Let us go on to the purely marxist-economic point after this brief clarification. The statement “capitalism heir to the liberal revolutions”, which correctly made the central point, contains the precise historical thesis: capitalism has a cycle, a single class course, from the bourgeois to the proletarian revolution, and it cannot be split into several cycles without renouncing revolutionary marxism. But, it must be said, as it is said a little further on, capitalism appeared from the bourgeois (not liberal) revolutions or, better still, “anti-feudal” revolutions. In fact liberalism became the goal and motive of these revolutions, their general idea, only through bourgeois apologetics. Marx rejected this and for him the historical goal of these revolutions is the destruction of the obstacles to the domination of the capitalist class.

Only in that sense is the abbreviated formulation correct. It is quite clear: capital can easily get rid of liberalism without changing its nature. And this is also clear: the direction of thedegeneration, the degeneration of the revolution in Russia does not pass from the revolution for communism to the revolution for a developed kind of capitalism, but to a pure capitalist revolution. It runs in parallel with

world-wide capitalist domination which, by successive steps, eliminates old feudal and Asiatic forms in various zones. While the historical situation in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries caused the capitalist revolution to take liberal forms, in the twentieth century it must have totalitarian and bureaucratic ones.

The difference is not due to basic qualitative variations of capitalism, but to the huge diversity in quantitative development, as with the intensity in each metropole, and the diffusion over the planet's surface.

The fact that capitalism decreasingly adopts for its conservation, just as for its development and enlargement, liberal chit-chat and ever increasingly uses police methods and bureaucratic suffocation, when the historical line is clearly seen, does not cause the slightest hesitation over the certainty that the same means must serve in the proletarian revolution. It will make use of this violence, power, state and bureaucracy, despotism as the Manifesto called it with a yet more dreadful term 103 years ago. Then it will know how to get rid of all of them.

The surgeon does not put down the blood stained lancet before the new life has emerged and has drawn its first breath, the hymn to life.

Yesterday

Does not the basic form of capitalism disappear with the disappearance of the private individuals who, as owners of factories, organise production? This is the objection in the economic field which attracts many people's attention.

"The capitalist" is named a hundred times by Marx. Besides, the word "capital" comes from the word caput, meaning head, and so traditionally capital is any wealth linked, intestate, to any singular titular person. However, the thesis to which we have dedicated expositions for a long time doesn't contain anything new, but only explains, remaining true, that the marxist analysis of capitalism does not consider as vital the element of the person of the factory owner.

Quotations from Marx would be innumerable: let us then conclude with just one.

Let us take the so called "classic" capitalism of the "free" factory. Marx always put these in quotation marks, they in fact characterise the bourgeois school he fought and destroyed with his economic concepts — this is the point that is always forgotten.

One naturally supposes that Mr. X, the first capitalist to appear, had a sum of money to hand. Good. Entire sections of Marx's work reply with the question: how come? The replies vary: theft, robbery, usury, black marketeering or, as we have seen more than a few times, royal charter or law of the land.

So X, instead of stashing his gold coins in a sack, so as to run his fingers through them every night, acts as a citizen imbued with liberal and humanitarian social ideals. He nobly faces the risks and circulates his capital.

So, first element accumulated money.

Second element, acquisition of raw materials, the classic raw cotton bales, of so many little chapters and paragraphs.

Third element, acquisition of the works where he sets up plant and looms to spin and weave.

Fourth element, technical organisation and management. The classic capitalist looks after this himself. He has studied, gone on trips and journeys and has thought out new systems to work the bales and, by producing thread in quantity, cuts costs. He will dress cheaply yesterday's urchins and even the blacks of Central Africa who were used to going about naked.

Fifth element, the workers at the looms. They do not have to bring an ounce of raw cotton or a single spare spool — that happened in the semi-barbaric times of individual production. But at the same time there will be trouble if they remove a single thread of cotton to patch their trousers. They are rewarded with a just equivalent for their labour time.[7]

Through the combination of these elements, one achieves the one that is the motive and the reason for the whole process: the mass of yarn or textiles. The essential fact is that only the capitalist can take this to market and the financial return is his and his alone.

Always the same old story. Yes, you know the little sum — the cost of the raw cotton, something for the wear and tear on plant and machinery, the workers wages. Receipts: the price of the product sold. This is greater than the sum of the costs and the difference constitutes the profit margin of the factory.

It matters little that the capitalist does what he likes with the money he gets back — he could do that with his original cash already without manufacturing anything. The important fact is that after restocking in everything to the level of his original investment, he still has a mass of money on hand. He could consume it himself, certainly. But socially he cannot, and something forces him to in large part invest it, to translate it into capital again.

Marx says that the life cycle of capital consists only in its movement as value perpetually set in motion so as to multiply itself. The desire of the person of the capitalist is not required in this, nor would he be able to impede it. Economic determinism not only obliges the worker to sell his labour time, but similarly the capitalist to invest and accumulate. Our criticism of liberalism does not consist in saying there is a free class and a slave class. There is an exploited one and a profiteering one, but they are both tied to the laws of the historical capitalist mode of production.

The process is therefore not within the factory, but is social and can only be understood as such. Already in Marx there is the hypothesis of the separation of the various elements from the person of the capitalist entrepreneur, which is substituted with a share participation in the profit margin of the productive enterprise. Firstly, the money can be got from a lender, a bank, who receives periodic interest. Secondly, in such a case the materials acquired with that money are not really the property of the entrepreneur, but of the financier. Thirdly, in England the owner of a building, house or factory may not be the owner of the land on which it stands: thus houses and factories can be rented. Nothing prohibits the same for looms and other machinery and tools. Fourth element, the entrepreneur may lack technical and administrative managerial capacities, he hires engineers and accountants. Fifth element, workers' wages — evidently their payment too is made from loans from the financier.

The strict function of the entrepreneur is reduced to that of having seen that there is a market demand for a certain mass of products which have a sale price above the total cost of the preceding elements. Here the capitalist class is restricted to the entrepreneurial class, which is a social and political force, and

the principal basis of the bourgeois state. But the strata of entrepreneurs does not coincide with that of money, land, housing and factory owners and commodity suppliers.

There are two basic forms and points required to recognise capitalism. One is that the right of the productive enterprise to dispose of the products and the sales proceeds (controlled prices or requisitions of commodities do not impair the right to such proceeds) is unimpaired and unimpairable. What guards this central right in contemporary society is from the outset a class monopoly, it is a structure of power, and the state, the judiciary and police punish whoever breaks this norm. Such is the condition for enterprise production. The other point is that the social classes are not isolated one from another. There are no longer, historically speaking, castes or orders. Belonging to the landed aristocracy was something that lasted more than one lifespan, as the title was handed down through the generations. Ownership of buildings or large finances lasts on average at least a lifespan. The “average period of personal membership of a given individual to the ruling class” tends to become even shorter. For this reason we are concerned about the extremely developed form of capital, not the capitalist. This director does not need fixed people. It finds and recruits them wherever it wants and changes them in ever more mind bending shifts.

Today

Here we cannot demonstrate that Lenin’s “parasitic capitalism” does not mean that power lies more in the hands of the financial capitalists than in those of the industrial capitalists. Capitalism could not spread and expand without growing more complicated and progressively separating into the various elements which enter into the competition for speculative gain: finance, technology, equipment, administration. The tendency is for the largest margin and social control to slip from the grasp of positive and active elements to become concentrated in the hands of speculators and business banditry.

We shall therefore fly from Marx to... Don Sturzo.

This latter, with his habitual prudence, took in hand the INA scandal[8]. What he said is interesting: “I cannot say what happened during fascism because I was in America, but where these things are the order of the day, many others may come to light!” We can be sure of it. The capitalist parasitism of contemporary Italy beats that of Mussolini, and both remain child’s play in comparison with wheeler-dealer US business.

INA had huge finances because it collected all the workers’ social security contributions, like other similar state institutions with their well known initials. It pays slowly so its safes are stuffed with ready cash. It therefore has the right (since it has no head, no body and no soul — it is for good reason that we are in the civilisation of habeus corpus) not to let such wealth lie idle, so it employs and invests it. What good luck for the modern entrepreneur! He is the capitalist without capital, just as dialectically modern capital is capital without the boss, acephalous.

The bad business, the clever Sicilian priest says (those in the gallery yearn soon to make an exaggerated oration at his funeral) was the formation of too many front companies under the INA.

What the hell are front companies? Some types, versed in business who have luxurious offices and have crept into the economic and political outer offices, who do not have a penny or registered stock or buildings to their names, (they do not even rent houses, but live in big hotels, they know Vanoni[9] backwards, but Vanoni does not know them[10])”plan” a given deal and register a company

with the plan as its sole asset. INA, or some similar body, will give it the money and if some “special law” is required, let us say for raising cocks in old army bases, a problem is hastily brought to the attention of national leaders, especially by a forceful speech on government ineptitude by one of the opposition MPs, which solves all.

In fact, once the common impresario went to the bank to borrow money to use in the business planned. The bank replied: good, here it is, where are your securities? Out with your property and other titles... But a state-run organisation does not have these trifling needs: the national good is enough for it to pull out the cash. The rest of the tale tells itself. If the old impresario with his plan and production project created not cocks but cock-ups, he was finished — he did not get his money back and he exited from the boss class humiliated.

Our front company with its brilliant general staff does not live in this fear: if it produces cocks, they are sold to poultry farmers for a good price, money is earned. If, supposing it does not produce cocks or no one wants cocks, no matter — hand-outs, indemnities and profit shares have all been cashed in and INA pays for the mistaken cock farm plan.

We have explained what state capitalism (or the economy centralised in the state) means by this small and banal example. It should be said that INA’s loss is shared by all the poor unfortunates who pay into its coffers another cut of their daily wages.

State capitalism is finance concentrated in the state at the disposal of passing wheeler-dealers of enterprise initiative. Never has free enterprise been so free as when the profit remained but the loss risk has been removed and transferred to the community.

The state alone can print as much money as it wants and can deal with the forger. The progressive expropriation of small owners and capitalist concentration in successive historical forms is based on this initial principal of force. We have with reason repeatedly stated that no economy in which firms present accounts and exchange is carried out in money, can avoid such laws.

The power of the state is therefore based on the convergent interests of these profiteers benefiting from speculative plans of firms and from their web of deep-seated international relations.

How can these states not lend capital to those gangs which never settle their debts with the state except by forcing the exploited classes to pay up? There is the proof that these “capitalising” states are in chronic debt to the bourgeois class, or if you want fresh proof, it lies in the fact that they are obliged to borrow, taking back their money and paying interest on it.

The socialist administration of a “centralised economy” would not provide outside takings to any “plan” just as it would not pay interest. Besides, it would not deal in money.

Capital is only concentrated in the state for the convenience of surplus-value and profit manoeuvring. It remains “available to all” or available to the components of the entrepreneurial class — no longer simply production entrepreneurs, but openly business entrepreneurs — they no longer produce commodities, but, Marx has already said, they produce surplus value.

The capitalist as person no longer serves in this — capital lives without him but with its same function multiplied 100 fold. The human subject has become useless. A class without members to compose it? The state not at the service of a social group, but an impalpable force, the work of the Holy Ghost or of

the Devil? Here is Sir Charles's irony. We offer the promised quotation: "By turning his money into commodities which serve as the building materials for a new product, and as factors in the labour process, by incorporating living labour into their lifeless objectivity, the capitalist simultaneously transforms value, i.e. past labour in its objectified and lifeless form, into capital, value which can perform its own valorisation process, an animated monster which begins to 'work', 'as if possessed by the devil'."[11]

Capital must be seized by the horns.

Footnotes

[1] Cf. Bussole impazzite (compasses struck with madness).

[2] Proprieta' e capitale (Iskra, Milan, 1980) p. 130

[3] Henry Kaiser proposed "social" capitalism with workers sharing the profits.

[4] A bulletin issued in September 1951 by the group that later became the French section of the International Communist Party. Chaulieu = Castoriadis, a founder of the groupSocialisme ou barbarie.

[5] "Il rovesciamento della prassi" now in Partito e classe (Milan, 1972) pp. 120-1, 130. "This theory (of the descending curve) comes from gradualist reformism: there are no drops, shaking or leaps." (Point 4)

[6] Reference to the Stalin-Khruschev attempt to increase corn yields.

[7] Publishers Note — Bordiga's use of the term "labour time" is perhaps a slip of the pen. Basic for Marx is that despite the appearance that workers are paid for their labour or labour time, they actually sell and receive payment for their labour power — their capacity to labour. The value of this labour power is its cost of reproduction: "the value of the means of subsistence necessary for the maintenance of its owner." (Capital Vol. I, p 274) While the wage form gives the appearance that all a worker's labour is paid for, for Marx part of workers' labour time reproduces the value of their labour power and is thus "paid" — and the rest of it is surplus to this and thus is "unpaid". (See Capital Vol. I, chapters 6 & 7)

[8] Don Sturzo: former priest, leader of the catholic right in the Christian Democrats, opposed to corruption in the party and the state. INA (Istituto Nazionale delle Assicurazioni) launched in 1912 to become the state monopoly, liberal opposition led to it being made into a state body but maintaining "greater autonomy and a more strikingly private type of internal structure than state bodies" (Candeloro Storia dell' Italia moderna, Milan, 1974, Vol. VII, p. 307). It could therefore operate in the way described in the text.

[9] Publisher's Note — Vanoni was the Italian Minister of Finance of the day.

[10] Cf. footnote 8 above.

[11] Capital Vol. I, p. 302. The final quotation from Goethe's Faust, is more correctly translated as "as if its body were by love possessed".

Characteristic Theses of the Party (1951)

I. Theory

The doctrine of the Party is founded on the principles of the historical materialism of the critical communism set out by Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto, in Capital and their other fundamental works and which formed the basis of the Communist International constituted in 1919 and of the Italian Communist Party founded at Leghorn in 1921 (section of the Communist International).

1. In the present capitalist social regime an ever increasing contrast between productive forces and production relations is developing. This contrast reveals itself in the opposing interests and the class struggle between the proletariat and the ruling bourgeoisie.

2. The present production relations are protected by the bourgeois State. Even when democratic elections are used and whatever the form of the representative system may be, it is always the exclusive organ of the capitalist class.

3. The proletariat cannot crush or modify the mechanism of capitalist production relations, source of its exploitation, without wrecking bourgeois power through violence.

4. The class Party is the indispensable organ for the proletarian revolutionary struggle. The Communist Party consists of the most advanced and resolute part of the proletariat, unites the efforts of the working masses transforming their struggles for group interests and contingent issues into the general struggle for the revolutionary emancipation of the proletariat. Propagating the revolutionary theory among the masses, organising the material means of action, leading the working class all along its struggle, by securing the historical continuity and the international unity of the movement, are duties of the Party.

5. After it has knocked down the power of the capitalist State, the proletariat must completely destroy the old State apparatus in order to organise itself as a ruling class and set up its own dictatorship. It will deny all functions and political rights to any individual of the bourgeois class as long as they survive socially, founding the organs of the new regime exclusively on the productive class. Such is the programme which the Communist Party sets itself and which is characteristic of it. It is the Party alone which therefore represents, organises and directs the proletarian dictatorship. The necessary defence of the proletarian State against all counter-revolutionary attempts can only be secured by taking from the bourgeoisie and from all the parties, enemies of proletarian dictatorship, any means of agitation and political propaganda, and by the proletariat's armed organisation, able to repulse all internal and external attacks.

6. Only the force of the proletarian State will be able to put systematically into effect the necessary measures for intervening in the relations of the social economy, by means of which the collective management of production and distribution will take the place of the capitalist system.

7. This transformation of the economy and consequently of the whole social life will lead to the gradual elimination of the necessity for the political State which will progressively become an apparatus for the rational administration of human activities. In the face of the capitalist world and the workers' movement following the second World War the position of the Party is founded on the following points:

8. In the course of the first half of the twentieth century the capitalist social system has been developing, in the economic field, by creating monopolistic trusts among the employers, and by trying to control and to manage production and exchanges according to control plans with State management of whole sectors of production. In the political field, there has been an increase of the police and army potential of the State, all governments adopting a more totalitarian form. All these are neither new sorts of social organisations as a transition from capitalism to socialism, nor revivals of pre-bourgeois political regimes. On the contrary, they are definite forms of a more and more direct and exclusive management of power and State by the most developed forces of capital.

This course excludes the progressive, pacifist and evolutionist interpretations of the becoming of the bourgeois regime, and confirms the prevision of the concentration and of the antagonistic arraying of the class forces. The proletariat in order to confront its enemies' growing potential with strengthened revolutionary energy, must repel the illusory revival of democratic liberalism and constitutional guarantees. The Party must not even accept this as a means of agitation: it must historically get rid once and for all, of the practice of alliances, even for transitory issues, with the middle class as well as with the pseudo-proletarian and reformist parties.

9. The world imperialistic wars show that the crisis of disaggregation of capitalism is inevitable as it has entered the phase when its expansion, instead of signifying a continual increment of the productive forces, is conditioned by repeated and ever-growing destructions. These wars have caused repeated deep crises in the workers' world organisation because the dominant classes could impose on them military and national solidarity with one or another of the belligerents. The only historical alternative to be set against such a situation is the awakening of the internal class struggle, until the civil war of the working masses to overthrow the power of all bourgeois states and of world coalitions, with the reconstitution of the International Communist Party as an autonomous force, independent of any organised political or military power.

10. The proletarian State, being its apparatus an instrument and a weapon for the struggle in a transition historical period, does not draw its force from constitutional canons and representative systems. The most complete historical example of such a State is up to the present that of the Soviets (workers' councils) which were created during the October 1917 Russian revolution, when the working class armed itself under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party alone; during the totalitarian seizure of power, the wiping out of the Constituent Assembly, the struggle to repulse the external attacks of bourgeois governments and to crush the internal rebellion of defeated classes, of middle and petty-bourgeois strata and of opportunist parties, inevitable allies of the counter-revolution at the decisive moment.

11. The integral realisation of socialism within the limits of one country is inconceivable and the socialist transformation cannot be carried out without insuccess and momentary set-backs. The defence of the proletarian regime against the ever-present dangers of degeneration is possible only if the proletarian State is always solidary with the international struggle of the working class of each country against its own bourgeoisie, its State and its army; this struggle permits of no respite even in wartime. This co-ordination can only be secured if the world communist Party controls the politics and programme of the States where the working class has vanquished.

II. Tasks of the Communist Party

1. The proletariat can only free itself from the capitalist exploitation if it fights under a revolutionary political organ: the Communist Party.

2. The chief aspect of the political struggle in the Marxist sense is the civil war and the armed uprising by which a class overthrows the power of the opposed dominant class and sets up its own power. Such a struggle can only succeed if it is led by the Party organisation.

3. Neither the struggle against the power of the exploiting class nor the successive uprooting of the capitalist economic structures can be achieved without the political revolutionary party: the proletarian dictatorship is indispensable all along the historical period where such tremendous changes will take place and will be exercised openly by the Party.

4. The Party defends and propagates the theory of the movement for the socialist revolution; it defends and strengthens its inner organisation by propagating the communist theory and programme and by being constantly active in the rank of the proletariat wherever the latter is forced to fight for its economic interests; such are its tasks before, during and after the struggle of the armed proletariat for state power.

5. The Party is not made up of all members of the proletariat or even of its majority. It is the organisation of the minority which has, collectively, reached and mastered revolutionary tactics in theory and in practice; in other words, which sees clearly the general objectives of the historic movement of the proletariat in the whole world and for the whole of the historical course which separates the period of its formation from that of its final victory. The Party is not formed on the basis of individual consciousness; it is not possible for each worker to become conscious and still less to master the class doctrine in a cultural way, neither is this possible for each militant nor even for the leaders of the Party as individuals. This consciousness lies in the organic unity of the Party.

Any conception which makes the progress of revolutionary emancipation of the working class derive from individual acts or on the contrary from mass action without a party framework must therefore be rejected. In the same way we must reject any conception of the party as a group of enlightened scholars or conscious individuals. On the contrary, the Party is the organic tissue whose function inside the working class is to carry out its revolutionary task in all its aspects and in its successive phases.

6. Marxism has always energetically rejected the theory which proposes to the proletariat only trade, industrial or factory associations, theory which considers that these associations can, by themselves, lead the class struggle to its historical end: the conquest of power and the transformation of society. Incapable of facing the immense task of the social revolution on its own, the union is however indispensable to mobilise the proletariat on a political and revolutionary level. This however is possible only if the Communist Party is present and its influence inside the union grows. The party can only work inside entirely proletarian unions where membership is voluntary and where no given political, religious or social opinions are forced on members. This is not the case with confessional unions, with those where membership is compulsory and with those which have become an integrant part of the State system.

The Party will never set up economic associations which exclude those workers who do not accept its principles and leadership. But the Party recognises without any reserve that not only the situation which precedes insurrectional struggle but also all phases of substantial growth of Party influence amongst the

masses cannot arise without the expansion between the Party and the working class of a series of organisations with short term economic objectives with a large number of participants. Within such organisations the party will set a network of communist cells and groups, as well as a communist fraction in the union.

7.In periods when the working class is passive, the Party must anticipate the forms and promote the constitution of organisations with immediate economic aims. These may be unions grouped according to trade, industry, factory committees or any other known grouping or even quite new organisations. The Party always encourages organisations which favour Contact between workers at different localities and different trades and their common action. It rejects all forms of closed organisations.

8. In any Situation, the Party refuses at the same time the idealist and utopist outlook which makes social transformation dependent on a circle of "elected" apostles and heroes; the libertarian outlook which makes it dependent on the revolt of individuals or unorganised masses; the trade union or economists' outlook which entrusts it to apolitical organisations, whether they preach the use of violence or not; the volunteristic and sectarian outlook which does not recognise that class rebellion rises out of a series of collective actions well prior to a clear theoretical consciousness and even to resolute will action, and which, as a result, recommends the forming of a small "elite" isolated from working class trade unions or, which comes to the same, leaning on trade unions which exclude non communists. This last mistake, which has historically characterised the German K.A.P.D. and Dutch Tribunists [The members of Kommunistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (KAPD) in Germany and of the Dutch group of "Tribune" review, lead by Gorter and Pannekoek, that definitely abandoned the C.I. in 1921.], has always been fought against by the Marxist Italian Left.

The differences for reasons of strategy and tactics which led our current to break away from the IIIrd International cannot be discussed without reference to the different historical phases of the proletarian movement.

III. Historical Waves of Opportunist Degeneration

1. It is impossible, unless we want to give way to idealism or to mystical, ethical or aesthetical considerations which are in complete opposition to Marxism, to assert that in all historical phases of the proletarian movement the same intransigence is necessary, that any alliance, any united front, all compromise is to be refused on principle. Quite on the contrary, it is only on a historical basis that questions of class and party strategy and tactics can be solved. For this reason, it is the development of the proletarian class throughout the world between the bourgeois and the socialist revolutions which must be considered, and not particularities of time and place that nourish casuistical politics and which leave practical questions to the whim of groups or steering committees.

2. The proletariat itself is above all the product of capitalist economy and industrialisation; like communism it cannot be born of the inspiration of individuals, brotherhoods or political clubs, but only of the struggle of the proletarians themselves. In the same way, the irrevocable victory of capitalism over those forms which have preceded it historically, that is the victory of the bourgeoisie over the feudal and land-owning aristocracy and over the other classes characteristic of the old regime, be it Asiatic or European or of other continents, is a condition for communism.

At the time of the Communist Manifesto, modern industrial development was still at its beginnings and present only in a very few countries. In order to speed up the explosion of modern class struggle, the proletariat had to be encouraged to struggle, armed, at the sides of the revolutionary bourgeoisies during the antifeudal insurrections or those of national liberation. In this way the workers' participation in the great French revolution and its defence against the European coalitions right up to napoleonic times, is part of the history of the workers' struggle and this in spite of the fact that from the very beginning the bourgeois dictatorship ferociously quelled the first communist inspired social struggles.

Because of the defeat of the bourgeois revolutions of 1848, this strategy of alliance between proletariat and bourgeoisie against the classes of the old regime valid, in the eyes of Marxists, until 1871, in view of the fact that this feudal regime still persists in Russia, in Austria and in Germany and that the national unity of Italy, Germany and the east European countries is a necessary condition of Europe's industrial development.

3. 1871 is a clear turning-point in history. The struggle against Napoleon III and his dictatorship is in fact directed against a capitalistic and not a feudal form; it is at the same time the product and proof of the mobilisation of the two fundamental and enemy classes of modern society. Although it sees in Napoleon an obstacle to the bourgeois development of Germany, revolutionary Marxism goes immediately on the side of the anti- bourgeois struggle which will be that of all parties of the Commune, first workers' dictatorship in history. After this date, the proletariat can no longer choose between contending parties or national armies in so far as any restoration of pre-bourgeois forms has become socially impossible in two big areas: Europe to the confines of the Ottoman and tsarist empires on the one hand, and England and North America on the other.

A. Opportunism at the end of the 19th Century

4. If we disregard Bakouninism during the first, International and Sorelism during the second, as they have nothing to do with Marxism, the social-democratic revisionism represents the first opportunist wave within the proletarian Marxist movement. Its vision was the following: once victory by the bourgeoisie over the old regime was universally secured, a historical phase without insurrections and without wars opens up before humanity; socialism becomes possible by gradual evolution and without violence, on the basis of the extension of modern industry and due to the numerical increase of workers armed with universal suffrage. In this way it was tried (Bernstein) to empty Marxism of its revolutionary contents, pretending that its rebellious spirit was inherited from the revolutionary bourgeoisie and not belonging to the proletarian class in itself. At this time, the tactical question of alliance between advanced bourgeois parties and the proletarian party takes on a different aspect to that of the preceding phase; it is no longer a question of helping capitalism to win, but to make socialism derive from it with the help of laws and reform, no longer to fight on the barricades of the towns and in the country against menaces of restoration; but only to vote together in parliamentary assemblies. That is why the proposal of alliances and coalition and even the acceptance of ministerial posts by workers' representatives is from then on a deviation from the revolutionary path. That is also why radical Marxists reprove all electoral coalition.

B. Opportunism in 1914

5. The second tremendous opportunist wave hits the proletarian movement when war breaks out in 1914. Most of the parliamentary and trade-union leaders as well as strong militant groups, and in some

countries whole parties present the conflict between national States as a struggle which might bring back the absolutism of the feudal system and which might lead to the destruction of the conquests of the bourgeois civilisation and even of modern productive system. They preach solidarity with the national State at war, the result of which is an alliance between Tsarist Russia and the advanced bourgeoisies of France and England.

The majority of the Second International therefore falls into the war opportunism from which very few parties, one of which is the Italian socialist party, escape. Worse, only advanced groups and fractions accept the position of Lenin who, having defined the war as being a product of capitalism and not a conflict between the latter and less advanced politico-social forms, draws the conclusion that the "holy union" must be condemned and that the proletarian party should practise a defeatist revolutionary policy within each country against the belligerent State and army.

6. The Third International rises on such historical position, against both social democratism and social-patriotism. In the Communist International, not only are no alliances concluded with other parties for parliamentary power, not only is it denied that power may be assumed by legal means, even if in an "intransigent" way [Here is referred to the "intransigence" displayed by the Italian Socialist Party that only consisted in refusing a parliamentary support to bourgeois governments, but which did not explicitly exclude the possibility of a legal and gradual ascent to power.], by the only workers' party, but all agree that the past idyllic phase of capitalism must be followed by armed violence and dictatorship.

No alliances are concluded with the governments at war - even a "defensive" war, upholding a class position even in this case -- but all efforts are made by defeatist propaganda on the front to turn the imperialistic war between States into a civil war between classes.

7. The revolutionary reply to the first wave of opportunism had been: no electoral, parliamentary or ministerial alliance to obtain reforms. The reply to the second was, since 1871: no war alliance with the State and bourgeoisie. The fact that these reactions came with a big delay prevented the proletariat from making full use of the turning point and crisis of 1914-18 and of setting up the struggle against war and for the destruction of the bourgeois State.

8. There was only one exception, an imposing one: the October 1917 victory in Russia. Russia was the only remaining great European State still ruled by feudal power where capitalist forms of production had as yet penetrated but little. The proletarian party was numerically weak, but it had a tradition of doctrinal steadfastness and had been in opposition to the two consecutive waves of opportunism in the Second International. At the sane time it had been capable, from 1905 onwards, of setting down the problems put by the simultaneous development of a bourgeois and a proletarian revolution.

In February 1917, the proletarian party struggled with the others against Tsarism, but in the phase which immediately followed, it was forced to fight not only against the bourgeois liberal party but also against the proletarian opportunist ones, which had openly gone over to the enemy, and it triumphed over all of them. It then became the centre of the reconstitution of the revolutionary International.

9. The effect of this formidable event is to be found in irrevocable historical results. In the last European country placed outside of the geo-political area of the West, an uninterrupted fight leads a proletariat, whose social development is far from being complete, to power. Liberal-democratic forms of the western type, set up during the first phase of the revolutions are brushed aside and the proletarian

dictatorship faces the immense task of accelerating economic development. This means that the still present feudal forms must be overthrown and that the recent capitalistic forms must be overcome. The realisation of this task calls above all for victory over the gangs of counter-revolutionary insurgents and the intervention of foreign capitalism. It calls not only for the mobilisation of the world proletariat for the defence of soviet power and to direct the assault on the western, bourgeois powers, but for the extension of the revolutionary struggle to continents inhabited by coloured people, in short the mobilisation of all forces able to carry on an armed fight against white capitalist metropoles.

10. In Europe and America strategical alliance with left bourgeois movements against feudal forms of power is no longer possible and has given way to direct struggle by the proletariat for power. But in underdeveloped countries the rising proletarian and communist parties will not disdain to participate to insurrections of other anti-feudal classes, either against local despotic dominations or against the white colonisers.

In Lenin's time, there are two historical alternatives: either the world struggle ends in victory, that is by the downfall of capitalistic power at least in a large advanced part of Europe, and this would permit Russian economy to be transformed at a fast rhythm, "jumping" the capitalistic stage and quickly catching up with Western industry, already ripe for socialism, or the big imperialist centres stay put, and in this case the revolutionary Russian power is forced to restrain itself to the economic task of the bourgeois revolution, making the effort of immense productive development, but of a capitalistic, not a socialist character.

11. It was quite obvious that only a quick grasp of power in Europe could prevent the violent fall of the Soviet State, or its involution into a capitalistic State within a historically short time. However, after the serious shock following the First World War, the bourgeois society was quickly consolidated, the communist parties having failed to be victorious, except for a few attempts which were rapidly crushed. This lead the communist parties to ask themselves by which means they could ward off the social democratic and opportunist influences which continued to exert pressure on large sections of the proletariat.

There were then two methods at strife: the first -- that of the Italian Marxist Left -- considered that those parties of the Second International which openly continued an unrelenting struggle at the same time against the communist programme and against revolutionary Russia, and it fought them on a class front as being the most dangerous enemy detachment; the other consisted of falling back on devices, strategical and tactical "manoeuvres" to turn the masses influenced by the social democratic parties, towards the communist party.

12. To justify the latter method the experiences of the Bolshevik policy in Russia were falsely explained, diverging from the correct theoretical line. In Russia the offers of alliance with petit-bourgeois and even bourgeois parties were historically justified by the fact that by banning all these movements Tsarism compelled them to an insurrectional struggle. In Europe, on the contrary, even when proposed purely as a manoeuvre, common action was only to be carried on legal lines, be it on trade-union or parliamentary ground. In Russia, the phase of liberal parliamentarism had been very short (the year 1905 and a few months in 1917) and the same goes for legal recognition of the trade union movement. In the rest of Europe, instead, half a century of degeneration of the proletarian movement had made these two fields of action propitious ground to drowse revolutionary energies and corrupt the workers' leaders. The guarantee lying in the firmness of the Bolshevik Party in its principles and its organisation

was one thing, while that given, according to Moscow, by the existence of a revolutionary power in Russia was quite another, as owing to the social conditions under which it came into being and to the international relations, this power was precisely the proletarian organism which lay most open (history has but shown it too well) to the renunciation of revolutionary principles and policy.

13. The left of the International (to which the great majority of the Communist Party of Italy belonged before it was more or less destroyed by the fascist counter- revolution which was favoured chiefly by the mistake of historical strategy) upheld that in the West all alliances or proposals of alliances with socialist or petit-bourgeois parties should be refused at all costs; in other words that there should be no united political front. It admitted that the communists should widen their influence within the masses by taking part in all local and economic struggles, calling on the workers of all organisations and of all faiths to develop them to the maximum, but it refused that the party's action should be subordinated to that of political committees of fronts, coalitions or alliances even if this subordination was to restrict itself to public declarations and be compensated by internal instructions to militants or the party and by the subjective intentions of the leaders. Even more strongly it rejected the so-called "Bolshevik" tactics when it took the shape of "workers' government", i.e. the launching of the slogan (become in some instances a practical experiment, with ruinous consequences) of coming into the parliamentary power with mixed majorities of communists and socialists of the various shapes. If the Bolshevik party could draw up with no danger the plan of provisional governments of several parties in the revolutionary phase, and if that allowed it to go to the firmest autonomy of action and even to outlaw the former allies, all that was made possible only by the diversity of situation of the historical forces: urgent need of two revolutions, and destructive attitude, by the State in force, towards any coming to power through a parliamentary way. It would have been absurd to transpose such a strategy to a situation in which the bourgeois State has a half a century hold democratic tradition, and parties that accept its constitutionalism.

14. The results of tactics applied by the communist International between 1921 and 1926 were negative, which did not stop the latter from advocating more and more opportunistic methods between the IIIrd and Vth International Congresses and the Enlarged Executive Committee in 1926. The Communist International's method was, to change its tactics according to situations which were analysed in a most whimsical fashion, new stages of capitalism being discovered every six months. The C.I.'s revisionism lay, at the bottom, essentially in this voluntarism which it had in common with all preceding revisionisms. Reformists in 1900 already reasoned thus: from now on the situation excludes all possibility of insurrection; let us not wait for the impossible, let us try to achieve concrete reforms by legal means, economic conquests by using the trade unions. The failure of this method provoked reaction from the anarchosyndicalist current which was also voluntarist. Surprise attacks from bold minorities were substituted for political party struggle under the pretension that the political course could be determined and the general strike imposed on the D-day. In the same way, seeing that the West-European proletariat did not attack the bourgeois State, the Communist International fell back on devices, which of course modified neither the objective situation nor the balance of power but only weakened and corrupted the workers' organisation. The confusion between the communist programme of revolutionary taking of power and the support or participation by the communists in "workers" governments, springing from parliamentary majorities, reduced the effects of Lenin's restoration of revolutionary principles to nothing and disarmed the world proletarian party ideologically with no other

practical effects than the ludicrous experience of Saxony and Thuringia where two policemen were enough to overthrow the government communist leader.

15. The confusion in matters of internal organisation compromised no less the success of the difficult task of selecting the revolutionary members from the opportunist ones in the different parties and countries. The error consisted in believing that the left wings torn away from the Old social democratic parties would make forces of the communist party easy to handle, whereas in fact they could but keep up the permanent crisis within the communist organisation. Under the pretext of winning over large groups of workers, compromises were made with the leaders, continually changing the people holding responsibility and this even when engaged in active struggle, when continuity in organisation was more than ever essential. Instead of demanding individual membership to the sections (the new International once constituted was to function in a continuous, stable manner as world Party), mergers were arranged with fractions and groups from opportunist parties calling themselves "communist" wiping out frontiers between followers and enemies of communism, breaking the continuity of action of the revolutionary party and recording therefore nothing but failures on an international scale. The Left always claimed unity and continuity of the Communist organisation in the face of all these dissolving practices.

The overthrow of the structure of the parties under the pretext of "bolshevisation" was another reason for the Left to differ from the leadership of the International. The territorial organisation of the party was changed for a network of factory cells. This narrowed the political horizon of the members who had the same trade and therefore the same immediate economic interests. In this way, the natural synthesis of the different social impulsions which would have helped to make the struggle a general one, common to all categories, was not achieved. As this synthesis was lacking, the only factor of unity was represented by the top executives whose members became in this way officials with all the negative characteristics of the old socialist party system.

The criticism which the Italian Marxist Left made of this organisation must not be mistaken as claiming the return to "internal democracy" and to "free election" of the party leaders. It is neither internal democracy nor free elections which give the Party its nature of being the most conscious fraction of the proletariat and its function of revolutionary guide. It is instead the matter of a deep discrepancy of conceptions about the deterministic organicity of the party as a historical body, living in the reality of the class struggle; it is a fundamental deviation in principles, that made the parties unable to foresee and face the opportunist danger.

16. Analogous deviations took place in Russia where, for the first time in history, the difficult problem of organisation and internal discipline of the communist party which had come to power and whose membership had enormously increased, arose. The difficulties met in the internal social-struggle for a new economy and revolutionary political struggle outside of Russia provoked contrasting opinions between Bolsheviks of the Old Guard and new members. The Party's leading group had in its hands not only the party apparatus but also the whole State apparatus. Its opinions or those of the majority within it were made good not by means of party doctrine and its national and international tradition of struggle, but by repression of the opposition by means of the State apparatus and by strangling the party in a police like manner. All disobedience towards the central organ of the party was judged as a counter-revolutionary act warranting, besides expulsion, punitive sanctions. The relationship between Party and State was thus completely distorted and the group which controlled both was thus able to enforce a series of surrenders of principles and of the historical line of the party and world revolutionary

movement. In reality the party is a unitary organism in its doctrine and its action. To join the party imposes peremptory obligations on Leaders and followers. But joining and leaving is voluntary without any kind of physical compulsion and shall be so before, during and after the conquest of power. The party directs alone and in an autonomous way the struggle of the exploited class to destroy the capitalist State. In the same way, the Party, alone and autonomous, leads the revolutionary proletarian State, and just because the State is, historically, a transitory organ, legal intervention against party members or groups is a pointer to a serious crisis. As soon as such intervention became a practice in Russia, the party became crowded with opportunistic members who sought nothing more than to procure advantages for themselves or at least to benefit from the protection of the Party. Yet they were accepted without hesitation and instead of a weakening of the State there was a dangerous inflation of the Party in power.

This reversal of influences resulted in the opportunists getting the upper hand on the orthodox; the betrayers of revolutionary principles paralysed, immobilised, accused and finally condemned those who defended them in a coherent way, some of whom had understood too late that the party would never again become a revolutionary one.

In fact, it was the government, at grips with the hard reality of internal and external affairs, which solved questions, and imposed its solutions on the Party. The latter, in turn, had an easy time in international congresses to impose these solutions on the other parties which it dominated and handled as it liked. In this way the directive of the Comintern lines became more and more eclectical and conciliatory with respect to world capitalism. The Italian Left never questioned the revolutionary merits of the party which had lead the first proletarian revolution to victory, but it maintained that the contributions of the parties still openly struggling against their bourgeois regime, were indispensable. The hierarchy which could solve the problems of revolutionary action in the world and in Russia must therefore be the following: the International of the World communist parties -- its various sections, including the Russian one -- finally the communist government for internal Russian politics but exclusively along party lines. Otherwise the internationalist character of the movement and its revolutionary efficiency could not but be compromised.

Only by respecting this rule could a divergence of interests and objectives between the Russian State and the World revolution be avoided. Lenin himself had many times admitted that if the revolution broke out in Europe or the world, the Russian party would take not second but at least fourth place in the general political and social leadership of the communist revolution.

17. We cannot say exactly when the opportunistic wave which was to bear away the Communist International, originated. This was the third wave, the first having paralysed the International founded by Marx and the second which had shamefully brought about the fall of the Second International. The deviations and political errors discussed in paragraphs 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 above, threw the world communist movement into total opportunism which could be seen from its attitude towards fascism and totalitarian governments. These forms appeared after the period of the great proletarian attacks which, in Germany, Italy, Hungary, Bavaria and in the Balkan States, followed the end of the Ist World War. The communist International defined them as employers' offensives with a tendency to lower the standard of living of the working classes economically, and politically as initiatives aiming at the suppression of democratic liberalism, which it presented, in a turn of phrase doubtful to Marxists, as being a favourable milieu for a proletarian offensive, whereas communism has always considered it as

the worst possible atmosphere of revolutionary corruption on the political level. In reality, fascism was the complete proof of the Marxist vision of history: the economic concentration was not only evidence of the social and international character of capitalist production, but it urged the latter to unite and the bourgeoisie to declare Social war on the proletariat, whose pressure was as yet much weaker than the defence capacity of the capitalist State.

The leaders of the International on the other hand created serious historical confusion with the Kerensky period in Russia, leading not only to a serious mistake in theoretical interpretation, but to an inevitable overthrow of tactics. A strategy for the defence and conservation of existing conditions was outlined for the proletariat and communist Parties, advising them to form a united front with all those bourgeois groups which upheld that certain immediate advantages should be granted to the workers and that the people should not be deprived of their democratic rights. The groups were in this way much less decided and perspicacious than the fascists and thus very feeble allies.

The International did not understand that Fascism or National Socialism had nothing to do with an attempt to return to despotic and feudal forms of government, nor with the victory of the so-called right-wing bourgeois sections in opposition with the more advanced capitalist class from the big industries, nor an attempt to form an autonomous government of the intermediate classes between employers and proletariat. It did not understand either that freeing itself from a hypocritical parliamentarism, fascism inherited on the other hand wholly the pseudo- Marxist reformism, securing for the least fortunate classes not only a living wage but a series of improvements of their welfare by means of a certain number of measures and state interventions taken, of course, in the interest of the State. The Communist International thus launched the slogan "struggle for freedom" which was forced upon the Communist Party of Italy by the president of the International from 1926 onwards. Yet nearly all the militants of the party had wanted for four years to lead as autonomous class policy against fascism refusing coalition with all democratic, monarchistic and catholic parties in favour of constitutional and parliamentary guarantees. And it was in vain that the Italian Left warned the leaders of the International that the path it had chosen (and which ended finally with the Committees for National Liberation!) would lead to the loss of all revolutionary energies, and demanded that the real meaning of the antifascism of all the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois parties as well as the pseudo-proletarian ones should be openly denounced.

The line of the communist party is by its nature an offensive one and in no case may it struggle for the illusory preservation of conditions peculiar to capitalism. If, before 1871, the working class had to fight side by side with bourgeois forces, this was not in order to hold on to certain advantages, nor to avoid an impossible return to old times but in order to help in the total destruction of all out-grown political and social forms. In everyday economic policy, just as in general politics, the working class had nothing to lose and therefore nothing to defend. Attack and Conquest, those are its only tasks.

Consequently, the revolutionary party shall interpret the coming of totalitarian forms of capitalism as the confirmation of its doctrine and therefore its complete ideological victory. It shall take an interest in the effective strength of the proletarian class in relationship to its oppressor in order to get ready for the revolutionary civil war. This relationship has ever been made unfavourable only by opportunism and gradualism. The revolutionary party shall do all in its power to stir up the final attack, and where this is impossible, face up without ever slating a "Vade retro Satana", as defeatist as stupid because it comes to begging foolishly for tolerance and pardon from the enemy class.

C. Opportunism after 1926

18. In the Second International, opportunism took on the form of humanitarianism, philanthropy and pacifism culminating in the repudiation of armed struggle and insurrection and, what is more, finding justification for legal violence between States at war. During the third opportunist wave deviation and treason of the revolutionary line went as far as armed fighting and civil war. But even when opportunism wants to impose a given government against another in one country by means of an armed struggle aiming at territorial conquests and strategical positions, the revolutionary criticism remains the same as when it organises fronts, blocks and alliances with purely electoral and parliamentary designs. For instance the alliance of the Spanish Civil War and the partisan movement against the Germans or the fascists during the Second World War was without doubt betrayal of the working class and a form of collaboration with capitalism, in spite of the violence which was made use of. In such cases, the communist party's refusal to subordinate itself to committees made up of heterogeneous parties should be even firmer: when action passes from legal agitation to conspiration and fighting it is still more criminal to have anything what so ever in common with non proletarian movements. We need not recall that in the case of defeat, such collusions were concluded by the concentration of all the enemy's forces on the communists, whereas in the case of apparent success, the revolutionary wing was completely disarmed and bourgeois order was consolidated.

19. All demonstrations of opportunism in the tactics imposed on European parties and carried on inside Russia were crowned during the Second World War by the attitude of the Soviet State towards the other belligerent States and by the instructions which Moscow gave to the communist parties. The latter did not deny their assent to the war, nor did they try to exploit it in order to organise class action aiming at the destruction of the capitalist State. On the contrary, in a first stage Russia concluded an agreement with Germany: then while it provided that the German section should do nothing against the hitlerite power, it dared to dictate self- styled "Marxist" tactics to French communists who were to declare the war of the French and English bourgeoisie as being an imperialistic aggressive one, and made these parties lead illegal action against their State and army; However, as soon as the Russian State came into military conflict with Germany and its interest lay in the strength of those opposed to the Russian state, the French, English and other parties concerned received the opposite political instruction and the order to move to the front of national defence just like the socialists, denounced by Lenin, in 1914. Much more, all theoretical and historical positions of communism were falsified when it was declared that the war between the western powers and Germany was not an imperialistic one but a crusade for liberty and democracy and that it had been so from the start, from 1939 on, when the pseudo-communist propaganda was entirely directed against the French and English.

Thus it is clear that the Communist International, which at one time had been formally wiped out in order to give extra guarantees to the imperialist powers, was at no time used to provoke the fall of any capitalist power and not even to speed on the appearance of conditions necessary for the taking over of power by the proletariat. Its only use was to collaborate openly with the German imperialist bloc, the opposite bloc having preferred to do without its help when Russia came over on its side.

It is therefore not a simple question of opportunism but rather a total abandonment of communism, proved by the haste with which the definition of the class structure of the bourgeois powers changed at the same time as did Russia's allies. Imperialist and plutocrat in 1939-40, France, England and America later became representative of progress, freedom and civilisation, having a common programme with

Russia for the reorganisation of the world. This extraordinary turning did not prevent Russia from the moment of the first disagreements in 1946 and from the start of the cold war, to heap the most fiery accusations on the very same States.

It is no wonder therefore that, beginning by simple contacts with the social-betrayers and social-patriots rejected the day before, continuing with united fronts, workers' governments (renouncing to class dictatorship) and even blocs with petit-bourgeois parties, the Moscow movement fell, during the war, into total enslavement of the policy of the "democratic powers". Later it had to admit that these powers were not only imperialist but just as fascist as Germany and Italy had been before. It is therefore no wonder either that the revolutionary parties which had met in Moscow in 1919-1920 had lost any remainder of their communist and proletarian nature.

20. The Third historical wave of opportunism unites all the characteristics of the two preceding ones in the same measure as present capitalism includes all forms of its different stages of development.

After the second imperialist war, the opportunist parties, united with all the bourgeois parties in the Committees of National Liberation take a part in government with them. In Italy, they even partake in monarchist cabinets, postponing the question of the Republic to more "suitable" times. Thus they repudiate the use of the revolutionary method for the conquest of political powers by the proletariat, sanctioning a purely legal and parliamentary struggle to which all proletarian pressure is to be sacrificed in view of the conquest of public power by pacific means. In the same way as during the first year of the conflict they did not sabotage fascist governments, nourishing their military strength the supply of first necessity, they postulate the participation in national defence governments sparing all trouble to the governments at war.

Opportunism continues its fatal evolution, sacrificing, even formally, the Third International to the enemy of the working class, to subsequent imperialism, in favour of the subsequent "reinforcement of the United Front of the allies and other United Nations". Thus the historical anticipation of the Italian Left made in the first years of the Third International came true. It was ineluctable that the gigantic opportunism which had gained the workers' movement would lead to the liquidation of all revolutionary instances. Consequently the reconstitution of the class strength of the world proletariat has been very much delayed, made more difficult and will require a greater effort.

21. In the same way as Russia, supported by the opportunist communist parties of other countries, had fought on the side of the imperialists, she joined them in the occupation of the vanquished countries to prevent the exploited masses from rising, and this without losing the parties' support. On the contrary, this occupation with counter-revolutionary purpose was fully justified by all the so-called socialists and communists during the Yalta and Teheran conferences. Any possibility of a revolutionary attack of the bourgeois powers was reduced to nothing in the countries that had won the war as in those that had lost. This confirms the position of the Italian Left which regarded the second War as imperialist and the occupation of the vanquished countries as counter- revolutionary, and foresaw that the second war could not be followed by a revolutionary revival.

22. In accordance with the counter-revolutionary past the Russian and affiliated parties have modernised the theory of the permanent collaboration between classes proclaiming the peaceful co-existence and competition between capitalist and socialist States. This position, after the former which reduced the class struggle to a so- called struggle between socialist and capitalist States, is their final

insult to revolutionary Marxism. If a socialist State does not declare a holy war on capitalist States, it at least declares and maintains the class war inside the bourgeois countries, whose proletariat prepares theoretically and practically for the insurrection. This is the only position which conforms with the programme of the communist parties who do not disdain to show their opinions and their intentions (Manifesto of 1846) and openly urge on the violent destruction of the bourgeois power.

Hence, States and parties which admit or even assume hypothetically peaceful coexistence and competition between States instead of propagandising the absolute incompatibility among the classes and armed struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat, are capitalist States and counter-revolutionary parties, and their phraseology only masks their non-proletarian character.

The Persistence of such ideologies within the working class movement is a tragical holdback of any class revival and the proletariat must pass beyond them before the class struggle can take place.

23. Another aspect which made the political opportunism of the third wave still more shameful than the preceding ones was its shameful attitude towards pacifism, defence of guerrilla warfare; pacifism again, but spiced with the anti-capitalist phraseology of the cold war and finally the insipid total pacifism of coexistence. All these turnings went side by side with the most scandalous variation in the definition of the English and American powers: imperialist in 1939, democratically "liberating" the European proletariat in 1942, imperialist again after the war, pacifist rivals in the competition between capitalism and "socialism" today. True Marxists know, that the American imperialism has taken up since the first World War from the English "despot" the role of principal white guard of the world, as Lenin and the Third International many times emphasised during the glorious period of revolutionary struggle.

Inseparable from social pacifism, pacifism taken on its own makes the most of the workers' hatred of imperialist wars. Defence of peace which is a common propaganda of all parties and all States, bourgeois or pseudo- proletarian is however as opportunist as is the defence of the fatherland. Revolutionaries should leave one as the other to the UNO which is horror struck at the mention of class struggle, but is itself, like the League of Nations, a league of Robbers.

In putting pacifism higher than any other demand, today's opportunists show not only that they are outside the revolutionary process and have fallen into total utopia, but that they do not come within reach of the utopists Saint Simon, Owen, Fourier and even Proudhon. Revolutionary Marxism rejects pacifism as a theory and means of propaganda and subordinates peace to the violent destruction of world imperialism; there will be no peace as long as the proletariat of the world is not free from bourgeois exploitation. It also denounces pacifism as a weapon of the class enemy to disarm the proletariat and withhold them from revolutionary influence.

24. Throwing bridges to the imperialist parties to set up governments of "national union" has now become a customary praxis of the opportunists who carry it out on an international scale in a gigantic superstate organism, U.N.O. The great lie consists in making believe that provided that the war between States is avoided, class collaboration can not only become reality but bring its mawkish fruits to the working class, the imperialist and class State becoming a democratic instrument for the public wealth.

Thus in the Peoples' Democracies, the opportunists have set up national systems in which all social classes are represented, with the pretence that in this way their opposing interests can be harmonised. In China for instance where the four class block is in power, the proletariat, far from having assumed

political power, is subjected to the incessant pressure of the young industrial capitalism, having born the cost of "National Reconstruction" just like the proletariats of the other countries. The disarmament of the revolutionary forces, which was offered to the bourgeoisie by the social- patriots of 1914 and the ministerialists such as Millerand, Bissolati, Vandervelde, MacDonald and Company who were fustigated and eliminated by Lenin and the Communist International, grows blurred in the face of the scandalous and impudent collaboration of the present social patriots and ministerialists. The Italian Left which already in 1922 was opposed to the "workers' and peasant government" (password which was given the meaning of "dictatorship of the proletariat" but which fostered a fatal ambiguity or worse meant something quite different) rejects all the more the open class collaboration which present day opportunists do not hesitate to advocate; the Italian Left claims for the proletariat and its party the unconditional monopoly of the State, the unitary and undivided dictatorship of the proletarian class.

IV. PARTY ACTION

1. Since its birth, capitalism has had an irregular historical development, with alternating periods of crisis and intense economic expansion.

Crises are inseparable from capitalism which will not however cease to grow and to expand so long as the revolutionary forces will not deal it the final blow. In a parallel way, the history of the proletarian movement presents phases of impetuous bounds and phases of withdrawal provoked by brutal defeats or slow degeneracy during which the renewal of revolutionary activity may be decades away. The Paris Commune was violently put down and its defeat opened a period of relatively pacific development of capitalism which gave birth to revisionist or opportunistic theories whose very existence proved the falling back of the revolution. The October revolution was slowly defeated over a period of regression, culminating in the violent suppression of those who had fought for it and survived. Since 1917, the revolution is very much absent and today it does not look as though we are on the threshold of the renewal of revolutionary revival.

2. In spite of such recurrences, the capitalist mode of production expands and prevails in all countries, under its technical and social aspects, in a more or less continuous way. The alternatives of the clashing class forces are instead connected to the events of the general historical struggle, to the contrast that already existed when bourgeoisie begun its rule on the feudal and precapitalistic classes, and to the evolutive political process of the two historical rival classes, bourgeoisie and proletariat; being such a process marked by victories and defeats, by errors of tactical and strategical method. The first clashes go back to 1789, arriving, through 1848, 1871, 1905 and 1917, to the present day; they gave the bourgeoisie a chance to furbish its arms against the proletariat in the same measure as its economy developed.

On the contrary, the proletariat, in the face of the gigantic extension of capitalism, has not always known how to use its class energy with success, falling back, after each defeat, into the net of opportunism and treason, and staying back from the revolution for an ever lengthening period.

3. The cycle of victorious struggles and of defeats, even the most drastic ones, and the opportunistic waves during which the revolutionary movement is submitted to the influence of the enemy class constitute a vast field of positive experiences where the revolution matures.

After the defeats, the revolutionary comeback is long and difficult; but the movement, although it is not visible on the surface, is not interrupted, it maintains, crystallised in a restricted vanguard, the revolutionary class demands.

The periods of political depression of the revolutionary movement are numerous. From 1848 to 1867, from the Second Paris revolution to the eve of the franco- prussian war, the revolutionary movement is nearly exclusively incarnated in Marx, Engels and a small circle of comrades; from 1872 to 1879, from the defeat of the Commune to the beginning of the colonial wars and the return of the capitalist crisis which leads to the Russian-Japanese war of 1905, and then to the 1914 war, the conscience of the revolution is represented by Marx and Engels. From 1914 to 1918 during the first World War during which the Second International crumbles, it is Lenin with some comrades of few other countries, who represent the continuity and victorious progression of the movement.

1926 introduced a new unfavourable period for the revolution which saw the liquidation of the October victory. Only the Italian Left communist movement has maintained intact the theory of revolutionary Marxism and the promise of a revolutionary come-back can have crystallised in this movement alone. During the second World War the conditions became still worse, the whole proletariat adhering to the imperialist war and the false Stalinistic socialism.

Today we are at the bottom of the depression and a come- back of the revolutionary movement cannot be envisaged in the near future. The length of the period of depression which we are experiencing corresponds to the seriousness of the degeneration as well as to the greater concentration of the capitalist forces. The third opportunistic wave unites the worst characteristics of the two preceding ones at the same time as the process of capitalist concentration in which the enemies strength lies is much stronger than after the first World War.

4. Today, in spite of depression and the limitation of the means of action at its disposal, the party, following the revolutionary tradition, has no intention of renouncing the historical preparation of the resumption on a large scale of the class struggle, which more formidable than all preceding ones, will profit by past experience. Restriction to activity does not imply the renouncement of revolutionary objectives. The party admits that in certain sectors its activity is quantitatively reduced, but it intends as far as possible to fulfil all its different tasks, and it does not renounce to any of them.

5. The principal activity today is the re-establishment of the theory of Marxist communism. At present, our arm is still that of criticism: therefore the party will bring forward no new theory, but will reaffirm the full validity of the fundamental theses of revolutionary Marxism, amply confirmed by facts and falsified and betrayed by opportunism to cover up retreats and defeats. The Marxist Left denounces and combats the Stalinists as revisionists and opportunists just as it has always condemned all forms of bourgeois influence on the proletariat. The Party bases its action on anti- revisionist positions. From the very moment of its appearance on the political scene, Lenin fought against Bernstein's revisionism and restored the original line, demolishing the factors of the two revisions -- social democratic and social patriotic.

The Italian Left denounced from the very start the first tactical deviations inside the Third International as being the first symptoms of a third revision, which has been fully accomplished today, uniting the errors of the first two.

The proletariat is the last class to be exploited in history and no system of exploitation will follow capitalism: this is the very reason why the doctrine which is born with the proletariat itself can be neither changed nor reformed. The development of capitalism from its origin up to now has confirmed and confirms the Marxist theorems laid out in the fundamental texts of the proletarian party. The last 40 years have brought nothing new and all that they have "taught" us, is that capitalism has a tough skin and that it must be overthrown. The central focus point of the actual doctrinal position of our movement is therefore the following: no revision whatsoever of the primary principles of the proletarian revolution.

6. Today, the party registers social phenomena scientifically in order to confirm the fundamental theses of Marxism. It analyses, confronts and comments on recent and contemporary facts, repudiating the doctrinal elaboration tending to found new theories or to indicate the insufficiency of Marxism as an explanation of the phenomena.

The same work, demolition of opportunism and deviationism as accomplished by Lenin (and defined in "What is to be done") is still at the basis of our party activity thus following the example of militants of past periods of setback of the proletarian movement and of reinforcement of opportunist theories, that found in Marx, Engels, Lenin and in the Italian Left, violent and inflexible enemies.

7. Although small in number and having but few bounds with the proletarian masses, in fact jealously attached to its theoretical tasks, which are of prime importance, the Party, because of this true appreciation of its revolutionary duties in the present period, refuses to become a circle of thinkers or of those searching for new truths, of "renovators" considering as insufficient the past truth, and absolutely refuses to be considered as such.

No movement can triumph in the historical reality without theoretical continuity, which is the condensation of the experience of past struggles. Consequently, the Party denies anyone claiming to be Marxist the liberty to elaborate (or better to lucubrate) new schemes or explanations of the contemporary social world. No member of the Party, be he the most highly formed intellectually, has the liberty individually to make analyses, critics or perspectives: the Party defends the integrity of a theory which is not the product of a blind faith but the very science of the proletariat, edified with secular materials, not by thinkers but by history itself reflected in the historical conscience of the revolutionary class and crystallised in the revolutionary party: facts have but confirmed the doctrine of revolutionary Marxism.

8. In spite of the small number of members which corresponds to the counter-revolutionary conditions, the Party continues its work of proselytism and of oral and written propaganda, it considers the writing and the distribution of its press as its principal activity in the actual phase, being one of the most effective means (in a situation where there are few and far between) to show the masses the political line they are to follow and diffuse systematically and more widely the principles of the revolutionary movement.

9. It is events, and not the desire or the decision of militants, which determine the depth of the Party's penetration amongst the masses; limiting it today to a small part of its activity, the Party loses no occasion to intervene in clashes and vicissitudes of the class struggle, well aware that there can be no restart so long as this intervention has not greatly developed and even, has not become the dominant form of Party action.

10. The acceleration of the process depends not only on deep social causes, that is to say historical crises, but also on the proselytism and propaganda of the party, even with the reduced means at its disposal. The party excludes the possibility of stimulating this process by devices and manoeuvres towards groups, leaders or parties which usurp the title of proletarian, socialist or communist. These manoeuvres, typical of the tactics of the Third International at a time when Lenin was obliged to retire from political life, had no other results than to break it up as a theory and as an organised force, each "tactical experiment" adding to the disintegration of the party. We therefore leave it to the Trotskyist movements and to the IVth International to be proud of and make use of such methods which they erroneously consider as communist ones.

There are no ready-made recipes to speed up the restart of the class struggle. No manoeuvres or expedients exist which will make the proletariat recognise the voice of the class. Such manoeuvres and expedients would not let the Party appear such as it really is but would represent a misrepresentation of its function to the detriment of the real starting up of the revolutionary movement which is based on the maturing of facts and a corresponding adjustment of the Party capable of doing this only because of its doctrinal and political inflexibility.

Insisting on Marxist determinism, the Italian Left has always denied that the party could keep up its influence on the masses by means of expedients, and has always denounced this false theory as a deviation of principles. Along the lines of past experiences, the Party therefore withholds from making and accepting invitations, open letters or agitation slogans aiming to form committees, fronts or agreements with other political organisations whatever their nature.

11. The Party does not hide the fact that when things start moving again this will not only be felt by its own autonomous development, but by the starting up again of mass organisations. Although it could never be free of all enemy influence and has often acted as the vehicle of deep deviations; although it is not specifically a revolutionary instrument, the union cannot remain indifferent to the party who never gives up willingly to work there, which distinguishes it clearly from all other political groups who claim to be of the "opposition". The Party acknowledges that today, its work in the unions can be done but sporadically; it does not renounce however to enter into the economic organisations, and even to gain leadership as soon as the numerical relationship between its members and sympathisers on the one hand, the union members or a given branch on the other is suitable, so long as the union in question does not exclude all possibility of autonomous class action.

12. The international current to which we belong cannot be characterised by its abstaining from voting, although the "abstentionist fraction" of the Italian socialist party played a preponderant part in the foundation of the Italian section of the IIIrd International, whose struggle and opposition to the Communist International on much more fundamental issues we vindicate.

The capitalist State taking on a constantly more evident form of class dictatorship which Marxism has denounced since the beginning, parliamentarism loses necessarily all importance. The elected organs and the parliament of the old bourgeois tradition are no more than survivals. They have no content any longer, only the democratic phraseology subsists and this cannot hide the fact that at the moment of social crises, the State dictatorship is the ultimate resource or capitalism, and that the proletarian revolutionary violence must be directed against this State. In these conditions the Party discards all interest in elections of all kinds and develops no activity in this direction.

13. The cult of the individual is a very dangerous aspect of opportunism; it is natural that leaders who have grown old, may go over to the enemy and become conformists, and there have been but few exceptions to the rule. Experience has shown that revolutionary generations succeed each other rapidly. That is why the Party accords maximum attention to the young people and makes the greatest possible effort to recruit young militants and to prepare them for political activity, without any personal ambition or personality cult. In the present historical moment, deeply counter-revolutionary, the forming of young leaders capable of upholding the continuity and revolutionary tradition over a long period is necessary. Without the help of a new revolutionary generation the starting up of the movement is impossible.

Fundamental Theses of the Party (1951)

I Theory

The party's doctrine is based on the principles of historical materialism and critical communism expounded by Marx and Engels in the Manifesto of the Communist Party, in Capital, and in their other fundamental works. These same principles formed the basis for the constitution of the Communist International, founded at Livorno in 1921. They were contained in the party program published in Battaglia Comunista no. 1, 1951, and republished several times since then in Il Programma Comunista.

The program reads as follows:

"The International Communist Party is founded on the basis of the following principles established at the formation of the Communist Party of Italy (section of the Communist International) at Livorno in 1921.

An ever-growing contradiction between the productive forces and relations of production develops within the present capitalist social system, engendering the antagonism of interests and the class struggle between the proletariat and the ruling bourgeoisie.

The present relations of production are protected by bourgeois state power. No matter what form of representative system, no matter what use may or may not be made of electoral democracy, the bourgeois state always constitutes the organ for defending the interests of the capitalist class.

The proletariat can neither destroy nor change the system of capitalist relations of production from which its exploitation derives without overthrowing bourgeois power by means of violence.

The indispensable organ of proletarian revolutionary struggle is the class party. The Communist Party, uniting in its ranks the most advanced and most resolute part of the proletariat, unifies the efforts of the labouring masses, leading them from the daily struggle for group interests and limited improvements towards the general struggle for the revolutionary emancipation of the proletariat. The party's tasks are to propagate revolutionary theory among the masses, to organise the material means for action, and to lead the working class through the development of its struggle by preserving the historical continuity and international unity of the movement.

After the overthrow of capitalist power, the proletariat can organise itself as the ruling class only by destroying the old state apparatus and instituting its own dictatorship. In other words it must deprive the bourgeois class, and the individual bourgeois as long as they survive socially, of all political rights and functions, and base the organs of the new regime on the producing class alone. The Communist Party, whose programme is characterised by the fact that it strives to realise these basic aims, represents, organises, and leads the proletarian dictatorship, sharing this role with no other party. The necessary defence of the proletarian state against all counter-revolutionary attempts can only be ensured by depriving the bourgeoisie and the parties which are enemies of the proletarian dictatorship of all means of agitation and political propaganda, and by equipping the proletariat with an armed organisation for repelling all internal and external attacks.

It is only the proletarian state which will be able to systematically intervene in the relations of the social economy, carrying out the whole series of measures which will assure the replacement of the capitalist system by the collective management of production and distribution.

As a result of this transformation of the economy and the concomitant transformation of all activities of social life, the need for a political state will be eliminated progressively, and the state apparatus will give way gradually to a rational administration of human activity.

The party's position as regards the situation in the capitalist world and within the workers' movement after World War II is based on the following points:

In the first half of the 20th century, the development of the capitalist social system has seen, in the economic sphere, the creation of employers' organisations for the purpose of securing a monopolistic position on the labour market, attempts to control and manage production and exchange according to central plans, and even state management of entire sectors of production. In the political sphere, there has been a strengthening of the police and military power of the state, while government has assumed totalitarian forms. These developments are not new types of social organisation transitional between capitalism and socialism, much less a return to pre-bourgeois political regimes. On the contrary, they are definite forms of more direct and more exclusive management of power and the state by the most developed forces of capital.

This process precludes pacifist, evolutionist and "progressive" interpretations of the development of the bourgeois regime and confirms the Marxist prognosis concerning the concentration and antagonistic alignment of class forces. In order for the proletariat to strengthen and concentrate its revolutionary energies with a corresponding potential, it must reject the demand of an illusory return to democratic liberalism as well as the demand of legal guarantees, excluding both as agitational methods. The revolutionary class party must liquidate historically the practice of alliances for transitory goals, both with bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties and with pseudo-workers' reformist parties.

The imperialist world wars show that the crisis of capitalist disintegration is inevitable. Capitalism has embarked definitively on the phase in which its expansion no longer intensifies the historical growth of productive forces but instead makes the accumulation of productive forces dependent upon periodic and growing destruction. The world wars caused deep, repeated crisis within the world organisation of workers, since the ruling classes succeeded in exacting national and military collaboration of the working class in both camps. The only historical alternative which can be posed in this situation is the resumption of the class struggle in every country, and its generalisation into a civil war by the working masses to

overthrow the power of all bourgeois states and world coalitions, a civil war led by the international communist party reconstructed as an autonomous force opposed to all political and military powers.

Since the proletarian state apparatus is an instrument and a weapon of struggle in an historical transitional period, it does not derive its organisational strength from constitutional rules or from any representative schema. The highest historical expression of such an organisation until now has been the workers' soviets born in the course of the Russian Revolution in October, 1917, when the working class organised itself militarily under the exclusive leadership of the Bolshevik Party. The burning issues of that period were the totalitarian conquest of power, dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, and the struggle to repulse external attacks by the bourgeois governments and to crush the internal rebellion of the defeated classes, of middle and petty-bourgeois layers, and of the opportunist parties, which are unfailing allies of the counter-revolution in decisive phases.

The proletarian regime must defend itself against the dangers of degeneration contained in possible miscarriages and set-backs in the process of economic and social transformation, the full realisation of which is not conceivable within the confines of a single country. This defence can only be insured by a constant coordination between the policy of the workers' state and the unified international struggle of the proletariat of each country against its own bourgeoisie, the capitalist state and its military apparatus. This struggle which must be waged incessantly in whatever situation, be it peace or war, requires the political and programmatic control by the world communist party over the state apparatus in the country where the working class has conquered power".

II Tasks of the Communist Party

The working class can liberate itself from capitalist exploitation only through a political struggle, led by a political organ of the revolutionary class, the communist party.

The most important aspect of the political struggle in the Marxist conception is the civil war and the armed insurrection through which one class overthrows the power of the enemy ruling class and institutes its own power. This struggle cannot be successful unless it is led by the party organisation.

Just as the struggle against the power of the exploiting class cannot be accomplished without the revolutionary political party, like-wise the party is necessary for the subsequent work of eradicating the previous economic institutions. The dictatorship of the proletariat, which is indispensable throughout this by no means brief historical transitional period, will be exercised overtly by the party.

Before, during, and after the armed struggle for power, the party must also fulfil the following necessary tasks: the defence and propagation of revolutionary theory; the defence and reinforcement of the internal organisation through proselytism and propaganda for the communist theory and program; constant activity within the ranks of the proletariat wherever it is driven by economic needs and pressure to struggle in defence of its interests.

The party can include in its ranks neither all the individuals which constitute the proletarian class nor even the majority of the class. It includes only that minority which has attained a collective preparation and maturity, in theory and action, corresponding to the general vision and ultimate goal of the historical movement, in the entire world and throughout the historical course from the emergence of the proletariat to its revolutionary victory.

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 organisational 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.

Marxism has always emphatically rejected the syndicalist theory wherever it appeared. This theory offers the class exclusively economic organs in the form of trade, industrial, or factory organisations, to which it attributes the ability to develop the social struggle and accomplish the social transformation.

While Marxism considers the trade union in itself to be an insufficient organ for the revolution, it regards it as an indispensable organ for the mobilisation of the class on the political and revolutionary level, which is effected through the presence and penetration of the communist party in the working class economic organisations. In the difficult phases presented by the formation of economic associations, only those associations containing solely proletarians and which proletarians join voluntarily, without being obliged to profess specific political, religious or social beliefs, can be considered as favourable for the party's work. Such an open character does not exist in denominational organisations where membership is obligatory, nor in those that have become an integral part of the state apparatus.

The party never adopts the method of creating selective economic organisations composed only of workers who accept the principles and leadership of the communist party. But the party recognises unconditionally that neither the pre- insurrectionary situation nor the entire phase, when the party's influence over the masses grows decisively, can take shape unless a layers of organisations for immediate economic defence involving a large proportion of the proletariat extends between the party and the class and unless a network emanating from the party (nuclei, groups, and communist trade union factions) exists within these organisations. The task of the party during unfavourable periods when the proletariat is reduced to passivity is to foresee the forms and encourage the emergence of organisations for carrying out the immediate struggle for economic defence. In the future such organisations may assume entirely new aspects, possibly different from the already well-known type of trade unions, industrial unions, factory councils and so on. The party always encourages forms of organisations that facilitate contact and common action between workers from different localities and different occupations, while it rejects closed forms.

In the succession of historical situations the party remains aloof from the idealist and utopian vision that entrusts the improvement of society to a union of chosen or enlightened individuals, apostles, or heroes; from the libertarian vision that entrusts the same task to individual rebellion or to a revolt of masses without organisation; from the syndicalist or economist vision that entrusts it to the action of economic, apolitical organisations, whether or not it is accompanied by advocacy of violence; and finally from the voluntarist and sectarian vision that, disregarding the real determinist process through which the class insurrection arises from actions and reactions which far precede theoretical consciousness and even a clear will, advocates a small "elite" party which either surrounds itself with extremist trade

unions — none other that its own look-likes or commits the error of isolating itself from the proletariat's network of economic and trade union organisations. The latter error was typical of the German KAPD and Dutch Tribunists(1), and was always fought against by the Italian Left within the Third International. The Italian Left took a specific position on the strategic and tactical questions of the proletarian struggle, which can only be treated in connection with that period and the sequence of historical phases in the proletarian movement.

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(1) The members of the Kommunistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (KADP) in Germany, and the Dutch group inspired by Gorter and Pannekoek and assembled around the review De Tribune. They separated from the International definitively in 1921.

III Historical Waves of Opportunist Degeneration

It is impossible to advocate a position of intransigence (that is of refusal on principle of all alliances, united fronts, or compromises) valid for all the historical phases of the proletarian movement, without lapsing into an idealism that seeks justification in mystical, ethical, and aesthetic considerations foreign to the Marxist vision. Questions of strategy, manoeuvre, tactics and practice of the class and of the party are posed and resolved only in the context of history. Consequently they must be understood in relation to the larger global process of the proletariat's advance in the period between the bourgeois and proletarian revolutions, and not according to a minute study case by case preoccupied with particulars of place and time and entrusted to the whim of leadership groups and committees.

The proletariat itself is above all a product of the capitalist economy and industrialisation. Therefore, since communism cannot originate in the inspirations of individuals, academic circles, or sects, but only in the struggle of the proletarians themselves, one of the preconditions for communism is the irrevocable victory of capitalism over the forms that preceded it historically, in other words, the victory of the bourgeoisie over the feudal landed aristocracy and over the other classes of the ancien régime in Europe, Asia, and all countries.

At the time of the Communist Manifesto modern industry had only begun to develop and was limited to a very few countries. In order to hasten the explosion of the modern class struggle, the proletariat was called upon to fight alongside bourgeois revolutionaries in anti-feudal insurrections and in the wars of national liberation which in that period could only assume the form of armed struggles. Thus the participation of the workers in the great French revolution and in its defence against the European coalitions (including its Napoleonic phase) belongs to the great historical course of proletarian struggle, in spite of the fact that even then the bourgeois dictatorship suppressed the first communist social manifestations fiercely.

Due to the defeats suffered by the still allied proletarians and bourgeois in the revolutionary movements of 1848, Marxists consider this period of anti-feudal strategy to extend to 1871 in Europe since historical feudal regimes still existed in Russia, Austria, and Germany, and since the conquest of national unity in Italy, Germany, and also Eastern Europe remained a precondition for European industrial development.

The year 1871 is an obvious historical turning point. The struggle against Napoleon III and his dictatorship is already clearly a struggle against a capitalist form, not a feudal one, and hence a product and evidence of the antagonistic concentration of modern class forces. Although it perceived a military obstacle to the modern bourgeois historical development of Germany in Napoleon Ill, revolutionary Marxism immediately championed the exclusively proletarian struggle against the French bourgeoisie that was waged by all parties of the Paris Commune — the first workers' dictatorship.

With this phase the possibility of a choice between two opposed historical groups and between two national armies is closed for Europe, since a "restoration" of pre-bourgeois forms had become socially impossible in two historical areas: England and North America on the one hand, and Europe as far as the border with the Czarist and Ottoman empires on the other.

a) First Opportunist Wave: Close of the 19th Century

Disregarding the Bakuninist movement in the First International (1867-1871) and the Sorelian movement in the Second International (1907-1914), which we consider foreign to Marxism, the first wave of opportunism in the ranks of the Marxist proletarian movement was social-democratic revisionism. With the bourgeoisie's victory assured everywhere, a phase without insurrections and without wars was opened. The revisionist position, pointing to the extension of industry, the increase in the number of workers, and universal suffrage, held that socialism was possible through a gradual and bloodless evolution. Thus Bernstein attempted to empty Marxism of its revolutionary content by asserting that it did not belong to the working class, being instead a distorted reflection of the bourgeois insurrectionary period. In this phase, the tactical question of alliances between progressive or left bourgeois parties and proletarian parties acquired a new dimension. It was no longer a matter of assisting the birth of capitalism, but of passing from capitalism to socialism through laws and reforms; it was no longer a matter of fighting together in the city and countryside, but of voting together in parliamentary assemblies. Such a proposal of alliances and blocs and even the acceptance of cabinet posts by the proletariat's leaders assumed the historical character of a defection from the revolutionary path, and therefore radical Marxists condemned all electoral blocs.

b) Second Opportunist Wave: 1914

The terrible second wave of opportunism struck the proletarian movement at the outbreak of the war in 1914. Countless parliamentary and trade union leaders, large groups of militants, and even entire parties portrayed the war between states as a struggle that might lead to a restoration of feudal absolutism and to the destruction of the bourgeoisie's civilised conquests as well as its modern productive network. Accordingly they preached solidarity with one's own national state in war-time. This was so on both sides of the front, since on the side of the advanced bourgeoisies of England and France there was Czarist Russia.

The majority of the Second International plunged into opportunist complicity in the war. Few parties, among them the Italian Socialist Party, escaped this fate, and only advanced groups and factions aligned with Lenin, who defined the war as a product of capitalism and not a conflict between capitalism and more ancient social forms. Lenin concluded not only that the Union Sacrée and the national alliance had to be condemned, but that the proletarian parties in each country must call for revolutionary defeatism against all warring states and armies.

The Third International was formed on the historical anti-social-democratic and anti-social-patriotic basis.

The entire proletarian International not only refused the practice of alliances with other parties for the exercise of parliamentary power; more than that, it denied that the proletarian party alone could conquer power by legal means, however “intransigent” this party may be, and on the ruins of the peaceful phase of capitalism it reaffirmed the necessity of armed violence and the dictatorship.

Not only did the Third International repudiate all alliances with warring governments, even in “defensive” wars, and maintain a class opposition, even in wartime; beyond this, it strove to carry out defeatist action behind the battle lines in every country in order to transform the imperialist war between bourgeois states into a civil war between classes.

The revolutionary reply to the first wave of opportunism was the formula: no electoral, parliamentary, or ministerial alliances to obtain reforms.

The reply to the second wave was the tactical formula: no war alliance, after 1871, with one’s own state and bourgeoisie.

The belated effect of these reactions prevented the proletariat everywhere from taking advantage of the turning point and collapse of 1914-1918 to engage and win the fight for revolutionary defeatism and for the destruction of the bourgeois state.

The sole imposing historical exception was the victory of October 1917 in Russia. Russia was the only large European state still ruled by a feudal regime, and was only sparingly penetrated by capitalist forms of production. In Russia there was a numerically small party which had a tradition of firmly adhering to the correct positions of Marxist doctrine. It had opposed the two opportunist waves within the International, and after the splendid dress rehearsal of the 1905 uprising it had proven its ability to grapple with the problems of a fusion of two revolutions: bourgeois and proletarian.

This party fought alongside of the other parties against Czarism in February 1917, then immediately afterwards against both the liberal bourgeois parties and the opportunist proletarian parties, and succeeded in defeating all of them. Moreover, it played a central role in the reconstruction of the revolutionary International.

The significance of this tremendous event is crystallised in irrevocable historical results. In the easternmost country bordering the western European area a relentless struggle led the proletariat alone to power, even though its social development was not entirely complete. After sweeping away the western-style liberal-democratic forms that had just been instituted, the proletarian dictatorship undertook the enormous task of pressing forward economic evolution, a task which entailed overcoming both feudal and new-born capitalist forms. The accomplishment of this task required a victorious resistance against attacks by counter-revolutionary armies and capitalist forces. This necessitated the mobilisation of the whole world proletariat to the side of the Soviet power for the attack on the western bourgeois powers. And, with the spread of the revolutionary struggle to the continents inhabited by non-white peoples, it required the mobilisation of all the forces ready to take up armed revolt against the Imperialism of the white imperialist centres.

In the European area the strategy of anti-feudal blocs with the left-bourgeois movements is entirely closed and is replaced by the strategy of armed proletarian struggle for power. But in the backward countries, on the terrain of armed struggle, the emerging proletarian communist parties could not scorn participating in insurrections by other anti-feudal social elements either against the local despotic rulers or against the white colonial masters.

In Lenin's time the historical alternative was as follows: either the world struggle of the proletariat would result in a victory with the overthrow of capitalist power at least in a large part of advanced Europe and the consequent transformation of the Russian economy at rapid tempo, leaping over the capitalist stage to catch up with western industry which was already ripe for socialism; or else the large centres of bourgeois imperialism would survive, with the consequence that the revolutionary power in Russia would have to retreat and confine itself to the tasks of only one of two social revolutions, the bourgeois revolution, applying an immense effort to the construction of a capitalist — not a socialist - economy.

Thus hastening the conquest of power in Europe was necessary to prevent the soviet state within a few short years from being violently overthrown or from degenerating into a capitalist state. As soon as it became apparent that bourgeois society was reconsolidating itself after the grave shock of the first World War, and that the communist parties would not succeed in winning their battles, except in a few very quickly suppressed attempts, the obviousness of this necessity prompted a search for means to destroy the influence still exerted on significant layers of proletarians by social democracy and opportunism.

Two counterpoised methods were advanced: the first considered the parties of the Second International, which were conducting an open and ruthless campaign against the communist program as well as against revolutionary Russia, as avowed enemies, and fought them as a part- the most dangerous — of the bourgeois class front. The second consisted in resorting to expedients, to strategic and tactical "manoeuvres", in order that the masses influenced by the social-democratic parties could be won over to the communist party.

The second method was erroneously justified by invoking the experiences of Bolshevik policy in Russia, thereby deviating from the correct historical position. The Bolshevik's proposals of alliances with other parties — petty-bourgeois and even bourgeois parties — were conditioned by the fact that Czarist power had declared all these movements illegal and compelled them to adopt insurrectionary struggle. In Europe it was not possible to propose common action, even for purposes of a manoeuvre, on the level of parliamentary or trade union legalism. In Russia, the experience of liberal parliamentarianism and legal trade unionism had been very brief in 1905 and lasted only a few months in 1917, whereas in the rest of Europe a half-century of degeneration had turned these domains into fertile ground for extinguishing all revolutionary energies and for imprisoning proletarian leaders in the service of the bourgeoisie. The guarantee provided by the Bolshevik party's firmness in the area of organisation and with respect to principles was quite different from any guarantee offered by the existence of proletarian state power in Russia, since — as history has demonstrated — due to the very fact of the existing social relations and international relationship of forces, this power was more vulnerable to the danger of renouncing revolutionary principles and directives.

Consequently the left-wing of the International, to which the enormous majority of the Communist Party of Italy belonged until it was practically destroyed by reaction (promoted above all by the

historical errors in strategy), demanded that in the West all alliances and proposals of alliances with socialist and petty-bourgeois political parties (the tactic of political united fronts) be rejected. It agreed that communists must attempt to enlarge their influence on the masses by participating in all economic and local struggles and by calling upon workers from all organisations and persuasions to develop these struggles to the maximum. But it denied absolutely that the activity of the party should ever be subordinated to the action of political committees, fronts, blocs, or alliances between several parties, even if only for the purpose of public declarations not affecting the internal intentions and directives of the party apparatus. With even greater vigour it rejected the alleged "Bolshevik" tactic when it assumed the form of the "workers' government" slogan, an agitational formula (which on a few occasions led to disastrous practical experiences) for taking power by parliamentary means through a heterogeneous majority comprising communists and socialists of all shades. If the Bolshevik party had been able to envision participating without danger in provisional and multi-party governments during the revolutionary phase, and if this enabled it to pass immediately to the most abrupt autonomy of action and even the outlawing of its temporary allies, then this was possible solely because the configuration of historical forces was entirely different: the period of double revolution created an immense pressure, and the existing state was bound to crush any attempt to take power by parliamentary means. It was absurd to transpose such a strategy to a situation where the bourgeois state had a half-century of democratic tradition behind it, with parties that had submitted to constitutional legality.

In the balance, the tactical method pursued by the International from 1921 to 1926 proved negative, and in spite of this, at each Congress (Third, Fourth, and Fifth, and the Enlarged Executive of 1926), more opportunistic variants were adopted. This method was based on the following rule: change tactics according to the assessment of the situation. Every six months new stages in the development of capitalism were revealed by spurious analyses, and each stage had to be combated with new manoeuvres. This is what is at the root of revisionism, which has always been "voluntaristic". When it recognised that the predictions about the advent of socialism had not yet been fulfilled, it thought it could force history with a new practice, but in fact it only ceased to struggle for the proletarian and socialist objective of our maximum program. The reformists of 1900 reasoned that since the situation precluded the possibility of insurrection from then on, it was senseless to await the impossible; why not work for concrete possibilities, elections, legal reforms, and union gains. When this method failed, trade union voluntarism reacted by placing the blame on political practice and on the political party as such, and advocated action by audacious minorities in a general strike led by the unions alone in order to change the situation.

Similarly, when the International saw that the Western proletariat did not take up the struggle for its own dictatorship, it resorted to expedients in order to break the impasse. The result of this was that once the momentary imbalance in capitalist forces had passed, the objective situation and the relationship of forces were not appreciably changed, while the movement became weakened and more and more corrupted. Thus it happened that the impatient revisionists to the right and left of revolutionary Marxism ended up in the service of the bourgeoisie in the Union Sacrée of the war. Theoretical preparation and the restoration of principles were sabotaged by the confusion created between the conquest of total power by the proletariat and the formation of "friendly" governments through the support and parliamentary or ministerial participation of communists. In Saxony and Thuringia the experiment ended in a farce, and only two policemen were needed to remove the government's communist leader from his post.

No less confusion was caused in the realm of internal organisation, and the difficult task of splitting the revolutionary elements from the opportunists in different parties and countries was compromised. It was thought that new elements, easily manipulable by the centre, could be obtained by tearing off the left-wings en bloc from the socialist parties. The new International instead, after an initial period of formation, should have had a stable operation as the world party of the proletariat, to whose national sections new proselytes had to adhere individually. The conquest of large groups of workers was sought, but in reality there was only conniving with the leaders, and this disorganised the leading cadres of the communist parties, continuously changing and re-changing the composition of their leaderships during periods of active struggle. Factions and cells within the socialist and opportunist parties were acknowledged as communist, and organisational fusions were practised. Thus, rather than becoming fit for struggle, almost all parties were maintained in a state of permanent crisis, and functioned without continuity or a well-defined delimitation between friend and foe; consequently continuous failures occurred in the various nations. The Left instead demands organisational uniformity and continuity.

Another point of disagreement was the replacement of a territorial organisation of communist parties by one based on the workplace. This restricted the horizon of the rank-and-file organisations, which consequently comprised only elements from the same trade with parallel immediate economic interests. The natural synthesis of the various social “thrust” in the party with its single final objective was weakened. It was expressed only in slogans and directives transmitted by the representatives of the higher centres, who moreover had become party officials and began to exhibit all the characteristics that had been criticised in the political and trade union functionarism of the Second International. This critique cannot be confused with a demand for “internal democracy” or with the regret that party leaders cannot be chosen through “free elections”. Instead, at issue were a profound divergence of conceptions concerning the organic character of the party as an historical body living in the reality of the class struggle, and a profound deviation in principle, which rendered communist parties unable to foresee and confront the opportunist danger.

Analogous deviations arose within Russia, where, for the first time in history, the movement faced the difficult problem of organisation and discipline within a communist party that had attained total state power and naturally had undergone an enormous growth in its membership. The difficulties of the relationship between the domestic social struggle for a new economy and the external political revolutionary struggle created differences of opinion between the Bolshevik Old Guard and new members. The party’s leading body which now had not only the party apparatus, but also the entire state apparatus in its hand, was not content with basing itself on the party’s doctrine, its tradition of struggle, and the unity and organic character of the international revolutionary movement in order to promote its own opinions or those of the majorities which formed within the leadership, but began to suppress the opposition and protests of militants by means of measures executed by the state apparatus. It proclaimed that in the interest of the revolution any disobedience toward the party centre not only had to be suppressed by internal organisational measures, including even expulsion from the party, but it should also be considered as an attack against the revolutionary state. Such a false relationship between the two organs, the party and the state, obviously created the possibility that the group controlling both of them might enforce the abandonment of the principles and historical line that had characterised the party during the pre-revolutionary period and that belonged to the whole revolutionary proletarian movement.

The party must be considered an organism, united in its theory and action; and membership in it imposes binding obligations on the leaders and militants. But joining (or leaving) the party must not be accompanied by any physical coercion, and this rule must be observed before, during, and after the seizure of power. The party alone, and with complete autonomy, leads the struggle of the exploited class to overthrow the capitalist state, just as it leads the state of the revolutionary proletariat alone and with complete autonomy. But precisely in its capacity as an historically transitory revolutionary organ, the state cannot intervene with legal or police measures against members or groups in the party without this signifying a serious crisis. From the moment when this practice was adopted in Russia the party experienced an influx of opportunist elements with no other objective than to procure advantages or to induce the state to favour their interests, and these dubious members were accepted without hesitation. Thus, instead of the state beginning to wither away, the party dangerously swelled in size. Because of the mechanical reversal of this relationship, foreign elements succeeded in eliminating the orthodox Marxists from the leadership of the party and the Soviet state, and the betrayers of revolutionary principles were able to paralyse, then try and sentence the consistent defenders of those principles, including those who perceived the irreparable deviation too late. In fact, the government, feeling the repercussions of all the relations it maintained with domestic enemy forces as well as with foreign bourgeois governments (including antagonism and open struggle), resolved the problems and dictated solutions to the leadership and organisational centre of the Russian party. The latter, in turn, easily dominated the parties of the other countries in the international organisations and congresses and manipulated the directives of the Comintern which became increasingly conciliatory and eclectic.

The Italian Left, without contesting the revolutionary historical merits of the Russian party, which had led the first proletarian revolution to victory, always maintained that the contributions of other parties still engaged in open struggle with the bourgeois regime remained indispensable. Hence in order to resolve the questions of revolutionary action in Russia and the rest of the world, the following hierarchy was necessary: the International of world communist parties; its different sections, among them the Russian section; and finally, for Russian policy, the Communist government executing the party's directives. Any other arrangement could only compromise the internationalist character of the movement and its revolutionary efficiency. Lenin himself had acknowledged on many occasions that if the revolution were to extend to Europe and the world, the Russian party would assume not even second place, but the fourth place at best in the general political and social leadership of the communist revolution. Only on this condition was it possible to avoid the possibility of a divergence between the interests of the Russian state and the objectives of the world revolution.

It is not possible to date precisely the beginning of the third opportunist wave, the third pathological degeneration of the world proletarian party, following the two previous ones which had paralysed Marx's International and led to the shameful decline of the second Socialist International. After the political, tactical, and organisational deviations and errors dealt with in points 11 to 16 above, the International succumbed to a full-fledged opportunism with Moscow's attitude toward totalitarian forms of bourgeois government and the repression of the revolutionary movement. These forms appeared after the great proletarian assaults that followed the first World War in Germany, Italy, Hungary, Bavaria, the Balkan states, etc.. In a formula of questionable Marxist accuracy the International defined these forms, from the economic point of view, as a capitalist offensive aimed at lowering the standard of living of the working class, and, from the political point of view, as an attempt to suppress the freedom of liberal democracy. Whereas traditionally Marxism had considered liberal democracy to

be the most propitious atmosphere for the corruption of the revolutionary movement, the International presented it as a milieu favourable for a proletarian offensive. These new forms were actually the fullest and most complete realisation of the great historical course foreseen only by Marxism: on the one hand, economic concentration testifying to the social and global character of capitalist production and compelling the capitalist system to consolidate its apparatus; on the other hand, the consequences in the area of politics and social war resulting from the inevitable final confrontation between classes envisioned by Marxism, corresponding to a situation in which the pressure exerted by the proletariat still remained below the defensive potential of the capitalist class state.

The leaders of the International committed a gross historical error by confusing these events of the postwar period with the Kerensky period in Russia. This led not only to a grave error of theoretical interpretation, but also to an unavoidable reversal in tactics. A defensive and conservative strategy was established for the proletariat and for the communist parties, recommending the formation of fronts with all the least combative and shrewdest bourgeois groups (and consequently the least sound allies) which maintained that it was necessary to secure immediate advantages for the workers without depriving the popular classes of rights of association, voting rights, etc.. The International did not understand that fascism or national socialism had nothing to do with a revival of feudal and despotic forms of government, nor did it signify a predominance of supposedly right bourgeois strata opposed to the more progressive big industrial capitalist class, much less an attempt by classes intermediate between the employers and the proletariat to set up an autonomous government. Moreover, it did not understand that fascism, discarding the repugnant mask of parliamentarism, inherited pseudo Marxist social reformism in toto, and assured the workers and the most deprived masses not just a vital minimum, but a series of advances in the realm of social assistance, through a number of measures and interventions by the class state in the interest of preserving capitalism. Thus the International issued the slogan of the struggle for freedom, which was imposed on the Italian party by the chairman of the International from 1926. Yet almost all the party's militants wanted to combat fascism, then in its fourth year in power, with autonomous class politics, and not by making blocs with all the democratic, or even monarchist and catholic parties, for the purpose of demanding the return of constitutional and parliamentary guarantees. From this period the Italian communists had striven to denounce the content of the anti-fascism practised by all the middle bourgeois, petty-bourgeois, and pseudo-proletarian parties; and in vain they warned that all revolutionary energies would end up in ruins once the International had embarked on the path of degeneration which finally led to the Committees of National Liberation during the Second World War.

The policy of the communist party is by its very nature offensive, and in no case must it fight for an illusory preservation of conditions characteristic of capitalist institutions. If the proletariat had to fight alongside bourgeois forces in the period before 1871, it was not to enable the bourgeoisie to preserve its established positions or prevent the fall of historically attained forms, but instead to enable it to destroy and surpass historically antecedent forms. In the field of daily economics as in general world politics, the proletariat has nothing to lose and therefore nothing to defend, and its only task is to attack and conquer. Therefore in the appearance of concentrated, unified, and totalitarian forms of capitalism, the party above all must recognise its total ideological victory. It consequently must concern itself exclusively with the real relationship of forces for the preparation of the revolutionary civil war, since this relationship has been rendered unfavourable precisely by successive waves of opportunist and gradualist degeneration. It must do everything in its power to unleash the final attack, and when it

cannot do this, it must face defeat; but it must never in a cowardly and defeatist manner beseech the devil of fascism to go away, which would amount to begging stupidly for tolerance or forgiveness from the class enemy.

c) Third Opportunist Wave: Since 1926.

In the second of the great historical opportunist waves the betrayal took humanitarian, philanthropic, and pacifist forms, and culminated in a repudiation of the insurrectional method and armed action, later turning into an apology for legalised state violence in the war. What is new in the third degenerative wave is that betrayal and deviation from the revolutionary class line are also presented in the form of combat and civil war. In the present phase, the critique of deviation from the class line remains the same, whether the latter takes the form of common fronts, blocs, or alliances formed for purely propagandist or electoral and parliamentary purposes, or whether it consists in a hybrid collusion with movements alien to the communist party with the object of bringing one government to power over another within a country by means of a military struggle entailing the conquest of territory or strongholds. Hence, the policy of alliances during the Civil War in Spain (during a period of international peace) as well as the entire partisan movement and the so-called “Resistance” against the Germans or the fascists (during World War 11), despite the violent methods employed, represent an unequivocal betrayal of the class struggle and a form of collaboration with capitalist forces. The communist party’s refusal to subordinate itself to committees composed of heterogeneous parties or situated above parties can only become more resolute when legal agitation gives way to the vital and primordial domain of conspiracy, military preparation and military organisation, where it is criminal to have anything in common with non-proletarian movements. It is useless to recall that in cases of defeat, the collusions always ended with a barrage of reprisals against the communists, and in cases of apparent success, with the complete disarming of the revolutionary wing and the denaturation of its party, giving rise to a new consolidation of bourgeois law and order.

All these manifestations of opportunism, both in the tactics imposed on the European parties as well as in the governmental practice in Russia, were crowned after the outbreak of the Second World War by the Russian state’s policy vis à vis the other belligerent states and by the directives given by Moscow to the communist parties. Not only did these parties not refuse to support the war in all capitalist countries, nor take advantage of the war in order to initiate class actions of revolutionary defeatism with the objective of smashing the state; on the contrary, in the first phase Russia concluded an agreement with Germany, and consequently, while it was decided that the German section should not take action against the Hitler regime, Russia dared to dictate a so-called Marxist tactic to the French and English bourgeoisies, and Moscow recommended that the parties conduct illegal actions against the state and army. But as soon as the Russian state found itself in military conflict with Germany, it consequently acquired an interest in the effectiveness of all the forces opposed to Germany. Not only were the parties in France, England, etc., given the opposite political directive and the command to go over to the Front for national defence (exactly as the Socialists denounced by Lenin had done in 1914), but all theoretical and historical positions were reversed, and the war conducted by the Western powers against Germany was declared — not imperialist — but a war for freedom and democracy, and this from the very beginning, since 1939, when the war broke out and all the pseudo-communist press and propaganda had been directed against England and France.

Thus it is clear that the forces of the Communist International (which formally was liquidated as a certain point in order to provide the imperialist powers with a better guarantee that the communist parties in those countries were completely at the service of their respective nations and fatherlands) had not been employed at any time during the long war to bring about the fall of a capitalist power or the conditions for a conquest of power by the working class. Instead, they were employed only in open collaboration with an imperialist camp; and moreover a collaboration with one or another camp according to the changing military and national interests of Russia. The fact that it was no longer a case of simple opportunist tactics, even driven to its extreme, but a total abandonment of the historical positions of communism was proved by the audacity with which the political appreciation of the bourgeois powers was reversed. France, England, and the United States, defined as imperialist and plutocratic in 1939-40, became representatives of progress, freedom, and civilisation in the subsequent years, and shared the program for world reorganisation with Russia. But such a spectacular transformation, which was alleged to be in conformity with the theory and texts of Marx and Lenin, did not even have a definitive character, since the first dissensions after 1946 and the first local conflicts in Europe and Asia were enough for Russia and its followers to condemn these same states, in the stronger language, as the most heinous imperialism.

The ordeals faced by the revolutionary parties that assembled in Moscow in 1919-20 spiralled as they went from contacts with the just denounced social-traitors and social-patriots, to united fronts, to experiments with coalition workers' governments that renounced the dictatorship, to blocs with petty bourgeois and democratic parties, and finally to a total enslavement in the war policies of capitalist powers, today [19511 not only openly acknowledged to be imperialist, but even no less "fascist" than Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy. Consequently it is no wonder that in the last thirty years any vestige of revolutionary class character in these parties has been completely destroyed.

The third historical wave of opportunism has combined the worst characteristics of the two preceding waves, just as capitalism incorporates all the phases of its development in its modern structure.

At the end of the second imperialist war the opportunist parties were allied with all the avowed bourgeois parties in the Committees of National Liberation and participated alongside them in the formation of constitutional governments. In Italy they even participated directly in monarchist cabinets, deferring the questions of the institutional state form to a more "opportune" moment. Consequently they repudiated the use of revolutionary means for the conquest of political power by the proletariat, sanctioning the necessity of legal and parliamentary struggle, to which all the class impulses of the proletariat had to be subordinated in the interest of a conquest of political power by a peaceful and electoral road. They advocated participation in governments of national defence, preventing any opposition to governments committed to the war, just as they had refrained from sabotaging the fascist governments during the first years of the conflict, and supported the war efforts through the production of indispensable goods.

Opportunism pursued its disastrous course, and even sacrificed the Third International formally to the class enemy of the proletariat, imperialism, in order to promote "a further strengthening of the United Front of the Allies and other united nations". Thus the historical prediction of the Italian Left, formulated during the first years of the existence of the Third International, had come true. It was inevitable that the growth of opportunism and its domination over the workers' movement should lead to the liquidation of all its revolutionary orientations.

Therefore the reconstruction of the class force of the world proletariat has been severely belated and difficult, and will require a greater effort than ever before.

The counter-revolutionary influence on the world proletariat, which was broadened and deepened by the direct participation of opportunist parties on the side of the victorious states in the second world conflict, has resulted in a military occupation of the defeated states in order to prevent an uprising of the exploited masses. This occupation was accepted and justified in its counter-revolutionary intent by all the so-called socialist and communist parties during the conferences at Yalta and Teheran. Thus any serious possibility of revolutionary attack against the bourgeois powers was obstructed, both in the victorious allied countries and in the defeated countries. This demonstrated the correctness of the position of the Italian Left, which considered World War Il to be imperialist and the military occupation of the defeated countries to be counter-revolutionary, and predicted the absolute impossibility of an immediate revolutionary resurgence.

In perfect consistency with all its increasingly counter-revolutionary past, Russia and its affiliated parties modernised the theory of permanent class collaboration, postulating the peaceful, global co-existence between capitalist and socialist states. A peaceful competition between states was substituted for the struggle between states, burying once more the doctrine of revolutionary Marxism. A socialist state, if it does not declare holy war against imperialist states, declares and maintains the class struggle within the bourgeois countries, and prepares the proletariat in theory and practice for insurrection. This is the only position that conforms to the program of the communist parties, which do not hesitate to proclaim openly their opinions and aims (The Communist Manifesto, 1848), and advocate and postulate precisely the violent destruction of bourgeois power.

Therefore the states and the parties that admit the hypothesis of peaceful “coexistence” and “competition” between states instead of propagating the absolute incompatibility between enemy classes and the armed struggle for the liberation of the proletariat from the yoke of capitalism, are in reality neither revolutionary states nor revolutionary parties, and their phraseology only mask the capitalist content of their structure.

The persistence of this ideology within the ranks of the proletariat represents a tragic obstacle. Until it is surmounted there will be no resurgence of the class struggle.

The political opportunism of the third wave appears more abject and shameful than its predecessors, since it has descended to the most repugnant depths of pacifism.

The manoeuvre that consists in alternating between pacifism and partisan resistance conceals the triple scandalous about-face in the appreciation of Anglo-American capitalist imperialism, defined as imperialist in 1939, democratic and a “liberator” of the European proletariat in 1942, and once again as imperialist today.

In reality, even at the time of World War I, American capitalism showed that it was a powerfully reactionary and imperialist power (albeit in a lesser degree than today). Lenin and the Third International drew attention to this several times during the glorious period of revolutionary struggle.

By exploiting the attraction pacifism possesses for the workers, opportunism exercises an undeniable profound influence on them, although it is obviously inseparable from social pacifism.

Defence of peace and country constitutes propaganda themes common to all states and parties coexisting within the United Nations, the new edition of the League of Nations, that “den of thieves” as Lenin called it. These themes are based on class collaboration and represent the fundamental principles of opportunism.

The present-day opportunists show that they are completely outside the revolutionary process, and that they are not even at the level of the utopians, Saint-Simon, Owen, Fourier, nor even at the level of Proudhon himself.

Revolutionary Marxism rejects pacifism as a theory and a propaganda method, and subordinates peace to the violent overthrow of world imperialism. There will be no peace until the whole world proletariat has been liberated from bourgeois exploitation. Moreover, Marxism denounces pacifism as a weapon of the class enemy used to disarm the proletariat and deliver it from the influence of the Revolution.

It has become a habitual practice for opportunism to offer a helping hand to the parties of imperialism, to form national governments of “national unity” between classes. Stalinist opportunism has realised this aspiration in the highest bourgeois international organisation, the United Nations, declaring an increasingly broader, unlimited inter-class collaboration on the condition that war between the two rival imperialist blocs be avoided and that the repressive apparatus of the states be camouflaged by a veil of democracy and reformism.

Where Stalinism rules uncontested it has realised this conditions by setting up a national power in which all social classes are represented. In this way it pretends to harmonise opposed interests, as in the bloc of four classes in China, where the proletariat, far from having conquered political power, is constantly subjected to the pressure of youthful industrial capitalism, and pays the price of “National Reconstruction” on the same basis as the proletariat of all the other countries of the world.

The disarming of revolutionary forces offered to the bourgeoisie by the social patriots of 19 14 and by the ministerialists such as Millerand, Bissolati, Vandervelde, Mac Donald, etc., scourged and battered by Lenin and the International, pales before the scandalous and cynical collaboration of the present social-patriots and ministeria lists. The Italian Left opposed the slogan of “workers’ and peasants’ government”, showing that either it was a synonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat, and was thus an equivocation and a pleonasm, or it meant something else, and was thus unacceptable. It rejected all the more the overt theory of class collaboration, even if it was presented as a transitory tactical means. It claimed the unconditional monopoly of the state and its organ by the proletariat and the class party and called for its unitary and indivisible class dictatorship.

IV Party Action in Italy and other Countries in 1952

Since its inception the history of capitalism has presented an irregular development marked by the periodic cycle of crises, established by Marx to be more or less ten years apart and preceded by periods of intense continuous development.

Crises are inseparable from capitalism which, in spite of these, does not cease to grow, expand, and swell, until the matured forces of the revolution deal it a final blow. Parallel to this the history of the proletarian movement during the course of the capitalist period presents phases of high pressure and advance, phases of sudden or gradual retreat caused by defeat or degeneration, and phases of long wait before a resurgence. The Paris Commune was violently defeated and a period of relatively peaceful

development followed, during which precisely the revisionist and opportunist theories emerged, proving the retreat of the revolution.

The October Revolution was defeated through a gradual involution, culminating in the violent annihilation of its surviving architects. Since 1917 the revolution has been the missing element and even today (1951) a resurgence of the revolutionary forces does not appear to be imminent.

In spite of its cyclical crises the capitalist mode of production has extended and taken hold in all countries almost without relent in its technical and social aspects. On the other hand, the tormented history of antagonistic class forces is linked to the vicissitudes of the general historical struggle, to the potential contradiction already present at the dawn of bourgeois rule over the feudal and pre-capitalist classes, and to the political evolution of the two historical class enemies, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, a development marked by victories and defeats, by error in tactics and strategy. The first clashes date from 1789, proceeding through 1848, 1871, 1905 and 1917 to today. All the while the bourgeoisie has sharpened its weapons of struggle against the proletariat, corresponding to the increasing growth of its economy.

By contrast, in the face of the gigantic extension and growth of capitalism, the proletariat has not always been able to employ its class energies successfully, and after every defeat has fallen back into the net of opportunism and betrayal, remaining far from the revolution for an increasingly long period of time.

The cycle of victorious struggles, of even more disastrous defeats, and of opportunist waves in which the revolutionary movement has succumbed to the influence of the enemy class, represents a broad field of positive experiences through which the revolution matures.

After the defeats, the revolutionary resurgences have been long and difficult. But although it does not appear on the surface of political events, the thread of the movement has not been broken; it maintains the revolutionary class tradition crystallised in a small vanguard.

Periods of political depression:

- from 1848 to 1867, from the second Parisian revolution to the eve of the Franco-Prussian war, the revolutionary movement was embodied almost exclusively in Marx and Engels and a small circle of comrades.

- from 1872 to 1889, from the defeat of the Paris Commune to the beginning of the colonial war and the re-opening of the capitalist crisis which would lead to the Russo-Japanese war and then to World War I, a period of reflux of the movement during which the consciousness of the revolution is represented by Marx and Engels.

- from 1914 to 1918, the period of World War I during which the Second International collapsed and Lenin and other comrades from a few countries carried the movement forward.

With 1926 another unfavourable period for the revolution began during which the October victory was liquidated. Only the Italian Left maintained the theory of revolutionary Marxism intact and in it alone are crystallised the premises of the class resurgence. During World War II the conditions of the movement worsened further, since the war placed the whole proletariat at the service of imperialism and Stalinist opportunism.

Today we are in the midst of the depression, and a resurgence of the revolutionary movement is conceivable only after a period of many years. The length of the period corresponds to the gravity of the wave of degeneration, as well as to the increasingly large concentration of enemy capitalist forces. On the one hand Stalinism has assumed the most destructive characteristics of the two preceding waves of opportunism, and on the other the process of capitalist concentration today is tar greater than that immediately following World War I.

Today, although we are at the deepest point of the political depression and the possibilities for action are considerably reduced, the party, following revolutionary tradition, does not intend to break the historical line of preparation for a future large-scale resurgence of the class movement, which must Integrate all the results of the previous experiences. The restricted nature of practical activity does not mean a renunciation of revolutionary postulates. The party recognises that the restriction of certain sectors of activity is quantitatively accentuated, but the entirety of the aspects of its activities is not changed on account of this, and the party does not renounce any area deliberately.

Today the principal activity is the restoration of the theory of Marxist communism. We are still at the stage of “the weapon of critique”. The party will present no new doctrine but reaffirms the full validity of the fundamental theses of revolutionary Marxism, which have been confirmed amply by facts and more than once falsified and betrayed by opportunism in order to cover retreats and defeats.

The Italian Left denounces and combats the Stalinists today, as it has always denounced all revisionists and opportunists.

The party bases its activity on anti-revisionist positions. Lenin combated the revisionism of Bernstein as soon as it appeared on the political scene, and restored the principled line by demolishing the arguments of the two social-democratic and social-patriotic revisions.

The Italian Left denounced the first tactical deviations as soon as they emerged within the Third International, as the first symptoms of a third revision, which has manifested itself fully today and which contains the errors of the first two.

The proletariat is the last exploited class and consequently in its turn will exploit no one. This is precisely why the doctrine was born with the birth of the proletarian class itself and can be neither modified nor revised.

The development of capitalism from its inception to today confirms the theorems of Marxism as they are set down in the classical texts, and all the purported “innovations” or “teachings” of the last thirty years only confirm that capitalism still lives and must be destroyed. Therefore the central point of the present doctrinal position of the movement is this: no revision of the original principles of the proletarian revolution.

The Party today undertakes a work of scientific observation of social phenomena, with the aim of confirming the fundamental theses of Marxism. It analyses, confronts, and comments on recent and contemporary events. It repudiates any doctrinal elaboration that tends to found new theories or to demonstrate the inadequacy of the Marxist doctrine for the explanation of phenomena.

All this work of demolishing opportunism and “deviationism” (Lenin: What Is To Be Done?) is today the basis of party activity. The party follows revolutionary tradition and experiences in this work during

these periods of revolutionary reflux and the proliferation of opportunist theories which had as their violent and inflexible opponents Marx, Engels, Lenin and the Italian Left.

With this correct revolutionary evaluation of the present-day tasks in hand, the party, although small and having only limited links with the mass of the proletariat, although tenaciously attached to the theoretical task as the most immediate task, absolutely refuses to consider itself as a circle of thinkers or simple researchers who are looking for new truths or who have supposedly lost yesterday's truth and consider it inadequate.

No movement can triumph in history without a theoretical continuity, which is the experience of previous struggles. Consequently the party prohibits personal freedom to elaborate and conjure up new schemata and explanations of the contemporary social world. It prohibits the individual freedom of analysis, critique, and perspective even for its members who are the best prepared intellectually, and defends the firmness of a theory which is not the product of blind faith, but the content of the proletarian class science, constructed from the experiences of several centuries, not from the thought of individuals, but from the force of material facts, reflected in the historical consciousness of a revolutionary class and crystallised in its party. Material facts have only confirmed the doctrine of revolutionary Marxism.

The party, despite the limited number of its members resulting from clearly counter-revolutionary conditions, does not suspend proselytism and the propagation of its principles in all oral and written forms, even if its meetings are attended by only a few individuals and its press has a limited circulation. The party considers its press as the principal activity in the present phase, since it is one of the most effective means permitted by the real situation for indicating the correct political line for the masses to follow, and for an organic and more extensive propagation of the principles of the revolutionary movement.

Events, and not the will or determination of individuals, thus also determine the extent to which the penetration of the broad masses is possible, limiting it today to a small part of the party's general activity. Nonetheless the party does not pass up the opportunity to insert itself into every fracture, every break, knowing well that there can be no resurgence until this sector of its activity has been expanded amply and has become dominant.

The acceleration of the process depends not only on the profound social causes of historical crises, but also on the work of proselytism and propaganda with the reduced means at the party's disposal. The party denies absolutely that the process can be stimulated by expedient recipes and manoeuvres directed at groups, leaders and apparatchiks that usurp the name "proletarian", "socialist", or "communist". These methods, which characterised the tactics of the Third International after Lenin's absence from the political scene, had no other effect than the disorientation of the Comintern as the organisational expression of the theory and the operative force of the movement, while every "tactical expedient" caused the parties to lose sections of their membership. These methods have been advocated and approved by the Trotskyist movement and by the Fourth International, which wrongly consider them to be communist methods.

There are no fixed recipes for accelerating the class resurgence. There are no "manoeuvres" or "expedients" that can make the proletariat listen to its class voice. Such methods cannot make the party appear for what it truly is, but instead deform its function, undermining and compromising the effective

resurgence of the revolutionary movement, since the latter is based on the real maturation of the situation and on the ability of the party to respond adequately, an ability that it can acquire only through doctrinal and political inflexibility. The Italian Left has always combated the method of resorting to tactical expedients to stay afloat, denouncing it as a deviation from principles and incompatible with Marxist determinism.

The party, in line with its previous experiences, thus abstains from issuing or accepting invitations, open letters, and agitational slogans as a basis for forming committees, fronts, and agreements with other political movements and organisations, whatever they may be.

The party does not conceal the fact that in phases of resurgence it cannot strengthen itself in an autonomous way unless a form of trade union associationism of the masses emerges.

Although the trade union has not always been free from the influence of the enemy classes and has functioned as a vehicle of extended and profound deviations and deformations, and although it is not a specific revolutionary instrument, nonetheless it is an object of the party's attention, and the party does not refuse voluntarily to work within it, distinguishing itself clearly from all the other political groups. While the party recognises that it can conduct trade union activity only in a sporadic manner today, it never renounces this activity. From the moment when the concrete numerical relationship between its members, sympathisers, and unionised workers in a given branch reaches a certain proportion, and on the condition that the organisation in question doe . s not exclude in its statutes and a priori the possibility of conducting an autonomous class activity, the party will undertake to penetrate it and attempt to conquer its leadership.

The party is not a direct descendent of the Abstentionist (Left-Wing) Faction of the Italian Socialist Party, although this tendency played a large role in the movement that culminated in the formation of the Communist Party of Italy at Livorno in 1921. The opposition of the Left within the Communist Party of Italy and the Communist International was not based on the theses of abstentionism, but on other basic questions. Parliamentarianism loses its importance little by little with the development of the capitalist state, which will assume the form of an open class dictatorship as Marxism has recognised since its inception. Even where they seem to survive, the parliamentary electoral institutions of the traditional bourgeoisies are emptied of their content more and more. What remains is only an empty phraseology which in moments of social crisis reveals the open dictatorial form of the state as the final expression of capitalism, against which the revolutionary proletariat must direct its violence. Therefore since this historical level and this present relationship of forces has been reached, the party can have no interest in democratic elections of any kind and does not develop its activity into this domain.

It is a fact of revolutionary experience that revolutionary generations succeed each other rapidly and that the cult of the individual is a dangerous aspect of opportunism, since the defection of old leaders to the enemy and to conformism due to exhaustion is a natural fact confirmed by rare exceptions. This is why the party directs the maximum attention to the youth and devotes the maximum effort to the recruitment of young militants and to their preparation for political activity, excluding any. careerism or personality cult.

In the present historical atmosphere of counter-revolutionary high potential, we are compelled to create young leadership elements which will guarantee the continuity of the revolution. The

contribution of a new revolutionary generation is a necessary condition for the resurgence of the movement.

Murder of the Dead (1951)

In Italy, we have long experience of “catastrophes that strike the country” and we also have a certain specialisation in “staging” them. Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, rainstorms, epidemics... The effects are indisputably felt especially by poorer people and those living at high densities, and if cataclysms that are frequently much more terrifying strike all corners of the world, not always do such unfavourable social conditions coincide with geographical and geological ones. But every people and every country holds its own delights: typhoons, drought, tidal waves, famine, heatwaves and frosts, all unknown to us in the “garden of Europe”; and when one opens the newspaper, one inevitably finds more than one item, from the Philippines to the Andes, from the Polar Ice Cap to the African Desert.

Our capitalism, as has been said a hundred times over, is quantitatively small fry, but today it is in the vanguard, in a “qualitative” sense, of bourgeois civilisation, of which it offers the greatest precursors from amidst Renaissance splendour[1], in the masterful development of an economy based on disasters.

We wouldn’t dream of shedding a single tear if a monsoon washed away entire cities on the coast of the Indian Ocean, or if they were submerged by the tidal waves caused by submarine earthquakes, but we have found out how to collect alms from all over the world for the Polesine.

Our monarchy was great in knowing to rush not to the dance (Pordenone), but to where people are dying of cholera (Naples), or to the ruins of Reggio and Messina, raised to the ground by the earthquakes of 1908. Now our puffed-up President[2] has been taken off to Sardinia and, if the stalinists haven’t been fibbing, they have shown him teams of “Potemkin workers” in action, that then run to the other side of the stage like the warriors in Aida.[3] It was too late to pull the homeless out of the flooding Po, but good play was made of MPs and ministers paddling about in their wellies after setting up cameras and microphones for a world-wide broadcast of their lamentations.

Here we have the bright idea: the state should intervene! And we have been applying it for a good ninety years. The professedly homeless Italian has set state aid in the place of the grace of God and the hand of providence. He is convinced that the national budget has much wider bounds than the compassion of our Lord. A good Italian happily forks out ten thousand lire squeezed out of him so that months and months later he can “squander one thousand lire of the government’s money”. And during one of these periodic contingencies, now fashionably called emergencies but which fall in all seasons, when the central government has scarcely initiated the unfailing provisions and fundings, a band of no less specialised “homeless” will roll up its sleeves and plunge into the business of procuring concessions and the orgy of contracts.

The Minister of Finance of the day, Vanoni, suspends by his authority all other state functions and declares that he will not provide a single brass farthing from the exchequer for all the other “Special Acts” so that all means can be addressed to dealing with the present disaster.

There could be no better proof than this that the state serves for nothing and that if the hand of God really did exist, he would make a splendid present to the homeless of all kinds by causing earthquakes and bankrupting this charlatan and dilettante state.

The foolishness of the small and middle bourgeoisie shines forth at its brightest when it seeks a remedy for the terror that freezes it in the warm hope of a subsidy and an indemnity liberally bestowed upon it by the government. But the reaction of the overseers of the working masses who, they scream, lost everything in the disaster, but unfortunately not their chains, appears no less senseless.

These leaders, who pretend to be “marxists”, have for these supreme situations, which interrupt the well-being of the proletariat derived from normal capitalist exploitation, an economic formula even more foolish than that of state intervention. The formula is well-known: “make the rich pay!”

Vanoni is thus reviled because he was unable to identify and tax high incomes.[4]

But a mere crumb of marxism suffices to establish that high incomes thrive where high levels of destruction occur, big business deals being based on them. “The bourgeoisie must pay for the war!” stated those false shepherds in 1919 instead of inviting the proletariat to overthrow it. The Italian bourgeoisie is still here, and enthusiastically invests its income in paying for wars and other disasters for which it is then repaid four fold.

Yesterday

When the catastrophe destroys houses, fields and factories, throwing the active population out of work, it undoubtedly destroys wealth. But this cannot be remedied by a transfusion of wealth from elsewhere, as with the miserable operation of rummaging around for old jumble, where the advertising, collection and transport cost far more than the value of the worn out clothes.

The wealth that disappeared was that of past, ages-old labour. To eliminate the effect of the catastrophe, a huge mass of present- day, living labour is required. So, if we use the concrete social, not abstract, definition of wealth, we can see it as the right of certain individuals, who form the ruling class, to draw on living contemporary labour. New incomes and new privileged wealth are formed in the mobilisation of new labour, and the capitalist economy offers no means of “shifting” wealth accumulated elsewhere to plug the gap in Sardinian or Venetian wealth, just as one could not take from the banks of the Tiber to rebuild the ones swallowed up by the Po.

This is why it is a stupid idea to tax the ownership of the fields, houses and factories left intact to rebuild those affected.

The centre of capitalism is not the ownership of such investments, but a type of economy which allows the drawing from and profiting from what man’s labour creates in endless cycles, subordinating the employment of this labour to that withdrawal.

Thus the idea of resolving the war-time housing crisis with an income freeze on landlords of undamaged houses led to the provision of homes in a worse condition than that caused by the bombing. But the demagogues shout easy arguments so as not to confuse the working masses.

The basis of marxist economic analysis is the distinction between dead and living labour. We do not define capitalism as the ownership of heaps of past, crystallised labour, but as the right to extract from

living and active labour. That is why the present economy cannot lead to a good solution, realising with the minimum expenditure of present labour the rational conservation of what past labour has transmitted to us, nor to better bases for the performance of future labour. What is of interest to the bourgeois economy is the frenzy of the contemporary work rhythm, and it favours the destruction of still useful masses of past labour, not giving a tupenny-ha'penny damn for its descendants.

Marx explains that the ancient economies, which were based more on use than exchange value, did not need to extort surplus labour as much as the present one, recalling the only exception: that of the extraction of gold and silver (it is not without reason that capitalism arose from money) where the worker was forced to work himself to death, as in Diodorus Siculus.

The appetite for surplus labour (Capital Vol. I, Ch. 10, Section 2: "The Greed for Surplus Labour") not only leads to extortion from the living of so much labour power as to shorten their lives, but does good business in the destruction of dead labour so as to replace still useful products with other living labour. Like Maramaldo,[5] capitalism, oppressor of the living, is the murderer also of the dead: "But as soon as people, whose production still moves within the lower forms of slave-labour, corvée-labour, etc., are drawn into the whirlpool of an international market dominated by the capitalist mode of production, the sale of their products for export becoming their principal interest, the civilised horrors of over-work are grafted on the barbaric horrors of slavery, serfdom, etc." [6]

The original title of the paragraph quoted is "Der Heisshunger nach Mehrarbeit", literally; "The voracious appetite for surplus labour".

Small scale capitalism's hunger for surplus labour, as set out in our doctrine, already contains the entire analysis of the modern phase of capitalism that has grown enormously: the ravenous hunger for catastrophe and ruin.

Far from being our discovery (to hell with the "discoverers",[7] especially when they sing even the scale out of tune, then believe themselves to be creators), the distinction between dead and living labour lies in the fundamental distinction between constant and variable capital. All objects produced by labour which are not for immediate consumption, but are employed in a further work process (now one calls them producer goods), form constant capital. "Therefore, whenever products enter as means of production into new labour processes, they lose their character of being products and function only as objective factors contributing to living labour." [8]

This is true for main and subsidiary raw materials, machines and all other types of plant which progressively wear out. The loss due to wear which has to be compensated for requires the capitalist to invest another quota, always of constant capital, which current economics calls amortisation. Depreciate rapidly, that is the supreme ideal of this grave-digging economy.

We recalled a propos "the body possessed by the devil" [9] how, in Marx, capital has the demoniacal function of incorporating living labour into dead labour which has become a thing. What joy that the Po's embankments are not immortal, and today one can happily "incorporate living labour into them"! Projects and specifications are ready in a few days. Good boys, you are possessed by the devil!

"Sir, the drawing office of our firm has done its duty in predisposing technical and economic studies: here they are all nice and ready." And price analysis values the stone of Monselice higher than Carrara marble.[10]

“The property therefore which labour-power in action, living labour, possesses of preserving value, at the same time that it adds it, is a gift of Nature which costs the labourer nothing, but which is very advantageous to the capitalist inasmuch as it preserves the existing value of his capital.” [11]

This value, which is simply “preserved”, thanks always to the operation of living labour, is called the constant part of capital or constant capital by Marx. But: “... that part of capital, represented by [invested in] labour-power [wages], does, [instead] in the process of production, undergo an alteration of value. (...) and also produces an excess, a surplus-value...” [12]

We therefore call it the variable part, or simply variable capital.

The key lies here. Bourgeois economics calculates profit in relation to the constant capital which lies still and doesn’t move: in fact it would go to the devil if the labour of the worker did not “preserve” it. Marxist economics, on the contrary, places profit in relation only to variable capital and demonstrates how the active labour of the proletarian a) preserves constant capital (dead labour), and b) increases variable capital (living labour). This increase, surplus value, is gained by the entrepreneur. This process, as Marx explains, of establishing the rate without taking into account constant capital is like making it equal to zero: an operation current in mathematical analysis where variable quantities are concerned.

Once constant capital is set at zero, gigantic development of profit occurs. This is the same as saying that the enterprise’s profit remains if the disadvantage of maintaining constant capital is removed from the capitalist’s shoulders.

This hypothesis is none other than state capitalism’s present reality.

Transferring capital to the state means that constant capital equals zero. Nothing of the relationship between entrepreneurs and workers is changed, since this depends solely on the magnitude of variable capital and surplus-value.

Are analyses of state capitalism something new? Without any haughtiness we use what we have known since 1867 at the latest. It is very short: Cc = 0.

Let us not leave Marx without this ardent passage after the cold formula: “Capital is dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks.” [13]

Modern capital, which needs consumers as it needs to produce ever more, has a great interest in letting the products of dead labour fall into disuse as soon as possible so as to impose their renewal with living labour, the only type from which it “sucks” profit. That is why it is in seventh heaven when war breaks out and that is why it is so well trained for the practice of disasters. Car production in America is massive, but all, or nearly all, families have a car, so demand might be exhausted. So then it is better that the cars last only a short time. So that this is indeed the case, firstly they are badly built with a series of botched parts. If the users break their necks more often, no matter: a client is lost, but there is another car to substitute. Then they call on fashion with a large cretinising subsidy of advertising propaganda, through which everyone wants the latest model, like the women who are ashamed to put on a dress, even if perfectly good, “from last year”. The fools are taken in and it does not matter that a Ford built in 1920 lasts longer than a brand new 1951 model. And finally the dumped cars are not used even for scrap, and are thrown into car cemeteries. Who dares to take one saying: you have thrown it

away as if it were worthless, what harm is there in me fixing and reusing it? He would get a kick up the backside and a gaol sentence.

To exploit living labour, capital must destroy dead labour which is still useful. Loving to suck warm young blood, it kills corpses.

So while the maintenance of the Po embankments for ten kilometres requires human labour costing, let us say, one million a year, it suits capitalism better to rebuild them all spending one billion. Otherwise it would have to wait one thousand years. This perhaps means that the nasty fascist government sabotaged the Po embankments? Certainly not. It means that no one has pressed for an annual budget of a miserable million. This is not spent as it is swallowed up in the financing of other “large scale works” of “new construction” which have budget estimates of billions. Now the devil has swept away the embankments, one finds someone with the best motives of sacrosanct national interest who activates the project office and has them rebuilt.

Who is to blame for preferring the large scale projects? The fascists and the official communists. Both of them prattle that they want a productivist, full employment policy. Productivism, Mussolini’s favourite creature, consists in establishing “present day” cycles of living labour out of which big business and big speculation make billions. Let us modernise the aged machines of the great industrialists and also let us modernise the river banks after letting them collapse, all at the people’s expense. The history of the recent years of administrative management of state works and of the protection of industry is full of these masterpieces, ranging from the provision of raw materials sold below cost, to works “undertaken by a state monopoly” in the “struggle against unemployment” on the basis of “constant capital equals zero”. In a few words, let us spend it all in wages, and since the enterprise has only shovels for equipment, the Lord is convinced that it is useful to shift earth first from here to there then immediately back to here again.

If the Lord hesitates, the enterprise has the trade union organiser to hand: a demonstration of labourers shouldering shovels under the ministry’s windows and all’s well. The “discoverer” arrives and supersedes Marx: shovels, the only constant capital, have given birth to surplus value.

Today

Undoubtedly, the size of the disaster along the Po has been massive, and the estimated cost of the damage is still rising. Let us admit that the cultivated area of Italy lost one hundred thousand hectares or one thousand square kilometres, about one three hundredth or three per thousand of the total. One hundred thousand inhabitants have had to leave the area, which is not the most densely settled in Italy, or, in round figures, one five hundredth or two per thousand.

If the bourgeois economy were not mad, one could do a simple little sum. The national stock has suffered a serious blow. However, the zone was only partially destroyed. When the floodwaters recede, the agricultural soil will largely be left behind and the decomposition of vegetation along with the deposition of alluvium will partially compensate for the lost fertility. If the damage is one third of total capital, it costs one thousandth of the national capital. But this has an average income of five per cent or fifty per thousand. If for a year every Italian saved scarcely one fiftieth of his consumption, the damage would be made good.

But bourgeois society is anything but a co-operative, even if the great freebooters of native capital escape Vanoni by demonstrating that “part-ownership” of their enterprises has been distributed among the employees.

All the productivistic operations of Italian and international economy are more or less as destructive as the Paduan disaster: the water entered through one hole and left through another.

Such a problem is insuperable on capitalist grounds. If it were a question of making the arms to provide Eisenhower with his hundred divisions within a year, the solution would be found[14]. These are all short-cycle operations and capitalism is as pleased as Punch if the order for the 10,000 guns is with a delivery date in 100 and not 1,000 days. The steel pool does not exist without reasons.

But a pool of hydrological and seismological organisations cannot be formed, at least not until the great science of the bourgeois period is really able to provoke series of floods and earthquakes, like aerial bombardments.

Here it is a matter of a slow, non accelerable centuries long transmission from generation to generation of the results of “dead” labour, but under the guardianship of the living, of their lives and of their lesser sacrifice.

Let us admit, for example, that the water in the Polesine will recede in a few months and that the breach at Occhiobello is closed before the spring, only one annual harvest cycle would now be lost: no productive “investment” can replace it, but the loss is reduced.

If, instead, one believes that all the Po embankments and those of the other rivers will frequently come apart, due as much to the consequences of overlooked maintenance during thirty years of crisis as to the disastrous deforestation of the mountains, then the remedy will be even slower in coming. No capital will be invested for the good of our great-grandchildren.

Our father wrote in vain that only a few examples of virgin forest remain, growing without the intervention of human labour. The forestry system thus becomes almost man’s work despite the minimum of capital in the operation. Nevertheless, high growing trees, the most important in the public economy, always require a very long period before yielding a useful product. However, forestry science has shown that the best year to fell timber is not that at the end of the maximum life span, but that in which current growth equals average growth, one must always calculate 80, 100 and even 150 years for an oak wood. Di Vittorio and Pastore[15] would fling the book, if they had ever opened it, out of the window.

As in the operetta: steal, steal capital (love) cannot wait...

There is still worse to relate. Relatively little is said of the disaster in Sardinia, Calabria and Sicily. Here the geographical facts differ drastically.

The very slack gradient of the Po valley caused a build-up of water which then swamped over the clay and impermeable soils below. The same reasons in the South and the Islands, of high rainfall and deforestation of the mountains, along with the steep fall down to the sea caused the destruction. The mountain streams washed sand and gravel from the bedrock and destroyed fields and houses, all in a few hours, without, however, causing many victims.

Not only is the sacking of the magnificent forests of Aspromonte and the Sila by the allied liberators irreparable, but here also the renewal of the land swamped by the flood waters is practically impossible, not merely uneconomic for the “investors” and for the “helpers” (more self-interested than the former, if that is possible).

Not only the narrow horizons of cultivable soil, but also the thin non-rocky strata that gave it weak support have been washed away, soil which was carried up many times over decades by the grindingly poor farmers. Every plantation, every tree, the basis of a rather profitable agriculture, and industry in some villages, came down with the soil and the orange and lemon trees floated out to sea.

Replanting a destroyed vineyard takes about two years, but citrus plantations only provide a full harvest after seven to ten years and a great amount of capital is needed to establish and run them. Naturally, the good books do not give the cost of the unthinkable operation of carrying up again, for hundreds of meters, the soil brought down and, in any case, the water would carry it away again before the plant roots could fix it to the subsoil.

Not even the houses can be rebuilt where they were before for technical, not economic reasons. Five or six unfortunate villages on the Ionian coast in the Province of Reggio Calabria will not be rebuilt on their own hill sites, but down by the sea.

In the Middle Ages, after devastation had caused the disappearance of every last trace of the magnificent coastal cities of Magna Graecia, the apex of agriculture and art in the ancient world, the poor agricultural population saved itself from Saracen pirate raids by living in villages built on the mountain tops, which were less accessible and thus more defensible.

Roads and railways were built along the coast with the arrival of the “Piedmontese” government and, where malaria did not prohibit it, where the mountains ran down close to the sea, every village had its “on-sea” near the station. It became so convenient to carry timber away.

Tomorrow only the “on-seas” will remain and there they are laboriously rebuilding some houses. So what then if the peasant reclimbs the slope where nothing can ever take root and the very bare and friable rock strata itself does not permit the rebuilding of houses? And the workers by the sea, what will they do? Today they can no longer emigrate like the Calabrians of the unhealthy lowlands and the Lucanians of the “damned claylands” made sterile by the greedy felling of the woodlands which once covered the mountains and the trees that spread over the upland grazing.

Certainly, in such conditions, no capital and no government will intervene, a total disgrace of the obscene hypocrisy with which national and international solidarity was praised.

It is not a moral or sentimental fact that underlies this, but the contradiction between the convulsive dynamic of contemporary super- capitalism and all the sound requirements for the organisation of the life of human groups on the Earth, allowing them to transmit good living conditions through time.

Bertrand Russell, the Nobel Prize winner, who quietly pontificates in the world press, accuses man of overly sacking natural resources, so much so that their exhaustion can already be calculated. Recognising the fact that the great powers conduct absurd and mad policies, he denounces the aberrations of the individualist economy and tells the Irish joke: why should I care about my descendants, what have they ever done for me?

Russell counts among the aberrations, along with that of mystical fatalism, that of communism which states: if we have done with capitalism, the problem is solved. After such a display of physical, biological and social science, he is unable to see that it is an equally physical fact that the huge level of loss of both natural and social resources is essentially linked to a given type of production, and thinks that all would be resolved by a moral sermon, or a Fabian appeal to the human wisdom of all classes.

The corollary is pitiful: science becomes impotent when it has to solve problems of the spirit?

Those who really achieve human progress, taking decisive steps forward in the organisation of human life, are not really the conquerors and dominators who still dare to ostentate greed for power, but the swarms of insipid benefactors and proponents of the ERP[16] and brotherhood among peoples, like so many pacifist dovecots.

Passing from cosmology to economics, Russell criticises the liberal illusions in the panacea of free competition and has to admit: “Marx predicted that free competition among capitalists would lead to monopoly, and was proved correct when Rockefeller established a virtually monopolistic system for oil.”

Starting from the solar explosion, which one day will instantaneously transform us into gas (which could prove the Irishman right), Russell finishes with maudlin sentiments: “Nations desiring prosperity must seek collaboration more than competition.”

Is it not the case, Mr. Nobel Prize winner, who has written treatises on logic and scientific method, that Marx calculated the development of monopoly fifty years earlier?

If that were good dialectics, the opposite of competition is monopoly, not collaboration.

Take good note that Marx also predicted the destruction of the capitalist economy, class monopoly, not with collaboration, with which you are devoted to flattering all the Trumans and Stalins of good will, but with class war.

Just as Rockefeller came, “big moustache[17] must come!” But not from the Kremlin. That one, despite Marx, is about to shave like an American.

Footnotes

[1] “The first capitalist nation was Italy.” (Engels, “Preface to the Italian Edition of The Communist Manifesto”)

[2] Luigi Einaudi, President of Italy 1948-55.

[3] Potemkin had constructed prefabricated villages to show Catherine II on her tour of the Russian countryside. They gave the impression of rural prosperity, but after each visit they were hastily dismantled then re-assembled elsewhere on the tour.

[4] In early 1951 Vanoni introduced personal income tax to Italy. This tax entered the Guiness Book of Records as the ‘least paid tax in the world’. Still today tax evasion is widespread. (Cf. 11th. ed., 1963, p. 10)

[5] Maramaldo killed the dying General Ferrucci in 1530, the last act of Florentine independence. The British equivalent is Ivo of Ponthieu who hacked at the dying King Harold at Hastings. But he was

“branded with ignominy by William and expelled from the army” (Gesta Regun Anglorum). The chivalry of nascent feudalism contrasts favourably with the squalid unscrupulousness of early capitalism.

[6] Capital Vol. I, Chap. 10

[7] Publisher’s Note — The word used in the Italian original is “troviero”. This literally means “finder” and, in the context, actually means something like “someone who thinks they’ve found something important, but they haven’t”, e.g. some bourgeois apologist who thinks they have refuted Marx. There is no obvious English equivalent so “discoverer”, with the inverted commas, will have to do.

[8] Capital Vol. I, Chap. 10

[9] In this collection.

[10] Monselice: the nearest stone quarries to the Po, Carrara: the main centre of marble production in Italy.

[11] Capital Vol. I, Chap. 8

[12] ibid.

[13] Capital Vol. I, Chap. 10, Section 1

[14] The article refers to the start of the Korean War.

[15] The “communist” and “catholic” union leaders of the period respectively.

[16] The European Recovery Programme, the “Marshall Plan”.

[17] i.e. Stalin, “Uncle Joe”.

The Human Species and the Earth’s Crust (1952)

The theme of the last "filo del tempo"2 "Public utility, private heaven", was intended to show that in the present day social economy, initiative and choice always remains with those who pursue speculative profit, not only when they carry on their private business with their own means and on their own terrain, but also in the case of "public works" where the terrain is dedicated to "motives of general interest", and removed from the old individual form of property.

Initiative, choice, the decision concerning the opportunities from such or such a project (a road, a railway, a waterway, a public construction project, the development of urban or rural areas, coastal construction etc.), as well as the priority given to one or other of these works, seem to be dictated by a centre which has a superior vision of the general interest. In reality they are, on the contrary, always planned, imagined, supported, promoted and completed or, as they say these days without euphemism, "launched" (in the real sense you launch boats, and in the economic sense you launch a classic series of financial expenditures) by a private group which makes its calculations and expects a very high profit.

What's more, while for an entirely private company the financing is onerous and carries an important risk (the possibility of an unfavourable result involving a loss rather than the gain which was hoped for), in the case of works and enterprises bearing the holy stigmata of the public good, it is much easier to obtain funds at good rates, and it is almost mathematically impossible for the profit to be limited, in never mind negative. In effect, for the interest to be paid and the expected expense to be recovered, in this case there is the means to make the eternal taxpayer responsible for the budget, so we can just as well speak of: the work of private use and public fraud.

This question doesn't only allow us to understand certain recent developments in the capitalist economy, commonly called the controlled or managedeconomy, which represents nothing new qualitatively or anything unforeseen quantitatively (even if it spreads more and more). It also leads on to the general problematic of marxism vis-à
-vis the social process, and to the demonstration, of universal value, that within all the great things that the capitalist epoch makes a show of today, it has not had as its primary purpose or its motor force any aim other than the interest of the dominant class, of its members or its groups, and never the general good of society. The question which we are talking about, while limiting ourselves to the works which transform the great cities, always vaster and more ostentatious in the present epoch, always more celebrated and praised to the skies as the masterpieces of civilisation and wise administration, is linked to the question of the settlement of man the animal on the earth, and to the solution, not civilised and perfect but insane and monstrous, given to it by the capitalist mode of production. There we can find it in the framework of the atrocious contradictions that revolutionary marxism denounces as proper to today's bourgeois society. These contradictions do not only concern the distribution of the products of labour and the relations which result from this among the producers, but they also apply in an indissociable manner to the territorial and geographical distribution of the instruments and equipment of production and transport, and therefore the distribution of people themselves. In no other historical period, perhaps, has this distribution presented such disastrous and appalling characteristics.

Yesterday

It is not without great delight that we quote those passages where Marx rails against and condemns the conceptions of George Hegel, while according to some eternal dilettantes he always displayed the most reverential fear towards his "master".

The subversive and radical interpretations that marxism has given to reality suppose, by their very structure, an assimilation of all the great contributions of the previous epochs. Marxism does not neglect to explain any utterance, any system transmitted by history, even those which bourgeois "culture" stupidly mocks with a presumptuous arrogance. It is rather a clique of preachers who have eliminated and swept away everything else: these are the philosophers of law and the ideologues of the human person. The reply to this that we are about to concern ourselves with is one of the numerous passages which illustrates this in a dramatic fashion.

Marx showed that all value, in the private and market economy, must be measured in human social labour invested in "goods" of any kind. In consequence, all accumulation, any reserve of new value and new wealth, must correspond to work done and "not consumed", that is to say, to a marketable difference between the work obtained and the quantity of means of subsistence granted to the worker's consumption. In the course of this imposing process of thought, he had to demonstrate that the wealth consumed not only by the proletarian and the capitalist, but also by the landowner, can have no other

origin. In economic terms: land rent is only a part of surplus value, deducted from the value created from the sum of social effort on the part of the workers.

This thesis ruled out one of the opposing theses, that proposed by the Physiocratic school, which states that wealth and value can come out of the ground, before it even receives the contribution of human labour.

At the present stage in history, and given the measurements of the land, populations and foodstuffs, we have to put paid to any idyllic vision which represents a small, serene and naive humanity, which lives on fruit which falls into its mouths from spontaneously growing trees under which it lies, singing and embracing. This, they say, is what happened on Tahiti and on the other chains of islands in the Pacific, where an eternal spring reigned. But the colonists of modern capitalism got there in due course and, in place of free love in the open air, they importedmercantile love and brothels. As the French rightly say (the pun is in the pronunciation): civilisation and syphilisation — paper money and the sickly spirochete3.

Subsequently Marx deals with the relation between man and the earth. For us, man is the Species; for bourgeois gentlemen, man is the individual.

Marx said right at the beginning — and we haven't forgotten — that he deals with property in land as it presents itself when the capitalist mode of production is fully developed. He knew very well that in the majority of countries you could still find vestiges of other historical forms of landed property: the feudal form, which supposes that the direct producer only constitutes a simple accessory of the soil (in the form of serfs, slaves etc.)4, and which therefore had the characteristic of a personal domination over the mass of people; the form of fragmented property, which supposes that the agricultural labourers have not been "dispossessed of their means of labour"5 - land, instruments of labour and spare supplies.

Marx therefore made an abstraction of the precapitalist forms, and considered agriculture organised on the basis of the following elements: the landowner, who periodically received a rent from the capitalist farmer; the farmer who brings the capital of exploitation and pays wages; the mass of agricultural workers. Marx said that to do his research it was enough to consider as absolutely analogous the capitalist manufacturing firm and the agricultural enterprise, the capitalist who produces industrial goods and the one who produces foodstuffs. For the sake of clarity, he reduced even the latter to wheat, the essential food of modern-day people. It remains only necessary to explain the function of a third personage, who is (generally) absent from manufacturing, but who is always present in capitalist agriculture: the landowner. And we still need to examine the source of his wealth, or land rent.

The development of capitalism imposes the elimination of feudal agrarian forms and small landed property, the liberation of all serfs and the maximum ruin of the direct cultivators, which dumps them all into the proletariat without land or reserves (reserves are a stock of objects of consumption, or money sufficient to acquire them when there is no other source of revenue). However, as Marx showed, the only form of ownership of the earth which is compatible with full capitalism is not a necessary condition for it. In other words, landed property will disappear in front of industrial capitalism; or yet, as is illustrated magnificently all the way from the passages which come from The Poverty of Philosophy in 1847 to one of the last letters Marx ever wrote (read at our meeting in Milan, in September)6, the suppression of private property in soil does not mean the passage to socialism.

"It is true, as we shall see later, that landed property differs from other kinds of property in that it appears superfluous and harmful at a certain stage of development, even from the point of view of the capitalist mode of production."7.

As was said in Milan, the "later" came after the dramatic digression of Engels which closed what we have of Book 3 (in Chapter 52, while here we are in Chapter 37): here the manuscript breaks off...8 As for us, we contend that the crowning point of the work must be the chapter-programme on the social passage of capitalist production to communism9.

After these explanations, always necessary even if we repeat ourselves, according to the method that we have decided to apply, let's recall the Marxist definition of property in land (as opposed to the pseudo-definition of idealist philosophy) as stated by Marx in a footnote. We only have to transcribe them:

"Landed property is based on the monopoly by certain persons over definite portions of the globe, as exclusive spheres of their private will to the exclusion of all others"10.

And now the note:

Quote:

"Nothing could be more comical than Hegel's development of private landed property. According to this, man as an individual must endow his will with reality as the soul of external nature, and must therefore take possession of this nature and make it his private property. If this were the destiny of the "individual", of man as an individual, it would follow that every human being must be a landowner, in order to become a real individual. Free private ownership of land, a very recent product, is according to Hegel, not a definite social relation, but a relation of man as an individual to "nature", an"absolute right of man to appropriate all things" (Hegel, Philosophie des Rechts, Berlin, 1840, p 79) This much at least is evident the individual cannot maintain himself as a landowner by his mere "will" against the will of another individual, who likewise wants to become a real individual by virtue of the same strip of land. It definitely requires some thing other than goodwill [here Marx, employing with a fine irony the Hegelian jargon which he had been a master of since 1840, wants to say: for that, you need the good will of truncheon blows]. Furthermore, it is absolutely impossible to determine where the "individual" draws the line for realising his will, whether this will requires for its realisation a whole country, or whether it requires a whole group of countries by whose appropriation "the supremacy of my will over the thing can be manifested." Here Hegel comes to a complete impasse. "The appropriation is of a very particular kind; I do not take possession of more than I touch with my body; but it is clear, on the other hand, that external things are more extensive than I can grasp. By thus having possession of such a thing, some other is thereby connected to it. I carry out the act of appropriation by means of my hand, but its scope can be extended" (p.90). But this other thing is again linked with still another and so the boundary within which my will, as the soul, can pour into the soil, disappears. "When I possess something, my mind at once passes over to the idea that not only this property in my immediate possession, but what is associated with it is also mine. Here positive right must decide, for nothing more can be deduced from the concept" (p. 91). This is an extraordinarily naive admission "of the concept", and proves that this concept, which makes the blunder at the very outset of regarding as absolute a very definite legal view of landed property belonging to bourgeois society, understands "nothing" of the actual nature of this

landed property. This contains at the same time the admission that "positive right" can, and must, alter its determinations as the requirements of social, i.e., economic, development change."[11]

Here ends the very important note by Marx. Idealist speculation searches in vain for the relation between the Person and the land-thing, and describes it as a projection, from the beginning, of mysterious magnetic fluid emanating from will. Marxism straightaway eliminates the fetish of the person. It sets out to study the extremely variable historical process of relations between people, as a species and as a society , and agricultural production. Finally it establishes positively the process in the reality of the relation between classes, that is to say between people who, in rural production, have different tasks and share differently in the product and the benefits. Philosophy and all the bourgeois philosophers are completely helpless here!

The passages from Hegel, and the rough mise au point of the pupil Karl, bring into clear relief to what extent the tiresome grumbling of the Stalino-Turinian marxists[12] stinks of Hegelianism. When a self-described Marxist has made sacrifices to those two tragic theses: the dignity of the human Person on the one side, and the division of the land amongst the peasants on the other, there is no need to wait for a third piece of stupidity: he's already renounced everything.

In the chapter under study, therefore, Marx only skims through the history of occupation, of organisation of the land by humans, before the present capitalist phase. However, he explains at the start that there is no simple "right to the surface" in which the present positive right is established as ownership of land, transmissible by exchange against money. It is a matter of a stage in the disposition of human installation on the earth's "crust", in other words in a layer which extends above and below the surface of the soil. In effect, Marx signals not only that in the expression of land is included the waters which are the object of economic use, but that in the development of the theory of landed rent he deals with rent seen not only as applying to the produce of the fields, but also to mines, built-up areas, construction and any other installation fixed to the ground, whether it is found above or below the surface.

The utilisation of all these forms requires the provision of financial capital to seed, labour, harvest, construct, dig, build etc.. The "cadastral" [land registration] right which attributes each piece of land to its owner, establishes that the entrepreneur who raises the capital cannot put it to work if he doesn't obtain permission to cross over the boundary and set to work with all his labourers and employees. He thus opens a temporary breach in the monopoly of the owner, who the "positive right" — an exception made to that supreme finesse which is expropriation by force — cannot prevent from lying down on hischaise longue right in the middle, with his belly to the sun (or to the moon), and protected by a surrounding wall or a series of notices: entry forbidden. A monopoly, therefore, and not an ownership like that of objects of consumption. Now, thepermission to break or interrupt the monopoly has to be paid for, and, in effect, the capitalist entrepreneur pays an annual rent. His gain will be diminished accordingly. He will deduct this sum from the total profit which he will have left after paying one thousand for the labour and selling the wheat for two thousand. Thus the land by itself, and even the calories radiating from the sun do not give anything to man on the chaise longue; and yet he pockets a rent, which has been subtracted from the labour-value produced by those who show their backs, and not their bellies, to the blazing rays of the sun and who rip, dripping with sweat, at the fertile womb of the soil, virgin and not mother.

Marx showed that the law of the falling rate of profit of capital, more than any other factor, raises to the maximum the value of the land monopoly, and that the maximum increase is produced for the forms which are not purely agrarian, such as mines and building land, particularly in the area around large towns.

Before going any further, and ending up with Marx at the demonstration that the modern relation between people and the land is the worst of all the ways of using, or to put it another way, "equipping" the earth's crust by means of all the various kinds of installation, we will very quickly retrace the history of its conquest by man. Clearly we are not going to seek out the psychic-like fingerprints of acts of will, but the physical effects of labour and the efforts ofgenerations, accomplished not because anyone set out with reason or consciousness, but because in the beginning there was need, and at various stages of its development, human collectivity providing in various ways for its security, its life and its multiplication, in a diverse succession of successes and catastrophes.

Man is not the only animal who leaves a trace on the earth's crust, and is not content to travel around on light feet brushing gently on the surface and leaving hardly a trace, like the fish who swims in the sea or the bird who flies in the air. In one sense man is inferior and the dream of Leonardo da Vinci has still not succeeded in detaching him from the ground with only the power of his muscles and without the help of vehicles - which, besides, were inaugurated by a sheep. In the water, despite his bathyscaphe made from the finest steel, Piccard13 can only manage a descent of a few hundred metres, while life pulses in the submarine depths and was perhaps born there. On the solid crust, man perhaps has primacy over the other zoological species, but he was not the first to leave footprints or construct buildings. Numerous animals prowl about in the subsoil boring out galleries, and the mysterious animal plant-colony, the coral, has constructed from its chalky corpses something greater than our edifices: veritable islands which we consider as an integral part of the geophysical landscape.

The first humans were nomadic just like the beasts, and consequently had no interest in creating "fixed installations", such that the first acts of will, like Hegel said, did not give a soul to the soil, to the turf or the rock, but only to a branch torn down to serve as a club or a stone carved into an axe. On the other hand, they were already preceded by other "colonising" creatures of the earth's crust and authors of "stable structures", and not only fixed things, but in certain cases things endowed with movement, if it is true that the beaver has a house and the elephant has a graveyard.

Let's leave aside the nomad who only left fleeting and often dispersed traces on the earth's surface, and approach the first sedentary societies. We won't try to retrace history. It took millennia before, under the pressure of demographic growth and thanks to the first technical resources of labour, there appeared real constructions going beyond the tent of the Bedouin or the ice cabin of the Lapp. Man set out to dig the earth first of all to extract the rocks and the cement which would enable him to construct the first houses and buildings under the ground, and he imprinted on the wild crust the first paths, channels, numerous camps and trails which have resisted being uprooted and swept away over the centuries.

While the predominant production was agricultural, the density of population was low, needs were limited (even if this already meant a demand for fixed territorial sites and the necessity of defending them, not only against natural calamities, but also against attack, invasion or destruction by other human groups), and the exchange of products of the land remained at an embryonic stage, the form of "kitting out of the earth's crust" by human societies would conserve the traits of an intervention of

limited depth. The greatest part, by far, of the space required by people was subjected to no intervention other than cultivation, which doesn't involve breaking into the ground beyond a few tens of centimetres. Obviously it makes sense to ignore terrain which is not very fertile or which is too exposed to the danger of flooding, unhealthy conditions, high winds, tides, drought, which is situated a too great an altitude etc. Between the cultivated fields, would be a few rudimentary habitations for the farmers, a modest network of roads to be travelled on foot or even on horseback, rare hydraulic constructions to assist rural techniques... From time to time there might be a castle where a lord or a military commander lives and, installing themselves little by little around it, thevillage houses of the first artisans. In the middle ages, even more than in the Classical period, towns were rare, lightly populated, distant from each other, and connected by unreliable roads travelled by light vehicles pulled by animals. The ventures of some maritime peoples go back a long way and were sometimes astounding, but maritime and port cities did not have a great importance, at least not until the twelfth century, given the weak impact of maritime traffic on the general economy.

The dispersed population clearly outnumbered the population concentrated in towns.

We know very well this segment — one of the most oafish — of the idealist symphony: it is urban agglomeration which has produced schools, culture, civilisation, the participation of the whole people in political life, freedom, human dignity! It's always like this: the more we see individuals crammed in their thousands and millions into stinking rabbit hutches, military abattoirs, barracks and prisons, the more we see them reduced to pulp, because of this very concentration, by bombs (atomic or not), the more the Phariseean adoration of the Individual spreads its infection.

Above all, urban agglomeration has produced illnesses and epidemics, superstition and fanaticism, physical and criminal degeneration, the formation of the lumpen-proletariat and of an underworld worse than the highwaymen of previous centuries, the terrifying rise of all the statistics relating to crime. On this level the richer and more advanced countries are ahead of the backward countries and the prize goes to those with the biggest urban units.

Here it is not a question of applauding the situation of the rural masses today, those rare examples of a real agricultural proletariat who are really housed in modern habitations spread out over an area, and not concentrated in towns of more than fifty thousand people. The small farmer who lives in a log cabin on his little piece of land doesn't offer us an image of anything desirable either. On the subject of this layer of the population, an object today of adoration from fascists, the democratic and Stalinist false left or the Catholic centre, here is what Marx had to say:

"Small landed property creates a class of barbarians standing halfway outside of society, a class combining all the crudeness of primitive forms of society with the anguish and misery of civilised countries"14.

But (and it would be useful to complete the description of this picture some time) the results of big rural property and modern industry are scarcely any more brilliant. The first leads to the progressive reduction of the agricultural population and the fertility of the soil, the second destroys "labour-power, hence the natural force of human beings"15. In this, Marx adds, they go hand in hand. And for him, as for us, the healthy and vigorous coarseness of the barbarian peoples was less dire than the degeneration of the masses in the capitalist epoch, the epoch that our enemies designate as civilisation — a word

used well here, and in its proper sense, because it means the urban way of life, the way of life proper to those great agglomerated monsters which are the bourgeois metropolises.

Today

We are not dealing here with urban development and its effects from the point of view of the whole of social development, but only from the "technical" basis of the organisation of the land, which tends to transform it, without much concern for the needs of agriculture, into a space really equipped with all the general installations which create the platform of urban complexes — transforming it into a space, to put it another way, which has roads, sewers, equipment for the distribution of water, electricity and gas, installations for lighting and heating, communication and public transport of all kinds. Up until the Classical era, spaces left by cities swept away or razed by various devastations remained, despite the lower density of equipment and their weaker attachment to the subsoil, arid and unfit for any cultivation, as enclaves of desert in the midst of cultivated fields. Thus the extension of the town to the detriment of the countryside, which accompanied the influx of people into the former, involved a very different and much more profound manner of transforming the earth's crust, and this new technical fact engendered new economic relations of value and rent (as defined by Marx and Engels) and thus of social relations — and the programmes of social revolution.

According to modern technicians, the system of big concentrations of people is "economic" in terms of the expenses required, in every way, to "install the population on its territory". But "economic", for them, means adapted to profit and to the monopoly of the dominant class. They would burst out laughing on seeing a proposal for a more dispersed and uniform organisation, and would claim that the network, very different in this case, of all the systems of supply and drainage for habitations and people, would lead to excessive costs. But this is personified in the most extreme way by applied science, which is supposed to be animated by an incessant progress while it is more and more reduced, under the pressure of wheeling and dealing, to a jumble of lies, calculations and consciously incorrect deductions, and an terrible entanglement of superstitions and clichés.

Italy, an extremely densely populated country, has more than 150 inhabitants on average per square kilometre. But in the towns, or at least in the centre of the towns, there are 400 inhabitants per hectare, that's 40,000 per square kilometre, without considering the most disastrous cases. The density there is therefore more than 250 times greater than the average, and the ratio is even higher if we compare the average urban density with the rural average. While the "economic policy" of capitalism tends to further exacerbate this terrible contradiction, revolutionary policy will frontally attack it with radical measures.

Modern technology claims to have created masterpieces with the massive unitary infrastructures which allow the provisioning of a city with water and lighting, which make its congested transport function, which look after its roads, take away its waste and destroy them to make them inoffensive, that is to say by mineralising the organic part, or transporting them great distances, into the rivers or the sea. Naturally, it scorns the type of rural organisation in which each farm, or each group of farms, resorts to almost "natural" means to resolve the problems of supplying water or disposing of rubbish.

The young graduate fresh out of university and a reader of fashionable journals would therefore grimace if he read the following passage from Engels (The Housing Question, 1872), and would condemn it as backward and "superseded" by history and brilliant modern applications. Here, Engels responds to those

who see as utopian the abolition of the opposition between town and countryside under the pretext that this opposition is natural or, more exactly, is a consequence of history:

Quote:

"The abolition of the antithesis between town and country is no more and no less utopian than the abolition of the antithesis between capitalists and wage workers. From day to day it is becoming more and more a practical demand of both industrial and agricultural production. No one has demanded this more energetically then Liebig16 in his writings on the chemistry of agriculture, in which his first demand has always been that man shall give back to the land what he takes from it, and in which he proves that only the existence of the towns, and in particular the big towns, prevents this."17

Liebig! Our youngster will say, what an old idea! He lacked all the data that we have today, after almost a century of research in all areas, chemical, biological and agronomic! Liebig is also cited by Marx, and if today we still have more confidence in him than in the modern universities, it is because more than all the present experimental data he lacked something particularly notable: the grants and salaries distributed by Montecatini18 or Agfa.

Quote:

"When one observes how here in London alone a greater quantity of manure than is produced by the whole kingdom of Saxony is poured away every day into the sea with an expenditure of enormous sums, and when one observes what colossal works are necessary in order to prevent this manure from poisoning the whole of London, then the utopian proposal to abolish the antithesis between town and country is given a peculiarly practical basis. And even comparatively insignificant Berlin [but certainly not today, in 1952] has been wallowing in its own filth for at least thirty years.

On the other hand, it is completely utopian to want, like Proudhon, to transform present-day bourgeois society while maintaining the peasant as such. Only as uniform a distribution as possible of the population over the whole country, only an integral connection between industrial and agricultural production together with the thereby necessary extension of the means of communication — presupposing the abolition of the capitalist mode of production — would be able to save the rural population from the isolation and stupor in which it has vegetated almost unchanged for thousands of years"19.

We should not consider as outmoded the thesis of Liebig which says that the rotating cycle of organic matter necessary to life will become deficient if we relinquish the waste of humans, and part of that of animals. Yet today this abandonment is an accomplished fact, justified in the name of a deceitful urban hygiene, which would be opposed to the precepts of speculative profit if it put in doubt the necessity of cramming huge masses of humans into zones where the subsoil is equipped with the network of urban services, and limiting them to breathing by "iron lung". All the modern research on the perspectives for food production, taking account of the growth of population, from the extent of cultivable land and energy calculations of heat and available chemical methods, conclude that a food shortage is approaching. The only possible compensation may be constituted by "plankton" from the waters of the sea, that is to say by the miniscule bodies of tiny animals which populate the seas, which can be

extracted with appropriate means into a kind of tinned food. We can also foresee that, thanks to the atomic manipulations of chemistry, it will be possible to synthesise nutrient pills (we know the response of the lady who was told that in future children will be produced in a laboratory: it is truly admirable, but I think that we'll always return with pleasure to the old system!). But the fact is that, setting aside these futuristic visions, the cycle of the land, agriculture-animals-humans, today is deficient, particularly in substances containing nitrogen. Why then neglect the enormous losses due to the present systems of sterilisation of waste (for sterilisation all that's needed is a strong dilution and a few hours) while the mineral reserves of some types of fertiliser are close to exhaustion?20 The human species thus destroys innumerable masses of calories in this vital sector, as it does with the preservation of dead bodies. Don't worry: we don't want to industrialise corpses like the Nazis did. Anyway, the sum of waste excreted by a man in the course of an average life represents around 300 times the weight of his body. But by replacing the cemeteries by some other system, even mineralising corpses, we can gain cultivable land. Today this would be for the promoters of tempting building land — but let's have no confusion about this, it's not on their behalf that we're taking up the cudgels.

When we plan the first unitary "projects" to achieve a uniform network of infrastructure on the earth's crust in which man will no longer be either peasant or townsman, we are situating ourselves therefore, with Marx and Engels, not on the terrain of utopia or vague hypotheses, but in the framework of a precise post-revolutionary and post-capitalist programme. Bourgeois democracy cries out in horror if, to all the other freedoms of the citizen, we want to add the freedom to grow fat from the soil. As for bourgeois democracy, it has stooped so low as to renounce the freedom to breathe. The black fog which has attacked the great city of London paralysed all activity for several weeks, while it deposited the fine coal dust secreted from the thousands of chimneys around the metropolis into the lungs of those who ventured into the streets, and rendered completely useless the magnificent systems of lighting and transport, as well as all the factories and other places of work; so much so that it was the thieves and hoodlums who largely profited from it.21

We have therefore gone well beyond the equilibrium between the "interests" of the townsman and those of the countryman, which is the question in the latest declarations of Stalin22. Here it is a question of an objective which capitalism pursues in vain, while that of the socialist revolution is to go beyond social classes, and therefore to suppress the possibility that social groups can secure improvements and well-being at the expense of other groups.

The capitalist system and its supposed modernisation of the most ancient systems wants something for the crust of our planet which is completely irrational. The question is no longer about sharing out the product of such an enterprise. It is no longer a question of the economy, understood as dispute about mercantile or monetary wealth. It is a matter of physically introducing a totally different type of technical equipment for the soil and the subsoil. Perhaps we can leave some of the existing equipment standing here and there for archaeological purposes, some masterpieces of the bourgeois epoch maybe, so that those who accomplished this centuries-old work, only possible after the world revolutionary explosion, can remember them.

1."Specie umana e crosta terrestre", Il Programma Comunista no. 6/1952, 18 December 1952.

2.Bordiga wrote a whole series of articles under the tile of "Sul filo del tempo" ("On the thread of time") which always had the same structure — a section entitled "Yesterday" and another one called "Today" — and which always emphasised the unchanging nature ("invariance") of the marxist analysis.

3.A group of bacteria, one of which is responsible for syphilis.

4.Capital, Book 3, chapter 37. All quotes from Marx and Engels are taken from the versions used on www.marxists.org .

5.Op. cit.

6.The account of this meeting in September 1952 (L'invariance historique du marxisme - Fausse ressource de l'activisme ["The historical invariance of Marxism — the false resource of activism"]) was published in French in the review Programme Communiste nos. 53-54, October 1971. The letter mentioned is that of Marx to Sorge, 20 June 1881.

7.Capital, Book 3, op. cit.

8.In fact, this is the end of the book!

9.That is, Book 3, Chapter 48, where Marx discusses the relationship between freedom and necessity : http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1894-c3/ch48.htm

10.Op. cit., Chapter 37

11.Op. cit., Chapter 37, Footnote 26. For greater clarity we have put the passages of Hegel quoted by Marx in italics.

12.To put it another way, Gramscism.

13.Auguste Piccard pioneered deep-water submersible craft in the late 1940s.
See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auguste_Piccard .

14.Capital, Book 3, chapter 47; op. cit.

15.Ibid.

16.Justus von Liebig (1803-1873). German chemist and agronomist, author of many books on these subjects, notably Organic Chemistry in its Applications to Agriculture and Physiology, 1840. As the author mentions a bit later on, Liebig is cited numerous times in Books 1 and 3 of Capital by Marx, who typically comments: "To have developed from the point of view of natural science, the negative, i.e., destructive side of modern agriculture, is one of Liebig's immortal merits. His summary, too, of the history of agriculture, although not free from gross errors, contains flashes of light."(Capital, Vol 1, Chapter 15, footnote 245).

17.The Housing Question, op. cit.

18.The company later became Montedison, after fusing with Edison in 1966. Finally it was taken over by a consortium dominated by Fiat in 2002.

19.Ibidem.

20.Here Bordiga must be referring to phosphorus fertilisers which, unlike nitrogen compounds which are created from nitrogen in the atmosphere, have to be dug out of the ground. In the words of the CEEP (Centre Européen d'Etudes des Polyphosphates), "Modern society has moved from a phosphorus recycling loop, where animal manure and human wastes were spread on farming land to recycle

nutrients, to a once-through system, where phosphates are extracted from mined, non-renewable phosphate rock and end up either in landfill (sewage sludge, incinerator ash) or in surface waters." However, several European countries have begun to implement phosphorus recycling and, according to industry bodies such as the International Plant Nutrition Institute (http://www.ipni.net/) there is no immediate prospect of phosphorus fertilisers running out. As with nitrogen, the problem today is too much fertiliser in the environment, not too little.

21.21Bordiga is referring to the "smog" of early December 1952 (just before this article was written), which killed 4000 people. Chilly weather and stagnant air meant that smoke from coal fires and coal-fired trains and power stations filled the streets. A government enquiry followed, and then the Clean Air Act of 1956, which regulated domestic coal smoke. See John McNeill,Something New Under the Sun: an environmental history of the twentieth century (Penguin, 2000), p. 66. In case anyone thinks that this kind of thing doesn't happen any more, we should recall that in present day Beijing "several days a week, the air is so toxic that the children cannot play outside at school" ("Where the mornings taste grey: living under a cloud of smog in Beijing", Daily Telegraph, 25 Dec 2011).

22.An allusion to the text by Stalin already cited: The economic problems of socialism in the USSR, point 4: "Abolition of the Antithesis Between Town and Country, and Between Mental and Physical Labour, and Elimination of Distinctions Between Them":http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1951/economic-problems/ch05.htm

The Historical “Invariance” of Marxism (1952)

1

The term “Marxism” is not used in the sense of a doctrine that was discovered and introduced by an individual named Karl Marx, but to refer to the doctrine that emerges with the modern industrial proletariat and which “accompanies” the latter throughout the entire course of a social revolution; and we continue to use the term “Marxism” despite the vast field of speculation and exploitation to which it has been subjected by a series of anti-revolutionary movements.

2

Marxism, in its sole valid definition, has three main groups of adversaries today. The first group: the bourgeoisie who proclaim the capitalist commodity type of economy to be permanent and its historical abolition and replacement by the socialist mode of production to be illusory, and consistently reject in its entirety the doctrine of economic determinism and the class struggle. The second group: the so-called Stalinist communists, who declare that they accept the Marxist doctrine of history and economics, but who advocate and defend, even in the highly developed capitalist countries, non-revolutionary demands, which are identical to, when not worse than, the politics (democracy) and economics (popular progressivism) of the traditional reformists. The third group: the self-declared advocates of the revolutionary doctrine and method who, nonetheless, attribute its current abandonment by the majority of the proletariat to defects and initial gaps in the theory that must therefore be rectified and brought up to date.

Deniers—falsifiers—modernizers. We fight against all three, and we consider the third group to be the worst of the lot.

3

The history of the Marxist left, that of radical Marxism, or more correctly, that of Marxism, consists in the successive defensive campaigns waged against every "wave" of revisionism that has attacked the various aspects of its doctrine and method, from the very commencement of its organic and monolithic formation that may be dated to the "Manifesto" of 1848. In other texts we have recorded the history of these struggles in the three historic Internationals against utopians, workerists, libertarians, reformist and gradualist social democrats, left wing syndicalists and right wing trade unionists, social patriots, and now the national or people's communists. This struggle has affected the lives of four generations and throughout its various stages it is not to be identified with a series of names of individual persons, but with a well-defined and compact school and, in the historical sense, with a well-defined party.

4

This long, hard struggle would have lost its connection with the future resumption of the revolution if, instead of drawing the lesson of "invariance" from this struggle, it were to have accepted the banal idea that Marxism is a theory "undergoing a process of continuous historical elaboration" that changes with the changing course of events and the lessons subsequently learned. This is invariably the justification offered for all the betrayals that have accumulated since its inception, and it explains all the revolutionary defeats as well.

5

The materialist denial that a theoretical "system" that had arisen at a particular moment in time (and, worse yet, one that had arisen in the mind and took shape in the works of a particular man, a thinker or historical leader, or both at the same time) could irrevocably apply to the whole course of the historical future, its rules and its principles, must not be understood in the sense that there are no stable systems of principles that are applicable to very long stretches of historical time. To the contrary, a system's stability and its powers of resistance against being mutilated and even against being "improved", constitute a primordial element of the power of the "social class" to which that system pertains and whose historical mission and interests it reflects. The succession of such systems and bodies of doctrine and praxis is not connected with the advent of men who define the stages, but with the succession of "modes of production", that is, of the varieties of the material organization of life of human collectivities.

6

Despite the fact that it obviously recognized the formal contents of the bodies of doctrine of all the major historical eras to be erroneous, dialectical materialism does not thereby deny that they were necessary in their time, and much less does it imagine that their errors could have been avoided if sages or legislators had better ideas, and that this would have enabled them to notice their mistakes and rectify them. Every system possesses its explanation and its reason for existence in its cycle, and the most significant ones are those that have maintained themselves unaltered and retained their organic form over the course of very long struggles.

7

According to Marxism, there is no such thing as continuous and gradual progress in history (especially) with regard to the organization of productive resources, but rather a series of long leaps forward that profoundly revolutionize the entire economic and social apparatus. These leaps are true cataclysms, catastrophes, rapidly unfolding crises in which everything changes in a brief span of time, after it had remained unchanged for a very long period; these crises are like those of the physical world, the stars of the cosmos, geology and the phylogenesis of living organisms.

8

As the class ideology of a superstructure of the modes of production, it is not formed by the gradual daily accretion of grains of knowledge, either; it appears amidst the upheaval of a violent clash and guides the class that it represents, in a substantially monolithic and stable form, over a long series of struggles and conflicts, until the next critical stage is reached, until the next historical revolution.

9

It was precisely the doctrines of capitalism that, while justifying the social revolutions of the past up to and including the bourgeois revolution, nonetheless proclaimed that, from now on, history would advance along a gradually ascending path, without any more social catastrophes, because the ideological systems, gradually evolving, would absorb the flow of the new conquests of pure and applied knowledge. Marxism demonstrated the fallacy of such a vision of the future.

10

Marxism itself cannot be a doctrine that is moulded and reformed every day with new contributions and with the replacement of its parts (or more correctly speaking, patched together with duck tape and bubble gum!) because, despite the fact that it is the most recent example, it is still one of the doctrines that constitute a weapon of an exploited and ruled class that must revolutionize social relations, and which, by doing so, is in a thousand ways the target of the conservative influences of the traditional forms and ideologies of the enemy classes.

11

Although it is possible today—or, rather, it has been possible ever since the day when the proletariat appeared on the historical stage—to discern the outlines of the history of the future society without classes and therefore one without revolutions, it must be affirmed that, during the very long period that will elapse before this future condition is attained, the revolutionary class will be capable of fulfilling its mission only if it acts throughout the entire course of this tremendous struggle by availing itself of a doctrine and a method that remain stable. And this doctrine and method will be stabilized in a monolithic program, regardless of the drastic fluctuations in the number of its supporters and the outcomes of the social stages and conflicts.

12

Consequently, despite the fact that the ideological legacy of the revolutionary working class, unlike that of the classes that preceded it, does not assume the form of revelation, myth or idealism, but of “positive” science, it nonetheless needs a stable formulation of its principles, and even of its rules for

action, that performs the role and possesses the efficacy that dogmas, catechisms, tablets of law, constitutions and guide-books such as the Vedas, the Talmud, the Bible, the Koran or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights once performed and possessed. The profound errors with regard to form and substance in those compilations did not deprive them of their enormous organizational and social power (at first a revolutionary power, then a counterrevolutionary power, in dialectical succession); what is more, in many cases these "deviations" contributed precisely to the creation of this power.

13

Precisely due to the fact that Marxism denies any meaning to the search for the "absolute truth" and does not see doctrine as a manifestation of the eternal spirit and abstract reason, but rather as an "instrument" of labor and a "weapon" for combat, it postulates that, at the most trying moment during the fiercest stage of the battle, one does not abandon, in order to "repair them", either one's tools or one's weapons, but that one conquers in times of peace as well as in war by keeping a firm grasp from the very beginning on good tools and good weapons.

14

A new doctrine cannot appear at just any historical moment, but there are certain quite characteristic—and even extremely rare—eras in history in which a new doctrine can appear like a blinding flash of light; if one has not recognized the crucial moment and fixed one's gaze on this terrible light, in vain would one have resort to the candle stubs with which the academic pedant or the combatant of little faith attempts to illuminate the way forward.

15

For the modern proletarian class that took shape in the first countries that underwent major industrial capitalist development, the dark clouds parted shortly before the halfway point of the 19th century. The integral doctrine in which we believe, in which we must, and want, to believe, then had all the information it needed to take shape and to delineate the outline of a centuries-long process (during which it would have to be confirmed and driven home after immense struggles). Either this position would prove to be valid, or else the doctrine would be convicted of falsehood; but then the declaration of the appearance of a new class with its own character, program and revolutionary function in history would have been an empty assertion. As a result, anyone who attempts to replace essential parts, theses or articles of the Marxist "corpus" that we have possessed for approximately one century destroys its power in a worse way than someone who completely renounces it and proclaims its miscarriage.

16

The "explosive" period, in which the very novelty of the new positions causes them to be clearly perceived and establishes clear-cut boundaries for them, is followed by a period whose outstanding feature was, and still is, its great stability, as a result of the chronic nature of the ensuing circumstances, so that so-called class "consciousness" does not undergo any improvement or reinforcement, but instead an involution and degeneration. All the history of Marxism proves that the movements in which the class struggle is recrudescent are those in which the theory returns with affirmations reminiscent of its origins and its first integral expression: we need only recall the Paris Commune, the Bolshevik revolution and the period after the First World War in the West.

17

The principle of the historical invariance of the doctrines that reflect the missions of the contending classes, and even that of the powerful moments when they return to their original tablets, applies to all the great historical periods. This principle is opposed to the weasel assumption that each generation and each stage of intellectual fashion is more powerful than the preceding one, to the foolish cliché of the continuous and incessant advance of civil progress, and to other similar bourgeois prejudices, from which few of those who label themselves with the adjective, “Marxist”, are really exempt.

18

All myths express this, and especially the myths of the semi-human demigods, or of the wise men who had interviews with the Supreme Being. It is pointless to laugh at such stories; only Marxism has allowed us to discover their real, material substructures. Rama, Moses, Christ, Mohammed, and all the prophets and heroes who ushered in centuries of history for the various peoples, are different expressions of this real fact that corresponds to an enormous leap forward in the “mode of production”. In the pagan myth, wisdom, that is, Minerva, did not emerge from the head of Jupiter due to the dictate of whole volumes of spidery handwriting, but thanks to the hammer-blow of the worker-god Vulcan, who had been called upon to cure an unending headache. At the other extreme of history, and in opposition to the Enlightenment doctrine of the new Goddess Reason, Gracchus Babeuf would rise up like a giant, with his crude theoretical presentation, in order to say that material, physical force is a greater force for advancement than reason and knowledge.

19

Nor do we lack examples of restorers who confronted revisionist deviations, which was the role played, for example, by Francis of Assisi with respect to Christ when Christianity, which had originally arisen for the social redemption of the humble, made itself at home in the courts of the medieval lords; and also the Gracchi with respect to Brutus[1]; and so many of the precursors of a class that was yet to come who had to act as restorers with respect to the revolutionaries who had repudiated the heroic phase of the preceding era: the struggles in France in 1831, 1848, 1849 and innumerable other such moments throughout all of Europe.

20

We maintain that all the great events of recent times are just so many categorical and integral confirmations of Marxist theory and its predictions. We are referring above all to developments that have once again provoked large-scale desertions from the class terrain and which have even confused those who judge the Stalinist positions to be completely opportunist. These developments are the advent of centralized and totalitarian capitalist forms (in the economic as well as in the political domains), economic planning, state capitalism, and the openly dictatorial bourgeois regimes; and, on the other hand, the Russian and Asiatic developmental process as seen from the social and political points of view. We therefore see that our doctrine, born in monolithic form, is confirmed at a crucial historical juncture.

21

Anyone can confront Marxist theory with the historical events of this volcanic period and prove that it is erroneous, that it has completely failed, and thus every attempt to deduce the guiding threads of the course of history from economic relations has also proven to be a failure. At the same time, he will also prove that, regardless of the historical period, events compel the establishment of new deductions, explanations and theories, and therefore the acceptance of the possibility of proposing new and different means of action.

22

An illusory solution to the difficulties of the present time is that of admitting that the basic theory must be subject to change and that it is precisely today that the moment has arrived to add some new chapters to that theory, so that, by way of such an act of thought, this unfavorable situation can be reversed. Furthermore, it is an aberration that this task should be assumed by tiny groups with hardly any members and, worse yet, that it can be resolved with a free discussion that constitutes a parody on a Lilliputian scale of bourgeois parliamentarism and the famous clash of individual opinions, which is not a new breakthrough but rather old nonsense.

23

This is a moment of the deepest low point of the curve of revolutionary potential; we are therefore decades away from the right moment when original theories can be born. At this moment, which is without the perspectives associated with a great social upheaval, not only is the political disintegration of the world proletarian class a logical datum of the situation, but it is also logical that there should be small groups that know how to maintain the red thread of history of the great revolutionary process, stretching in a great curve between two social revolutions, on the condition that such groups show that they do not want to disseminate anything original and that they continue to adhere strictly to the traditional formulations of Marxism.

24

Criticism, doubt and challenges to all the old firmly consolidated ideas were vigorous elements of the great modern bourgeois revolution which surged ahead in gigantic waves against the natural sciences, the social order and the political and military powers, in order to advance and emerge later with a much-reduced iconoclastic impulse with regard to the sciences of human society and the course of history. This was precisely the result of an era of profound upheaval that found itself straddling the feudal and agrarian middle ages and modern industrial and capitalist society. Criticism was the effect rather than the motor force of this immense and complex struggle.

25

Doubt and individual control over one’s own consciousness were the expressions of the bourgeois reform against the established tradition and authority of the Christian Church, and took the form of the most hypocritical Puritanism that, under the flag of bourgeois conformity to religious morality or individual rights, promoted and protected the new class rule and the new forms of mass servitude. The proletarian revolution proceeds in the opposite way, in which individual consciousness is nothing and the unitary direction of collective action is everything.

26

When Marx said in his famous “Theses on Feuerbach” that the philosophers had interpreted the world enough and that now we have to transform the world, he was not saying that the transformative will conditions the fact of the transformation, but that first comes the transformation determined by the clash of collective forces, and only later the critical consciousness of this transformation in individual subjects. The latter do not act by virtue of a decision arrived at by each individual, but from influences that precede knowledge and consciousness.

The passage from the arms of critique to the critique of arms precisely shifts the entirety of the thinking subject to the militant masses, in such a manner that not only rifles and cannons are weapons, but above all that real instrument that is the common doctrine of the party, uniform, monolithic, and invariable, to which we are all subordinated and bound, putting an end to all chattering and know-it-all discussions.

Marxism of the Stammerers (1952)

The decontamination to which we dedicate 90% of our humble work will be continued a long time after us and be realised only in the distant future. This decontamination combats the epidemic - always and everywhere dangerous, of those who - in all places and at all times - innovate, bring up to date, renovate and revise.

It would be useless and even detrimental to specify or to personalise - to search around for a bacteriological bomb thrower - rather, it is a matter of identifying the virus itself and of applying the antibiotic which we obstinately assert exists in the continuity of the line and fidelity to principles, with preference being given 999 times out of a thousand to catechistical ruminations rather than to the exploit of the new scientific discovery, which require of us the wings of eagles, but to which all too often vulgar gnats feel themselves drawn by destiny.

It therefore disturbs these quivering winged creatures, when, bluntly down to earth, we remind them of the modest altitude that it is given to us to attain, we to whom all heroism and all romanticism is forbidden; we, who stick to irony rather than lyricism, feel obliged to remind those who are too impetuous: Don't play at being Phaeton. It would be nice to test out on the abacus those who suffer from the hysteria of making purist calculations, to ascertain if they are capable of adding up on the ends of their fingers or not.

Woe betide to those who believe themselves to be expressing revolutionary theory and who pretend to be - as is said nowadays - a mouthpiece of the proletarian movement, who haven't yet digested and assimilated the crucial turning-point where our doctrine abandoned traditional positions.

Woe betide to all, but especially those groups who wish to place themselves at the extreme left of the movement, and to personify the struggle against degeneration. It has been far too easy for opportunists and those who collaborate with the class enemy, to defame the "left" by accusing it of being prey to illusions, sectarianism, extreme formalism and of not comprehending the overall dialectic of Marxism.

The retort and defence of the international left has consisted and consists, of demonstrating that the rejection of concessions, compromises and manoeuvres doesn't stem from a relapse into mysticism and metaphysics, like that of the extremely simple child who, like in the old religious beliefs, opens all doors with the key of one sole antithesis between two opposed principles: good and evil.

The "good" for us would equate with the proletariat, and the "evil" with capitalism: which everywhere at all times without need of further reference points, is this same capitalism, an absolute evil, - always one - always the same. The rest a fairy-tale! We have fought for a long time to demonstrate that we don't reason thus, and that we have understood well "the dialectic of living history" by unmasking the falsity of postleninist opportunism, and by tracing out with sufficient exactitude the path of its line over thirty years from orthodoxy to total renunciation.

We certainly weren't deterred when they reminded us that with the onset of each historical stage the terms of the antithesis change. For although for believers in all mystics, good can only beget good, and evil beget evil for fear that the eternal values etched in the light of the spirit should fall, according to our revolutionary doctrine, Communism is the son of capitalism and it could only have been engendered by it and that despite that, and even because of it, it must fight and overthrow it. Furthermore, the historical timing of turning points and of reversals of positions occur by virtue of material conditions and relations - never thanks to the clownishly vigilant will of petty men or grouplets, self-appointed through their negligible conviction of being instrumental in checking the path is not a mistaken one.

Yesterday

The spread of the "Communist Manifesto" was slow in Italy. In the preface to the 1.2.1893 Italian edition, Frederick Engels was clearly aware of the "general opinion" according to which what was being dealt with were a country and a Proletariat that were "behind". A view so general and enduring, that not less than half a century later, the second Risorgimento, the second 1848, would still remain "to be made". Engels harked back at that time to 1848, to recall that this revolution contemporary to the "Manifesto" wasn't Socialist, but prepared the ground in Europe for the Socialist Revolution.

We have returned to this text to rediscover there two important truths, truths which are on the level of two and two equals four, but which it is evidently necessary to "resuscitate" - namely:
"the manifesto gives full credit to the revolutionary part played by capitalism in the past. -The first capitalist nation was Italy".
Let us chew this over thoroughly. The end of the feudal middle ages and the beginning of the modern capitalist era is fixed by Engels - not with Walter Audisio, Mussolini's executioners - but with Dante.

We have often said that the "Manifesto" is an apology of the bourgeoisie, and we add that today, the Second World War and the reabsorption of the Russian Revolution, a second one should be written, not in terms of philosophies of values; for these values pour into the bourgeois ideology the implacable economicism and shopkeeper's spirit appropriate to the class and the time. We need to vindicate the accused, in order to conclude that it is time to condemn him to death.

To prove this we should draw evidence from the Manifesto as a whole. We will confine ourselves however to memorising ten words:
"the bourgeoisie has played an eminently revolutionary role in history".

We now take up from a later passage. The main reason why the pre-bourgeois production relations were, in a certain sense, static regarding the requirements of the ruling class, whilst bourgeois relations are brutally dynamic, lies in the breaking down of the narrow circles of satisfaction of needs of the autarkic islands of production/consumption. Here is the thesis, expressed so of ten, but ever new:
"In place of the old needs met by local (spell it! L-O-C-A-L) production, new ones appear which demand for their satisfaction, the products of distant countries and regions".

Karl Marx's "Capital" (whoever is horrified by the smell of decay and mumification is invited to seek after new, more exalted texts) contains a section, the fourth in the first chapter, which, in ten pages resumes the entire work and its subject, in fact all Marx's work, written and unwritten. The section is entitled: "the fetishism of commodities and the secret thereof", an illiterate manual labourer can easily understand it, but for the intellectual who attempts its mastery, fifty years of elementary school will scarcely be enough.

We would recommend for inclusion on the agenda at a party meeting, for anyone who would like to give it a - "truly political" foundation, the reading and application - whilst looking out of the window of course - of chapter 1, section 4.

Marx was face to face with a thesis already established by classical political economy. Thus he named the school which openly sought to explain the nature of naissant capitalist production without glossing anything over,
"in opposition to vulgar economy which contents itself with appearances (....) and restricts itself in truly pedantic fashion to erecting a system and proclaiming as eternal truths the most banal and stupid illusions, with which the agents of bourgeois production like to people their universe, the best of all possible worlds".
A vulgar school still alive and well to which we may enrol the great economists of the like of Sombart and Keynes. Therefore Marx accepted a thesis, a discovery of classical economy:
"the exchange value of a commodity is given by the labour time necessary for it's production".

Proletarian science accepts this thesis on the one hand whilst on the other it demonstrates that as long as this truth implicitly includes the conviction that as long as the world exists, objectsutilised by people to satisfy their needs will have the character of commodities, this "scientific truth" shrinks to the level of arbitrary assertion, mystical, on the level of fetish, that is to say, to the level of a misleading falsehood, different in no respect from those contained in the ideologies and beliefs of pre-bourgeois times from which bourgeois science turned in derision (not that they scoff quite so much anymore, but this phenomenon was to be expected).

Let us follow some of Marx's evocative steps, after having in our turn anticipated, with a didactic aim, what he was getting at. The objects of consumption haven't always been commodities - today they are affected by a price and a value of exchange which derives from work-time crystallised in them - but they won't always exist as commodities; Once the complete analysis of the capitalist industrial mode of production is made, it can be deduced not only that it isn't necessary that all the objects which satisfy the needs of our existence be commodities and be exchanged at their price and value, -but that on the contrary, at a certain moment, they won't be such anymore.

From primary school, we know what this statement signifies "politically" (agreed?). It signifies: the capitalist mode of production isn't eternal and it will collapse with the victory of the working class. It will

have disappeared as soon as exchange values and commodities don't exist anymore, that's to say when there isn't either mercantile exchange of the objects of consumption, or money anymore.

This signifies something more precise: there cannot exist in the future an economy which is still mercantile but which isn't capitalist anymore. Before capitalism there were economies which were partially mercantile, but capitalism is the last of this genre.

As obstinate adversaries of novelty, we show to those who are able to read properly, that this was written down: Let us suppose I have a candle at my disposal, and I need light. I make use of it by lighting it, and in a few hours I will have consumed it. Almost nothing odd there, in the candle or in the light, so "the mystical character of the commodity doesn't derive from it's use value (the property the candle has of giving light). It doesn't derive either from the features which determine the value (so many grams of stearin)".

From whence then derives therefore, Marx asks himself, the enigmatic quality that the object of consumption assumes in cloaking the commodity form? Evidently from this same form. Do not take for banal what is profound!

The value form, that is the relation which establishes itself between the candle and the fifty francs which we pay for it, isn't a relation between things: between the stearin and the grubby bits of republican paper; but it does conceal a social relation between men who participate in production. The mercantile monetary relation seems to be a simple means to exchange the candle that I burn, with let us say, the matches which I produce; it seems to be a relation between products: in reality it is a relation between producers, a social relation, better still a relation between social classes. It is here that Marx unveils the mystery of the commodity "fetish".

"A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour, this is the reason why the products of labour become commodities, social things whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses".

Marx wanted to best explain this "Journey" in which the innocent candle - as opposed to the dry sticks snapped off the tree and rubbed together by primitive man in his lair - becomes, by assuming an exchange value, the expression of the relationship of exploitation which the owner of the factory makes his workers put up with in the candle factory.

He made a comparison with the stimulation of the retina which appears to us as an object existing exterior to the eye which sees it. But the light radiated by the object and the stimulation of the eye are physical realities, whilst the value form is nothing physical at all, contained neither in the stearin or in the light or stimulation of the optic nerve. The latter is a definite social relation between men, that assumes in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things,
"in order, therefore to find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped region of the religious world".

As in mysticism,
"the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings"

and it is the same with the products
"in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. This I call the Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities".

Marx, who isn't a man of letters but a fighter, sees the class enemy in front of him with every line he writes. He isn't a "thinker" and he doesn't soliloquise, but writes in dialogue form with his enemy. You thought, oh theoreticians of the bourgeoisie, to have reached the acme of development in, clearing away from the spirit of man the fetishes of beliefs in the divinities which justified the authority of the class to which you have succeeded, but you have set up a new and much sadder fetish which we will throw down in its turn from your altars - the banks - and eject from your temples - the stock exchanges.

"It is, however, just this ultimate money-form of the world of commodities that actually conceals, instead of disclosing, the social character of private labour, and the social relations between the individual producers. (....) The categories of bourgeois economy consist of such like forms. They are forms of thought expressing with social validity the conditions and relations of a definite, historically determined mode of production, viz, the production of commodities".
All mysticism is dissipated if we refer ourselves to another type of distribution, one that is non market.

We have asked Karl Marx to demonstrate the transitory character of mercantile forms and to confirm the annexed thesis: the mercantile forms appeared at a certain stage in history, and it is when they have disappeared that we will be in the Communist stage. Marx then, in the twinkling of an eye, takes us from Robinson Crusoe to the society of the future. It is our standard and usual method: to elaborate the analysis of future development with indisputable data from the past. Would that they - who having read without reading, say that Marx stuck to the prudent science of contemporary facts and gave a mere photograph of capitalism of his day - (the imbecile puppy of 1952 knows more about it than Marx of course). Would that they clean their gummy eyelids; realised communism, they will find it on pages 82-3 in Volume 1 of Capital!

Since economy is fond of "robinsonades", let us start from there, said Marx, Robinson had needs and satisfied them with objects that he gathered together: he saved ink, pen and ledger and made an inventory; but...that's all. He didn't engage in double entry book-keeping, nor did he receive or deposit money, for around him there were no commodities of any description. Marx transports us away from "Robinson's island bathed in light to the European middle-ages shrouded in darkness".
This next part is for you; the liquidators of feudal guilt for the better glory of the brilliant neon civilisation of today. You, who understand only that light comes of light and dark from dark; deum de deo, lumen de lumine. For our part, we recognise the necessity for the passage from the light of the early and generous primitive communism, without commodities, to the shadowy society of feudalism, and then onto the fetid sewer of bourgeois civilisation in order to pass beyond it. For us nothing is a fetish, not even hatred of capitalism.

Right then, so in the middle-ages, commodities still don't exist on a wide scale: the privilege of the dominant class is constituted by openly visible personal payments in labour. The social formof labour is also its natural form, that's to say, particularity, and not as in the mercantile form, generality. Let us try to understand this. I have turned the winepress for you and after having stretched yourself out somewhere, you will imbibe a good glassfull. This is less ignoble than buying from the pub the poisoned capitalist liquid, containing water and colouring - to increase the profit-margin.

Clear relations then in the gloomy Middle-ages: the lies of the priest dominate! But,
"the tithe to be rendered to the priest is more intelligible than his blessing".
The foul conjuring trick of representing the relations of human slavery as an equal relation between exchangeable things, will be the characteristic feature of the subsequent bourgeois epoch.

But can a human activity exist that is fit to fulfil essential needs without such a modern deception, outside of the fetish of the market? Yes, says Marx, and he gives examples for three periods: the past, the present, and the future.

The past: Robinson, as an entirely abstract figure used for the purposes of analogy doesn't interest us. Man is the species, not the person: this bizarre, solitary and evidently sterile being, knows only consumer goods and not exchange, and not finding himself in the Garden of Eden and besides the disadvantage of being deprived of Eve, he procures himself useful goods through his work.

Our example from the past we draw from the primitive communities. Between the "Manifesto" and "Capital", practical archaeological research has established that not only certain peoples, but every one of them, had their origins in organisations based on the work of all and the property of no-one. An organisation where one finds:
"labour in common or directly associated labour" in its "spontaneously developed form which we find on the threshold of the history of all civilised races".

The Present: Of communal work

"We have an example close at hand in the patriarchal industries of a peasant family, that produces corn, cattle, yarn, linen, and clothing for home use. These different articles are, as regards the family, so many products of its labour, but as between themselves, they are not commodities. The different kinds of labour (...) possess a spontaneously developed system of division of labour. The distribution of the work within the family and the regulation of the labour-time of the several members, depend as well upon differences of age and sex, as upon natural conditions varying with the seasons".
On several occasions we have pointed out that these streams of autonomous organisation exist not only in backward areas into which the global market hasn't yet penetrated, but exist still in the bourgeois countries: in 1914, a Calabrian woman, a large landowner, boasted of spending one penny a year on needles and buying nothing else. If we weren't dialecticians we would say that ourideal is contained in such streams. On the contrary however, we say that the quicker these are swallowed up in the infernal circle of market capital - be it in Calabria or Turkestan - the better.

The Future

"Let us picture to ourselves, by way of a change, [the moderate tone employed here so as to avoid utopian affectations, blinds superficial people to the fact that it is the revolutionary programme being dealt with] a community of free individuals, [for us, on the historical level, free is equivalent to non-salaried] carrying on their work with the means of production in common, in which the labour-power of all the different individuals is consciously applied as the combined labour-power of the community. (...) the total product of our community is a social product. One portion serves as fresh means of production and remains social. But another portion is consumed by the members as means of subsistence. A distribution of this portion amongst them is consequently necessary [Take note! you look for the designation 'into equal parts' but it is not there] The mode of this distribution will vary with the

productive organisation of the community, and the degree of historical development attained by the producers".

In order to best establish that this "state of things" (nothing other - oh critics, oh vacant ones - than Communism; that Impossible Communism!) is the negation of commodity production, Marx makes a comparison by examining one of the ways of dividing things up, i.e.
"the share of each individual producer in the means of subsistence is determined by his labour time" (this would be the lower stage of Communism, as Lenin correctly described it drawing from the critique of the Gotha Programme - which in itself was another formidable hammering out of fundamental points). Very well then! Here, within communist organisation,
"the social relations of the individual producers, with regard both to their labour and to its products, are in this came perfectly simple and intelligible, and that with regard not only to production but also to distribution".

The last part of the paragraph deals with ideologies which necessarily reflect the three stages: ancient pre-mercantile economy, mercantile economies, and non-mercantile or socialist economies.

The ancient national religions belong to the first barbarian and semi-barbarian stage based on conditions of despotism and slavery.

The society of the universal market finds an appropriate religion in Christianity, and above all in its bourgeois development, the reformation.

It is only in the third stage, the communist one, that social life casts off the mystic veil that conceals its social aspect iron itself. However, as we have noted elsewhere, there is a but,
"This, however, demands for society a certain material ground-work or set of conditions of existence which in their turn are the spontaneous product of a long and painful process of development".

Marx finishes with a final taunt, by assimilating alongside earlier superstitions, the idiotic "self-knowledge" appropriate to the bourgeois epoch.

He chose Bailey, but we could choose Einaudi. The capitalist scientist speaks thus:
"Value (that's to say, the value of exchange) is a property of things. Wealth (use value) is a property of man."
Thus this capitalist savant is able to scientifically deduce that commodities, and the rich, will exist for ever and ever, amen, (for through reductio ad absurdum, Everyone will be rich).

We, who by the revolution will abolish commodities and the rich, will demonstrate to these alleged sages meanwhile, that on the contrary, it is things which have the property of being of use to mankind, and it is people alone and their present relations, which have the mercantile property, such that exchange value expresses an attribute of people - that of being exploiter or exploited.

The more the opinion of official science is enlightened and brought up to data, and the more it concludes that capitalist relations are irreplaceable and "natural", the more we consider it to be intrinsically ridiculous. Its calibre is comparable to the imbecilities that Shakespeare puts into the mouth of his ludicrous character Dogberry:
"to be a well-favoured man surely is the gift of fortune, but to write and read comes by nature".

Today

With the matter being so simple - but simplicity is hard to achieve, while complex things are well within the capacity of any peddler of culture - there are those who come along and say that "new formulas" are necessary. Why? In order to account for Russia and the encumbrance of the Marxist edifice, and for the fact that over there, whilst the means of production are no longer private, there nevertheless exists a capitalism not different by one Jot from those in the west! The entire international gang of stalinists loudly proclaim that Socialism is to be found there in its complete form. And the entire not less vast capitalist gang proclaim the same thing: communism exists over there; communism being nothing other than central and statist dictatorship over all wealth and over all people (to the horror of those in the wonderful free world).

Dear searchers for new formulas, why not go back and have a check over the old formulas, for I rather fancy that instead of convincing you to open an advanced research institute, they will convince you of the necessity of enrolling in a "school for dunces".

It is possible that Demosthenes got over an innate stammer and became a great orator - by dint of stuffing his mouth full of pebbles: But we are more than suspicious of the "cacaglios" of Marxism. You have understood that in neapolitan dialect "cacaglio" means stammerer. Scandalous usage of dialect? Perhaps it was for Stalin who denied that the national language is a transitory class product. But in many cases, dialect is actually nearer to the thought of the dominated class. Dante strengthened the revolution in the measure that the bourgeois opposed the Tuscan vernacular to the latin of the noble men and the prelates. In Russia the aristocrats mumbled in French whilst the proletarian revolutionaries expounded their ideas in German. Stalin, by ignoring both languages, expressed well the fact that one of the characteristics in the formation of bourgeois power is the extolling of the national language.

One need not hesitate to classify Russia within one of three stages: pre-mercantile, mercantile or socialist. At the time of Engels, the first stage was still manifestly evident, not only in the asiatic principalities, but also in the air - the rural community of European Russia, Was it possible then to graft this Communism of exclusive little islands, primitive and rudimenty, onto the Communism of a modern well equipped society? Engels, who was a great and wise diplomat of the revolution, recalled in presenting the "Manifesto" to the Russians, that Marx had predicted in 1862 that it was a possible point of departure if the Russian antifeudal Revolution signalled the Proletarian revolution in the West. If that didn't occur, or if the signal was insufficient, Russia would have to go through the mercantile phase; this it is in the process of doing at the moment. In fact, the collapse of the fabric of Tsarist feudalism provoked the following result: the swallowing up of all the closed-off little islands of Eastern Europe and Asia - thanks to an accelerated industrialisation of the backward territories - in the irresistible tide of the mercantile system.

And the revolutionary outcome? Marx and Engels had always thought that a second 1848, no longer bourgeois but proletarian, could not be victorious as long as there existed in Russia a powerful feudal army. From 1917, this counter-revolutionary condition is removed.

Like them, we consider that in order to be able to transform the anti-feudal revolution into a proletarian revolution in Russia (Lenin's line), the indispensable condition is a revolutionary victory in Europe.

In 1952, Russia hasn't built Socialism, but capitalism, just as Germany, Austria, and Italy built it after 1846.

Today, England, America, France and the other industrial countries are no longer building domestic capitalisms, but protecting global capitalism. Their respective state machineries working solely in a counter-revolutionary direction, with their arsenals pointed solely against the future - not even partly against the past and partly against the future.

We will not elaborate any further here on the question of the mercantile character of the economic organisation rather we will examine in greater detail how the isolated spots within the ocean of general commerce dissolved, by explaining the historical conclusion to be drawn from the fact that in given countries the process is still taking place, while in the territory of others "there are no more economic islands". And we will demonstrate further that this distinction is to be found in the pages of Marx, situated where he develops the history of the passage from fragmented labour to associated labour, which forms the necessary basis of the proletarian revolution and of Communist social organisation.

It has been announced that within two or three years, Russia should be able to exchange with other countries goods with an annual value totalling 40 billion roubles, that is 10 million dollars or 6,300 billion lire.

This Western propaganda would have us believe that this is all just a big hoax, and that this 40 billion will be spent with the sole aim of impressing the electors in the back of beyond, so as to get them to elect a Cominformist mayor.

We would like the tycoons of Western economy to explain to us how it comes about that the captains of industry who have set of f for Moscow have become, not as 'Unità' would romantically have it, suitors at the window but rather suitors of Potemkin, (1) that is, mere hirelings.

It would be more worthwhile surely if they discussed other phenomena like the stalinist decision of Truman to requisition the steel industry and to fix prices and wages by state edict - given that there remains a clear margin of 16$ per ton, or perhaps the phenomena of the founding by the capitalists of an international financial Institution for economic development with the aim of resisting the intervention of governments in their business.

The present development of capitalism towards profit is no surprise to the marxist doctrine, and this much is clear: there is not a single iota of Socialism in this development, as evidenced by the fact that for bourgeois economy - the economy which is diametrically opposed - this directed politics is "Socialism" par excellence. For Vilfredo Pareto for example, Socialism isn't understood to mean the same thing as it does for us, namely organisation without market and without "the firm"; quite the contrary in fact, it is understood as arbitrary intervention of moral andlegal elements within the natural economic fact.

(Marxism, on the contrary, maintains the opposite view, namely the intervention of economic reality in the shaping of the legal and moral artifice.) At any rate, at least Pareto is consistent when he declares: the Socialist systems, (as he sees them) are not different from the various protectionist systems. These latter, he adds, represent properly speaking, the Socialism of entrepreneurs and capitalists. This Socialism, envisaged by Pareto, more than half a century ago, we will willingly leave to Truman and Stalin. Never more than today has it been so obvious that Soviet Socialism is the Socialism of captains of industry. But in Russia have these not been suppressed? Well, now they're importing them!

In magnitude, 6300 billion lire is double the size of imports into Great-Britain, six times those into Italy, and equal to those of America. It is equivalent to the annual labour of 26 million workers; of probably all or almost all the Russian workers already drawn into production other than that of the exclusive little islands, but certainly of the work of the whole population of a developed country with half the population of the present day U.S.S.R. If half of the labour effort of this people - excluding that expended in pre-mercantile asiatic type consumption - has an equivalent price on the global market to that produced by the capitalist countries, other figures are not really needed in order for us to define the Russian economy as capitalist. Moreover, why doubt that it is immersed in fully fledged mercantilism when the ideological projection consists of the complete domination of the popular religiosity which is encouraged and utilised by the public power?

With the dialogue of exchange between the Russian commodity and the dollar which pays for it, and between the American commodity and the rouble which pays for it, we scarcely need to unravel its "fetishistic character". Objects can't talk, commodities can't talk, but where any type of commodity is produced, the relation is, in reality, the relation of the exploitation of wage-earners.

There is nothing to indicate that at the moment exchange isn't an open palpable reality. Exchange functioned during the war between 1941 to 1945 under various forms, such as arms and ammunition from the west for industrial and "military" effort and work from the east. Today the respective industries step up the accumulation of capital which is a social fact even in the bourgeois regime, either with the aim of arming for an imperialist war (with Truman invoking reasons of national defence for the requisition of enterprises and the militarisation of strikers) or with the aim of themercantile satisfaction derived from international exchange.

If one wishes to say anything new about Russia, it is more than useless to know that caviar was served at Stalin's table and a millet paté to the workers. This could be compatible with a lower stage of communism. At the higher stage we will give caviar to everyone... and the millet to recalcitrant pupils who have an incurable itch to play at being teacher.

For our part, we are interested to ask ourselves if by having roubles in our pockets we can have caviar or millet, and whether, once the exchange rate is worked out, we can do the same with dollars or lire.

After this, for us the fetish quality of caviar or millet contains no more secrets, as indeed nor does the supremely stupid character of the latest jargon!

Straightening the Dog’s Legs (1952)

At the end of the Second World War, it was easily concluded that a few weeks would suffice to dispel the generous yet useless and vain illusion that great revolutionary armed movements of the working class would emerge, just as they had at the end of the First World War.

Once more, we'll refer to the two principal aspects of this complex development. Instead of being satisfied with the unconditional surrender of the enemy General Staff and the ruling political power, the victorious armies completely suppressed the functions of both, occupying all the territories of the conquered countries and setting up an indefinite state of military siege within them. On this basis, it was

clearly impractical to use the favourable relation of forces between the proletarian class and the State defeated in war. It was equally impossible for the class to move from a position supporting or accepting the war to one of defeatism. The other element was the decomposition of the revolutionary movement. From 1922, around the time of the foundation of the Italian party, the 3rd International had begun a series of deviations to the right. In successive stages, the International had deserted all revolutionary positions, until it finally returned to the terrain of traitor movements of the Second International and the First World War. Or even worse.

On the other hand, these two elements of the relation of forces after the 2nd World War had been apparent not only at the start of the war, but right from the formation of bourgeois totalitarian ruling parties in various European countries. Thus, with the secure prospect of a new kind of "ideological war" having been established in the European camp, and of an "interclassist bloc" in the national camps, the deserters from communism tied to Moscow threw themselves into this politics in the most crass and disgusting way. All this was only made worse by their ceasing to be classists and communists, whilst remaining totalitarians, and by their cuddling up to the totalitarian Nazis for a time.

Taking these premises into account, it became apparent that the revival of the proletarian movement, in such a way as to rid it of the old opportunist scabies and its new and more debilitating syphilitic sores, would be a phase measurable not in years but in decades. The task of those groups which had kept to and defended the stance taken in 1919, a stance deserted by 99% of the communists who had subscribed to it at the time, turned out to be a long and difficult one; and it would start with a laborious settling of accounts with the counter-revolutionary disaster, which needed to be examined, understood and made use of with a view to a total reorganization.

For seven years now, the limited forces available in Italy (and perhaps they were even more limited in other countries) have worked towards this goal, reestablishing the historical facts and data, and carrying out analytical work. This has meant taking a resolute stand against any pessimism of the type given to such glib conclusions as: since things have gone so badly, first principles need to be abandoned and replaced – if not entirely, at least for the most part. The review Prometeo and the paper Battaglia Comunista have worked to uphold the central tenet of the continuity of the communists' theory and method of action.

Given the nature of the task and the means needed to accomplish it, it was equally clear that there would be no noisy impact on "Italian politics", certainly in the way the media or parliamentarians understand it. In fact, this was decidedly for the best; crude impatience has only ever made a difficult path even longer. Marxism, after all, has toiled for a century to kick out those inclined to such emotions; and when they are booted away, against the prevailing wind too, that's a good result.

The basis of this work has been the recovery of the movement's fundamental texts and theses, of its experience and history from its beginnings, and the comparison of recent historical facts with the original Marxist vision. What has been elaborated can be found distributed in various places and studies, with constant, untiring reference to the essential quotations.

Put bluntly, this is our position: new facts do not lead us to correct the old positions, nor to supplement or rectify them. Our reading of the first Marxist texts is the same today as it was in 1921 and before; and the same goes for our interpretation of the facts; the old proposals made regarding methods of organisation and action remain valid.

This work is entrusted neither to individuals nor committees and still less to bureaus; it is one moment and one area of a unitary operation which has been carried out for over a century, going well beyond the birth and death of generations. It is not inscribed in anyone's curriculum vitae, not even of those who have spent an extremely long time coherently elaborating and mulling over the results. The movement bans, and always will ban, extempore, personal and contingent initiatives being taken in this work of elaboration of key texts and even with regard to those studies which interpret the historical process around us.

It is babyish to think that with a pen, an inkwell and an hour or so, some good lad can coolly set out to write texts, or even that it can be done by the long-suffering "base" at the invitation of a circular; or by an ephemeral academic meeting, whether it be noisily public or clandestine. The results of such efforts can be disqualified from the start; especially when a set of norms of this sort is the work of those who madly over-estimate the effect of human influence, and human intervention, on history. Is it men in general, particular men, or one particular Man with a capital M who intervenes? It's an old question. Men make history, it's just that they have very little idea how and why they make it. In contrast, all the "fans" of human action, and those who mock what they allege to be fatalist automatism, are generally the very people who privately nurture the idea that their own wee bodies contain that predestined Man. And they are precisely the ones who have understood and can understand nothing: not even that history does not gain or lose one tenth of a second, whether they sleep like logs or realize their generous dream of thrashing about like men possessed.

With icy cynicism, and without the least pity for any super-activist specimens more or less convinced of their own importance, and for every assembly of innovators and would-be helmsmen, we repeat: "Go back to sleep!" you couldn't even set the alarm clock.

The task of setting theses in order and straightening dogs legs that are going astray all over the place – a task which always arises when least expected – requires much more than a short speech, or half an hour in some little congress or other. It isn't easy to compile an index of the places where it is necessary to plug up the holes, a work evidently seen as inglorious by those destined to "pass into history"; who are more inclined to knock the structure down than stop up the holes. Still, we think it might be useful to have just such a little index, which obviously won't be perfect and will contain repetitions and inversions. We point out correct theses and contrast them with the erroneous ones: though we don't call the latter anti-theses since such a term is easily confused withantithesis, which suggests two different theses side by side in opposition. We prefer to use the term counter-theses.

Simply for the sake of clarity, we divide the points we want to make into three, obviously interconnected, sections, which are: History, Economy and Philosophy (consider that word between quotation marks). Since the refutations of those theses which are blatantly bourgeois, and which stand in diametrical opposition to our own, are well-known, we will completely disregard them here. Sometimes we will take as counter-theses notions which are more than anything just improper formulations, but which have prevailed out of bad habit for so long they have given rise to frequent misunderstandings.

Historical Counter-theses and Theses

Counter-thesis 1. From around the beginning of the nineteenth century, society is divided into two classes in struggle: the bourgeois holders of the means of production, and proletarian wage-workers.

Thesis 1. According to Marx, there are three classes in the fully industrial countries:

1 - Industrial, commercial and banking capitalists;

2 - Landowners, in the bourgeois mode, with free market of agrarian land;

3 - Wage-labourers.

In all countries, but above all in those with barely-developed industry, and in the period in which the bourgeoisie has not yet taken political power, other classes are present in varying degrees too, such as: feudal aristocracy, artisans, peasant proprietors.

The bourgeoisie at first, then the wage-workers, begin to have historical importance at various times in various countries: Italy 15th Century – Low Countries 16th Century – England 17th Century – France 18th Century – Central Europe, America, Australia, etc., 19th Century – Russia 20th Century – Asia today. From this, very different areas and alignments of class struggles follow.

Counter-thesis 2. Proletarians are, and show themselves to be, indifferent to the revolutionary struggles of the bourgeoisie against the feudal powers.

Thesis 2. The proletarian masses struggle everywhere on the insurrectionary terrain to overthrow feudal privileges and absolute powers. In various times and countries, a central part of the working class ingenuously sees a real conquest in bourgeois democratic demands, for poor citizens as well. Another stratum sees that the bourgeoisie coming to power are also exploiters, but is influenced by the doctrine of "reactionary socialism" which wants to ally itself, in its hatred for the bosses, with the feudal counter-revolution. The most advanced part holds to the correct position: between the bosses and the workers exploited by them, there are no common ideological and "civil" demands. However, the bourgeois revolution is necessary: both to open the way to the use on a grand scale of associative mass production, which allows a new standard of living and greater consumption and satisfaction to the poor part of society; and to later render possible a social – that is, initially a proletarian – management of the new forces. Hence the workers strike out with the big bourgeoisie against the nobility and clergy, and even (Communist Manifesto) against the reactionary petty bourgeoisie.

Counter-thesis 3. Where counter-revolutions came after the bourgeois victory (feudal and dynastic restorations) the struggle did not concern the workers, because it took place between two of their enemies.

Thesis 3. In every armed struggle for restoration (examples of this are the anti-French coalitions) and against it (for example, the French republican revolutions of 1830 and 1848) the proletariat struggled, and had to struggle, in the trenches and on the barricades alongside the radical bourgeoisie. The dialectic of class struggles and civil wars showed that such help was necessary so that the property-owning and industrial bourgeoisie could win; but immediately after its victory this same group threw itself ferociously against the proletariat, which was aspiring to social advantages and power. This is the one path of the inevitable succession of revolutions and counter-revolutions: that historic insurrectional help to the bourgeoisie is the condition for one day being able to defeat it, after a series of attempts.

Counter-thesis 4. All wars between feudal and bourgeois States, or insurrections for national independence from the foreigner, have been a matter of indifference to the working class.

Thesis 4. The formation of national States with race and language uniform (as far as possible) is the best condition for substituting capitalist production for Medieval, and every bourgeoisie struggles to that end even before the reactionary nobility is overthrown. This arrangement into national States is a necessary transition for the workers (especially in Europe), since internationalism, immediately affirmed by the very first workers' movements, cannot be arrived at without overcoming the localism in production, consumption and demands which is characteristic of the feudal period. Therefore the proletariat struggled in its class interest for the liberty of France, Germany, Italy and the Balkan statelets until 1870, the epoch in which this arrangement could be said to be completed. While the alliance continued in the armed struggle, the differentiation of class ideologies developed, and the workers escaped from those that were national and patriotic. Of special interest to the future of the proletarian movement were the victories against the Holy Alliance, against Austria in 1859 and 1866, and finally against Napoleon III himself in 1870; always against Turkey and Russia; and conversely, defeats were negative conditions (Marx, Engels in all their works, Lenin's theses on war, 1914). All these criteria are applicable to the modern "Orient".

Counter-thesis 5. From the moment that in the entire continent, or continents, of the white race the bourgeois are in power, wars are those of imperialist rivalry; not only does no workers' movement have interests in common with the government at war, and continues the class struggle as far as defeatism, but the very outcome of the war in one or the other direction has no influence on the future development of the class struggle and proletarian revolution.

Thesis 5. According to Lenin, wars from 1871 and after the period of "peaceful" capitalism are imperialist, ideological acceptance of them is betrayal, and in 1914, whether in the lands of the Entente or in those of the Germans, every revolutionary workers' party had to carry out work against the war and transform it into civil war, above all by exploiting military defeat.

Any alliance in armed regular or irregular actions with the bourgeoisie therefore being excluded, the problem of the various effects of military solutions still has to be considered. It's vain to argue that the consequences of such an immense clash of forces are irrelevant. In a general sense it can be said that the victory of the older, richer, politically and socially more stable of the bourgeois States is more unfavourable to the proletariat and its revolution. There is a direct link between the unfavourable course of the proletarian struggle over the last 150 years – which has at least tripled the time calculated by Marxism – and the constant victory of Great Britain in the wars against Napoleon, and then against Germany. English bourgeois power has been stable now for three centuries. Marx set great store by the American civil war, but the latter did not result in the formation of a power capable of beating Europe; rather it formed a buttress to English power, and this buttress has gradually taken centre place through wars conducted in common, and not through direct conflict.

In 1914, Lenin clearly indicated the most favourable solution to be a military defeat of the Tsar's armies, which would have made possible the outbreak of class conflict in Russia: and he struggled with all his might against the notion that the worst hypothesis would be a German victory over the Anglo-French, though branding the German social-chauvinists with equal force.

Counter-thesis 6. The Russian revolution was nothing more than the outbreak of the proletarian revolution at the point where the bourgeois were weakest, and from which the struggle could extend itself to other countries.

Thesis 6. It's obvious that the proletarian revolution can only win internationally, and that it can and must begin wherever the relation of forces is most favourable. The thesis that the revolution must first commence in the country with the most developed capitalism, and then in others, is pure defeatism. But in order to strike at the opportunist position, the Marxists present the historical point quite differently.

In 1848, Marx considers that in spite of the violent Chartist struggles, the explosion of class revolution would not start out in industrial England. He regards the French proletariat as able to give battle by grafting itself onto the Republican revolution. Above all he considers as a point of support the double revolution in Germany, where feudal institutions are still in power, and he even sketches out in precise political dispositions the manoeuvres of the Germanic proletariat: first with liberals and bourgeois, against them immediately afterward.

For twenty years at least, and especially after 1905, the year in which the Russian proletariat appears as a class, the Bolsheviks prepare a similar perspective in Russia. It is based on two elements: the decrepitude of the feudal institutions which will be assailed in spite of the Russian bourgeoisie being as cowardly as it is, and the need for a defeat which, like the one inflicted by Japan, would provide a second opportunity.

The proletariat and its party, closely linked in doctrine and organisation with the parties of countries that have been bourgeois for some time, outline this task for themselves: to take on the struggle for the liberal revolution against tsarism and for peasant emancipation against the boyars, and thence the seizure of power by the Russian working class.

Many revolutions in history were defeated: some through not having succeeded in taking power; others through an armed repression which overthrew them (the Paris Commune); others without military repression, but through destruction of the social fabric (Italian bourgeois Communes). In Germany the expected double revolution overcame the first barrier militarily (and socially) but failed at the second. In Russia the double revolution overcame both the military barriers of civil war and crossed the first socio-economic barrier. It lost at the second barrier, to wit that from capitalism to socialism, although not due to an invasion from outside, but as a result of the international proletarian defeat beyond Russia (1918-1923). The efforts of Russian power today are directed not towards socialism, but towards capitalism, in its revolutionary march on Asia.

The historical turning-point which could have had its centre in Germany in 1848 or in Russia in 1917 can probably never reappear in the form of an internal national revolution: it's unthinkable that analogous world influence could be had, for example, by China – in any case already on the road passing from feudalism to bourgeois-ism.

The weak point for locally initiating the new international revolutionary phase could, from that time on, come only from a war lost in a capitalist country.

Counter-thesis 7. Granted that it is clear that the formation of totalitarian systems of government in capitalist countries has nothing to do with the restorationist counterrevolutions dealt with by theses 2 and 3, and that these totalitarian systems are an expected consequence of the economic and social

concentration of forces, the recognition of a need for a proletarian-bourgeois bloc to restore liberalism in the economy and in politics, and adopt the partisan method of struggle, is therefore a fall into betrayal; and granted that it would also be a mistaken position, in the event of conflict between bourgeois States, to support the group opposed to the one planning to attack Russia – in order to defend a regime which nevertheless derives from a proletarian victory – no influence on the proletarian class perspective and revolutionary revival was to be attributed to the solutions of the second imperialist war.

Thesis 7. The historic problem is not exhausted by simply acknowledging that a crusaderist interpretation of the war – as "ideological" conflict between democracy and fascism – is just as bad as the justifications given for the 1914 war, viz., liberty, civilisation and nationality. On both sides the aim of the propaganda is to cover up the real goal, which is the conquest of markets and economic and political power; this is correct, but not enough. Capitalism will only come to an end by means of a series of explosions within the unitary systems that are the territorial class States: this is the process which needs to be identified and, if possible, accelerated. Since the advent of the imperialist wars, the possibility that it can be hastened by means of proletarian political and military solidarity is excluded. But it's no less important to decode this process of the ending of capitalism, and to adapt the strategy of the International of revolutionary parties accordingly. In place of principles such as these, Russian policy has substituted the cynical State manoeuvre of a new system of power, showing thereby that it is part of the constellation of world capitalism. From hence, the proletarian class movement will again have to surge forth resolutely. And the first stage is: to understand.

At the outbreak of war the State in Moscow reached an agreement with the one in Berlin. It will never be possible to criticise enough this historic turning point, accompanied as it was by the mobilisation of Marxist arguments on the imperialist and aggressive nature of London's and Paris's war – which the self-styled communist parties in the countries of the two blocs were invited to participate in.

Two years later Moscow's State allied itself with those of London, Paris and Washington, and redirected its propaganda towards demonstrating that the war against the Axis was not an imperialist campaign but an ideological crusade for liberty and democracy.

Of paramount importance for the new proletarian movement is not only to establish that revolutionary directives were abandoned in both these phases, but to evaluate the historic fact that in the second move the Russian State not only gained forces and resources for its internal capitalist advance, but also contributed to the war's conservative outcome. It did this by contributing an enormous military force, which averted a catastrophe at least in the State centre of London – for the nth time unscathed by the storm of war. Such a catastrophe would have been an extremely favourable condition for a collapse of the other bourgeois States, starting from Berlin, and for setting Europe ablaze.

Counter-thesis 8. In the present antagonism between America and Russia (with their respective satellites) it is simply a case of two imperialisms opposing each other as such; and it is to be denied that one or the other outcome – or lasting compromise – will determine great variations in conditions for the revival of the communist movement and for the world revolution.

Thesis 8. Making such an equivalence and parallel – when not restricted to condemnation of support for the State in any possible third war, of any partisan action on both sides, or of any renunciation of internal autonomous defeatist actions of the proletariat, where the forces exist – is not only not enough,

but is a foolish position. A view of the way the world revolution will be attained (a view which is necessary even when history then belies the favourable possibilities, and without which there is no revolutionary party) is impossible without posing the problem of the absence of a revolutionary class struggle between capitalists and proletarians in America, and England, where industrialism is more powerful. It's not possible to separate the response to that question from the observable success of all the imperialist enterprises and their exploitation of the rest of the world.

The power systems in America and England have no other requirement but the conservation of world capitalism. It is a need for which they are well prepared due to a long historical kinesis of movement heading in that direction, and they proceed with measured step towards social and political totalitarianism (another inevitable premise to the final antagonistic clash). Whilst even in the satellites of this bloc advanced bourgeois governments are in place, in the other bloc, conditions have meant that the opposite is the case. Here one finds European and extra-European territories where more recent bourgeoisies struggle socially and politically against feudal remnants, and where the State formations are young and have a less consolidated framework. On the other hand, this bloc is reduced to using democratic and class-collaborationist deception in a purely superficial way, and it has already burned all the resources of the one-party and totalitarian government, thus abbreviating the cycle. Obviously it will fall into crisis if there is a collapse of the formidable capitalist system centred on Washington, controlling five-sixths of the economy that is ripe for socialism, and of the territories where there is a pure wage-working proletariat.

The revolution will have to pass through a period of civil struggle inside the United States: a victory in the world war would put this off for a time measurable in half-centuries.

Since the un-degenerated Marxist movement is today minute, its duty cannot extend to sending greater forces to internally break up one or the other system. Basically it's a matter of mustering those proletarian groups (still very few) which have gained an understanding of how Moscow's policy, and the parties which back Moscow, have for thirty years collaborated at the highest level in this consolidation of capitalist power into great organised systems: creating, first with false politics, then even with the help of millions upon millions slain, the main conditions for the success of its criminal subjection of the masses to the perspective of welfare and liberty under the capitalist regime and "Western and Christian civilisation".

The way in which the proletariat organised by Moscow has fought against the "West" in the Atlantic countries is, for this accursed civilisation, both its greatest triumph and best insurance: and that, unfortunately, also applies within the framework of predictions on the fate of a military attack which might be brought from the East.

Economic Counter-Theses and Theses. The tendency of the cycle of capitalist economy is towards a continuous depression of the workers' standard of living, such as to leave barely enough to sustain life.

Thesis 1. Given that the doctrine of concentration of wealth into units that are ever greater in volume, and fewer in number, remains firmly in place, the theory of increasing impoverishment does not mean that the capitalist system of production has not enormously increased the output of consumer goods by breaking up small-scale production and consumption within closed islands, progressively increasing the

satisfaction of needs for all classes. According to Marxist theory, having taken these measures, the anarchy of bourgeois production disperses nine-tenths of the energy so recently multiplied a hundredfold, and pitilessly expropriates all the medium-sized owners of small reserves of useful goods. It therefore enormously increases the number of those without reserves, who consume their remuneration on a day by day basis. In this way the majority of humanity is defenceless against the economic and social crises and the fearful destruction of war inherent in capitalism; and defenceless against its policy of exasperated class dictatorship, foreseen more than a century ago.

Counter-thesis 2. Capitalism is overcome whenever one manages to assign to the worker the quota of surplus-value taken from him (undiminished proceeds of labour).

Thesis 2. Capitalism is not overcome by restoring to the working community the quota of profit on the ten per cent consumed, but by returning the ninety per cent squandered through economic anarchy. This does not come about by costing the values exchanged in a different way, but by taking from consumer goods their character of commodities, by abolishing money wages, and by centralising the organisation of general productive activity.

Counter-thesis 3. Capitalism is overcome by an economy in which groups of producers have control and management of single enterprises and trade freely among themselves.

Thesis 3. A system of mercantile exchange between free and internally autonomous enterprises, as may be propounded by co-operativists, syndicalists and libertarians, is not historically possible and cannot be characterised in any respect as socialist. It is retrograde even compared to many of the sectors already organised on a general scale in the bourgeois epoch, adapted to the requirements of technical progress and the complexities of social life. Socialism, or communism, means that society as a whole is the only association of producers and consumers. Every enterprise system conserves the factory's internal despotism, and the anarchy which results from adapting to consumption the labour effort which is today at least ten times what it needs to be.

Counter-thesis 4. Even if control of the economy by the State and State management of productive enterprises isn't socialism, it nevertheless modifies the character of the capitalism studied by Marx; it thus modifies the prospect of its collapse and determines a third unexpected form of post-capitalism.

Thesis 4. "Economic neutrality of the political State" has never been anything but a bourgeois claim directed against the feudal State. Marxism has shown that the modern State does not represent the whole of society but just the dominant capitalist class. From the very moment it first put pen to paper, Marxism has declared that the State is an economic force controlled by capital and by the entrepreneurial class. State capitalism and interventionism are further forms of subjection of the political State to enterprise capital. They delineate the final, desperate antagonism of the classes, consisting not of a clash of statistical numbers, but of physical forces: the proletariat organised into a revolutionary party against the constituted State.

Counter-thesis 5. In view of the unexpected shape the economy has assumed, Marxism must, if it wishes to remain valid, try and find another third class which comes to power after the bourgeoisie — a human group of capital owners which has vanished today — and which is not the proletariat. Such a class is the one which governs and has privileges in Russia: the bureaucracy. Or rather, as is argued for America, it is the class of managers, to wit, the technical and administrative directors of enterprises.

Thesis 5. Every class regime has had its administrative, judicial, religious and military bureaucracy, the totality of which is an instrument of the class in power, but its components don't constitute a class, since class is the totality of all those who stand in the same relationship with the means of production and consumption. The class of slave-owners had already begun to disband, due to its inability to feed its own slaves (Manifesto), at a time when the imperial bureaucracy reigned still, and was struggling against the anti-slavery revolution and bloodily repressed it. The aristocrats had long known ruin and the guillotine, yet still the State, military and clerical networks battled on behalf of the old regime. The bureaucracy in Russia is not definable without making an arbitrary division between its big shots and the rest: in State capitalism everyone is a bureaucrat. This supposed Russian bureaucracy, and for its part, the American managerial class, are instruments, without a life and history of their own, in the service of world capital against the working class. The parameters within which class antagonisms operate correspond with the Marxist view of economic, social and political facts; they don't correspond to any of the old views, and much less to new constructions born of the present beclouded atmosphere.

"Philosophical" Counter-theses and Theses

Counter-thesis 1. In the present society, since economic interests determine everyone's opinions, the bourgeois party represents the capitalist interest, and that composed of workers, socialism. Therefore every problem can be resolved by means of consultation – not with the citizens as whole, which is the democratic bourgeois lie – but with the workers, who share the same interests, and the majority of whom can clearly see their class's general future.

Thesis 1. In every epoch the dominant opinions, culture, art, religion and philosophy are determined by man's position in relation to the productive economy and by the social relations which derive from it. Hence every epoch, especially at its peak and around the middle of its cycle, sees every individual tending toward opinions which not only don't derive from eternal truths or spiritual lights, but which don't even remotely represent the true interest of the individual, category or class. Instead they are largely shaped around the interests of the dominant class and the institutions which are proper to it.

Only after a long and painful conflict of interests and needs, after long physical struggles provoked by class conflicts, is a new opinion, and a doctrine proper to the subjected class, formed which attacks the grounds for defending the constituted order, and proposes its violent destruction. For a long time after the physical victory – a prelude to the long dismantling of traditional influences and lies – only a minority of the interested class is capable of plotting a secure course into the future.

Counter-thesis 2. Class interest determines class consciousness, and consciousness determines revolutionary action. By the reversal of praxis is meant the contrast between the bourgeois doctrine – according to which every citizen forms a political opinion, due to idealistic or cultural reasons, which may even prompt him to act against his own group interest – and the Marxist doctrine – according to which the group or class interests of individuals dictate their personal opinions.

Thesis 2. The reversal of praxis, according to the correct vision of Marxist determinism, means that whilst each individual acts according to environmental determinations (which include not only physiological needs, but also all the innumerable influences of the traditional forms of production) and only after having acted tends to acquire a "consciousness", imperfect in varying degrees, of both his

action and his motives; and, whilst this also happens with regard to collective action, which arises spontaneously and due to material conditions before becoming ideological formulations, it is different in the case of the class party. Here are regrouped the advanced elements of the class and of society, who hold on to the doctrine of the future course. It is therefore the party alone which – not arbitrarily or by reason of emotional impulse but by proceeding rationally – is an element of that active intervention which in the language of the professional philosophers would be called "conscious" and "voluntary". The conquest of class power, and dictatorship, are functions of the party.

Counter-thesis 3. The class party constructs the doctrine of the revolution, and adapts it in response to the latest events and situations according to the new necessities and requirements of the class and the tendencies within it.

Thesis 3. A historical struggle of class revolution, and a party which represents it, are real facts and not doctrinaire illusion, inasmuch as the body of the new theory (which is nothing other than the identification of yet to be realised sequences of events on the basis of conditions and premises which can be detected in the preceding reality) was formed at a time when the class was making itshistorical appearance within a new disposition of forms of social production. The continuity of the class doctrine and party, in the broadest field of time and space, is the proof of the correctness of the revolutionary forecast.

With every physical defeat of the forces of the revolution there follows a period of bewilderment which manifests itself in revisions of chapters of the theoretical corpus, under the pretext of new facts and events.

The overall revolutionary plan will have proved itself valid only when and only if, once achieved, it can be confirmed that after every lost battle the forces reconstituted themselves on the same basis and on the same programme as that established in the "declaration of class war" (1848).

Any propensity to construct new, different versions of the theory – as evidenced not by philosophical or scientific lucubration but by a sum of historical experiences drawn from the century-old struggle of the modern proletariat – is equivalent, as far as Marxists are concerned, to a confession of having deserted.

* * *

Further clarification of these short synthetic accounts are scattered through numerous party writings, and reports on conferences and meetings.

Putting a break on dangerous improvisations does not mean that such work can be considered a monopoly, or an exclusive right, of anyone in particular.

Maybe more care could have gone into ordering the arguments, maybe it could have been presented more clearly or effectively. Activity and study will mean it can be done better, in another seven years, seven hours a week.

If little bunches of speedsters then show up, it will be proper to say: here are some of those men who only appear once every five hundred years. As we once recalled to the cold Zinoviev, who used to say that referring to Lenin.

We will wait for them to be embalmed. We don't feel we deserve such an honour.

The Immediate Program of the Revolution (1953)

1:With the resurgence of the movement which occurred on a world scale after the First World War and which was expressed in Italy by the founding of the PCI, it became clear that the most pressing question was the seizure of political power, which the proletariat could not accomplish by legal means but through violence, that the best opportunity for reaching that end was the military defeat of one's own country, and that the political form after victory was to be the dictatorship of the proletariat, which in turn is the first precondition for the following task of socio-economic overthrow.

2: The "Communist Manifesto" clearly pointed out the different measures are to be grasped as gradually possible and" despotic"-because the road to complete communism is very long-in dependence upon the level of development of the productive forces in the country in which the proletariat first attains victory and in accordance with how quickly this victory spreads to other countries. It designates the measures which in 1848 were the order of the day for the advanced countries and it emphasizes that they are not to be treated as complete socialism but as steps which are to be identified as preliminary, immediate and essentially "contradictory".

3: Later in some countries many of the measures at that time considered to be those of the proletarian dictatorship were implemented by the bourgeoisie itself: I.e free public education, a national bank etc. This was one of the aspects which deceived those who did not follow a fixed theory, but believed it required perpetual further development as a result of historical change.
That the bourgeoisie itself took these specific measures does not mean that the exact laws and predictions on the transition from the capitalist to the socialist mode of production have to be changed in their entire economic, political and social configuration; It only means that the first post-revolutionary, the lower and final higher stages of socialism (or total communism) are still antecedent periods, which is to say that the economics of transition will be somewhat easier.

4: The distinguishing mark of classical opportunism was to make believe that the bourgeois democratic state could accomplish all these measures from first to last if only the proletariat brought enough pressure to bear, and that it was even possible to accomplish this in a legal manner. However these various "corrections"-insofar as they were compatible with the capitalist mode of production-were in that case in the interest of the survival of capitalism and their implementation served to postpone its collapse, while those which were not compatible were naturally not applied.

5: With its formula of an always more widely developed popular democracy within the context of the parliamentary constitution contemporary opportunism has taken up a different and more evil duty. Not only does it make the proletariat think that a state standing over classes and parties is capable of carrying out some of its own fundamental tasks (which is to say it diffuses defeatism with regards to dictatorship-like social democracy before it), it deploys the masses it organizes in struggles for "democratic and progressive" social arrangements in diametrical opposition to those which proletarian power has set as its goal since 1848 and the "Manifesto".

6: Nothing better illustrates the full magnitude of this retrogression then a listing of the measures to take after the seizure of power in a country of the capitalist West. After a century these “corrections” are different from those enumerated in the “Manifesto”, however their characteristics are the same.

7: A listing of these demands looks like this:
A:“De-investment of capital” means of production are assigned a smaller proportion in relation to consumer goods.
B: “Increase of production costs” -so that as long as wages, money and the market still exist-more remuneration is exchanged for less labor time.
C: “Drastic reduction of labor time”- by at least half as unemployment and socially useless and damaging activities will shortly become things of the past.
D: A reduction in the mass of what is produced through an “under-production plan” which is to say the concentration of production on what is necessary as well as an “authoritarian regulation of consumption” by which the promotion of useless, damaging and luxury consumption goods is combated and activities which propagate a reactionary mentality are violently prohibited.
E: Rapid “dissolution of the boundaries of the enterprise” whereby decisions on production are not assigned to the workforce, but the new consumption plan determines what is to be produced.
F “Rapid abolition of social services” whereby the charity hand-outs characteristic of commodity production are replaced by a social (initial minimum) provision for those incapable of work.
G: “Construction freeze” on the rings of housing and workplaces around major and small cities in order to spread the population more and more equally throughout the land area of the country. With a ban on unnecessary transportation, limitation of traffic and speed of transportation
H: “A decisive struggle against professional specialization” and the social division of labor though the removal of any possibility of making a career or obtaining a title.
I: Immediate politically determined measures to put the schools, the press, all means of communication and information, as well as the entire spectrum of culture and entertainment under the control of the communist state.

8: It is not surprising that the Stalinists and those akin to them, together with their parties in the West today demand precisely the reverse-not only in terms of the “institutional” and also political-legal objectives, but even in terms of the “structural” which is to say socio-economic objectives.
The cause of this is their coordination with the party which presides over the Russian state and its fraternal countries, where the task of social transformation remains that of transition from pre-capitalist forms to capitalism: With all the corresponding ideological, political, social, and economic demands and pretensions in their baggage aiming towards a bourgeois zenith-they turn away with horror only from a medieval nadir.
Their Western cronies remain nauseating renegades insofar as the feudal danger (which is still material and real in insurgent areas of Asia) is non-existent and false with regards to the bloated super-capitalism across the Atlantic and for the proletarians who stagnate under its civilized, liberal and nationalist knout it is a lie.

The Factors of Race and Nation in Marxist Theory (1953)

Introduction
THE IMPOTENCE OF THE BANAL "DENIALIST" POSITION
Races, Nations or Classes?
1
The method of the Italian and international communist left has never had anything in common with the false dogmatic and sectarian extremism that seeks to abolish the forces that operate in the real process of history with empty verbal and literary denials.

In a recent article in our "Thread of Time" series ("Racial Pressure of the Peasantry, Class Pressure of the Peoples of Color", *Il Programma Comunista*, no. 14, August 24, 1953), which contains a series of reflections on the national-colonial and agrarian questions—and therefore concerning the principal contemporary social questions in which important forces are involved, forces that are not limited to industrial capital and the wage-earning proletariat—it was demonstrated with documentary evidence that a perfectly orthodox and radical revolutionary Marxism acknowledges the current significance of these factors and the corresponding need for an adequate class and party policy to address them; and this was undertaken not exclusively with quotations from Marx, Engels and Lenin, but also with the founding documentation, from the years 1920-1926, of the left opposition in the International and the Communist Party of Italy which during that period was a member of the International.
Only in the fatuous insinuations of the adversaries of the left, who have in the meantime followed the path of opportunism and are today shockingly floundering in the repudiation of class-based Marxism and in counterrevolutionary politics, has the left been complicit in the absolutist and metaphysical error according to which the communist party must concern itself only with the duel between the pure forces of modern capital and the wage workers, from which duel the proletarian revolution will arise, denying and ignoring the influence on the social struggle of any other class or any other factor. In our recent work involving the reconstruction of the basics of Marxist economics and of the Marxist revolutionary program we have fully proven that this pure "phase" does not actually exist in any country, not even in the most highly industrialized nations where the political rule of the bourgeoisie has been most deeply rooted, such as England, France and the United States; to the contrary, this "phase" cannot be verified anywhere, and its existence by no means constitutes a necessary precondition for the revolutionary victory of the proletariat.

It is therefore plain foolishness to say that, since Marxism is the theory of the modern class struggle between capitalists and workers, and since communism is the movement that leads the struggle of the proletariat, we have to deny any historical impact on the part of the social forces of other classes, the peasants, for example, and racial and national tendencies and movements, and that by correctly establishing the basis of our activity we shall consider such elements to be superfluous.

2
Historical materialism, presenting the course of prehistory in a new and original way, has not only considered, studied and evaluated the process of formation of families, groups, tribes, races and peoples up to the formation of nations and political states, but has precisely explained these phenomena in the context of their connection with and how they are conditioned by the development of the productive forces, and as manifestations and confirmations of the theory of economic determinism.

The family and the horde are forms that we undoubtedly also encounter among the animal species, and it is often said that even the most highly evolved animal families and herds, while they may begin to display examples of collective organization for certain purposes of defense and self-preservation and even for the gathering and storage of food, still do not display productive activity, which distinguishes man, even the

most primitive man. It would be more correct to say that what distinguishes the human species is not knowledge or thought or some particle of divine light, but the ability to produce not only objects of consumption but also objects devoted to subsequent acts of production, such as the first rudimentary tools for hunting, fishing, gathering fruit, and, later, for agricultural and craft labor. This primordial need to organize the production of tools is linked—and this characterizes the human species—with that of subjecting the reproductive process to some kind of discipline and rules, overcoming the accidental nature of the sexual relation with forms that much more complex than those presented by the animal world. It is especially in the classic work by Engels, to which we shall make abundant references, that the inseparable connection, if not the identity, of the development of the institutions of the family and of production is demonstrated.

Thus, in the Marxist view of the course of human history, before social classes even appeared—our whole theoretical battle is aimed at proving that these classes are not eternal; they had a beginning and they will also have an end—the only possible explanation is provided, on scientific and material bases, for the function of the clan, the tribe and the race and of their ordering under increasingly more complex forms due to the influence of the characteristics of the physical environment and to the growth of the productive forces and of the technology at the disposal of the collectivity.

3

The historical factor of nationalities and of the great struggles for and among them, displayed so variously throughout history, becomes decisive with the appearance of the bourgeois and capitalist social form by means of which this factor is extended over the entire earth, and Marx in his time devoted the greatest attention, no less than he devoted to the processes of social economy, to the struggles and wars of national consolidation.

With the doctrine and party of the proletariat already in existence since 1848, Marx not only provided the theoretical explanation for these struggles in accordance with economic determinism, but also strove to establish the limits and the conditions of time and place for supporting insurrections and wars for national independence.

By developing the great organized units of peoples and nations, and by superimposing state forms and hierarchies on them and their social dynamism that was differentiated by castes and classes, the racial and national factors played diverse roles in the various historical epochs; slavery, local chieftains, feudalism, capitalism. The importance of these factors varied from one form to another, as we shall see in the second part of our essay and as we have shown on so many occasions. In the modern epoch, in which the transition from the feudal form, from personal dependence and limited and local exchange, began and spread throughout the world, to the bourgeois form of economic servitude and the formation of the great unitary national markets, and then to the world market, the consolidation of nationality according to race, language, traditions and culture, and the demand that Lenin summarized in his formula, “one nation, one state” (while he explained that it was necessary to fight for this although he also said that it was a bourgeois formula and not a proletarian and socialist one), possess a fundamental force in the dynamic of history. What Lenin had verified with regard to the pre-1914 era in eastern Europe was true for Marx after 1848 in all of western Europe (except England) and even in 1871, as everyone knows. And today it is true outside of Europe, in vast areas of the inhabited world, although the process is impelled and accelerated by the potential for economic exchange and all sorts of other factors on a world scale. As a result, the problem of what position must be taken with regard to the irresistible tendencies of the “backward” peoples to engage in struggles for national independence is of contemporary relevance.

4

The dialectical core of the issue does not reside in equating an alliance in the physical struggle for anti-feudal revolutionary goals between bourgeois states and the working class and its party with a repudiation of the doctrine and the politics of the class struggle, but in showing that under the historical conditions and in the geographical regions in which this alliance is necessary and unavoidable, the programmatic theoretical and political critique of the goals and ideologies for which the bourgeois and petty bourgeois elements fight should remain integral and should be pursued tirelessly.

In the third and final part of our essay we shall show how Marx, at the same time that he energetically defends, for example, the cause of Polish or Irish independence, never ceases not only to condemn, but to utterly demolish and bury in ridicule the idealist conceptions of the bourgeois and petty bourgeois authors concerning democratic justice and the freedom of the peoples. Whereas for us the national market and the centralized capitalist nation-state constitute stepping stones to the international economy that will supersede the state and the market, for the famous personalities that Marx ridicules—Mazzini, Garibaldi, Kossuth, Sobieski, etc.—the democratic consolidation into nation-states is an end-point that will terminate all social struggles, and they want the homogeneous nation-state because in such a state the employers will not appear as enemies or as elements that are foreign to the exploited workers. At this historical moment the front lines are shifted, and the working class wages civil war against the state of its own “fatherland”. The advent of this moment was hastened and its conditions were being established by the process of the revolutions and bourgeois national wars of consolidation in Europe (and today in Asia and Africa as well): this is how to decipher this problem that, while changing, never ceases to offer variable directions.

5

Opportunism, betrayal, backsliding, and counterrevolutionary and philo-capitalist action on the part of today’s Stalinist false communists has a double impact on this terrain (no less than on the strictly economic and social terrain of so-called domestic politics). They contribute to the emergence of national democratic demands and values with excessive open political alliances, even in the highly advanced capitalist West where any plausible reason for engaging in such alliances was ruled out in 1871; but they also disseminated among the masses the sacred respect for the patriotic national and popular ideology identified with that of their bourgeois allies, and even court the support of the champions of these policies, who were ferociously denounced by Marx and Lenin in their time, while they pursue their mission of extirpating all class sentiment in the workers who have the misfortune of following them.

It would be stupid to offer as an extenuating circumstance for the infamy of the parties that today claim to represent the workers, and above all in Italy, under the false name of communists and socialists, the fact that they acknowledge as an admitted Marxist method, the participation in revolutionary national alliances on the part of the workers parties, on the condition that they should take place outside the 20th century and outside of the historical-geographical boundaries of Europe. When, in the conflict that recently erupted in the highly developed West (France, England, America, Italy, Germany, Austria), the Russian state and all the parties of the former Communist International then joined in the military alliance with all the bourgeois states, when there was no Napoleon III or Nicholas II or similar figures, first of all the lessons of Marx’s Address on behalf of the First International to the Paris Commune of 1871 were directly contravened, in which Marx denounced and ruled out forever any alliance with “national armies” because “the national governments are one as against the proletariat”, and secondly Lenin’s theses on the war of 1914 and the founding of the Third International were also contravened, in which it was established that, once the stage of generalized imperialist wars had commenced, demands for democratic reform and

national self-determination no longer had anything to do with the policies of states, condemning all social-nationalist traitors, from the Rhine to the Vistula.

A simple proposal to “reapply the terms” conceded to capitalism, transferring 1871 and 1917 to 1939 and 1953, with an incalculable subsequent extension, cannot proceed very far without completely undermining the entire Marxist method of reading history, at the crucial points in which its doctrinal force began to open up a breach in the armies defending the past: the European 1848, and the Russian 1905. Furthermore, such a proposal leads to the repudiation of all classical economic and social analysis, by claiming to assimilate the recent fascist totalitarianism with feudal remnants that still existed during that period (and even non-fascist, when Poland was divided between Germany and Russia!).

But the sentence of diametrical treason is also encountered in the second aspect: the total and integral cancellation of that critique of the “values” of bourgeois thought, which proclaim a classless world of popular independence, free nationalities, and independent and peaceful fatherlands. Marx and Lenin, however, when they were forced to reach some kind of agreement with the authors of this putrid conceptual framework, drove the struggle to liberate the working class from the fetishes of the national fatherland and democracy proclaimed by the big names of bourgeois radicalism to the highest point of virulence, and were able to in fact break with them in the historical dynamic, and when the relation of forces permitted they crushed its movement. Their successors today have inherited the function of the priests of these fetishes and myths; now it is not a matter of a historical pact that they will break later than they had foreseen, but of the total submission to the demands of the capitalist bourgeoisie in order to obtain the optimum of the regime that would allow them privileges and power.

The thesis is interesting because it conforms to the demonstration, offered in “Dialogue with Stalin” and in other inquiries in the field of economic science, that Russia today is a state that has completed the capitalist revolution, and that in its social marketplace there is a place for the flags of nationality and fatherland, as well as the most unbounded militarism.

6

It is a very serious mistake not to see, and indeed to deny, the fact that in today’s world national and ethnic factors still have an impact and exercise enormous influence, and that careful study of the limits in time and space in which campaigns for national independence, linked with social revolutions against pre-capitalist forms (Asiatic, slave and feudal) still have the character of necessary preconditions for the transition to socialism—with the founding of nation-states of the modern type (in India, China, Egypt, Persia, etc., for example)—is still relevant.

Differentiating between these situations is difficult, on the one hand because of the factor of xenophobia determined by the ruthless capitalist colonialism, and on the other due to the widespread dissemination throughout the world of productive resources that causes commodities to reach the most distant markets; but on the world scale the burning question posed in 1920 in the area of the former Russian empire, that of offering political and armed support to the independence movements of the peoples of the East, is by no means closed.

For example, to say that the relation between industrial capital and the class of the wage workers is expressed in precisely the same way in Belgium and Thailand, and that the praxis of their respective struggles should be established without taking into account in either of the two cases the factors of race or nationality, does not mean you are an extremist, but it means in effect that you have understood nothing of Marxism.

It is not by draining Marxism of all its depth and scope as well as its harsh and uninviting complexity that one conquers the right to refute, and one day to crush, despicable renegades.

Part 1
REPRODUCTION OF THE SPECIES AND PRODUCTIVE ECONOMY, INSEPARABLE ASPECTS OF THE MATERIAL FOUNDATION OF THE HISTORICAL PROCESS
Labor and Sex
1

Historical materialism loses all its meaning wherever it consents to the introduction of the allegedly individual nature of the sexual urge as a factor that is alien to the domain of the social economy, which would generate derivations and constructions of an extra-economic order until it attains the most evanescent and spiritual levels.

A much greater mobilization of the scientific material would be necessary, always starting from the highest degree of mistrust towards the decadent and venal official science of the current period, if this polemic were to be aimed only at the self-proclaimed total adversaries of Marxism. As always, it is the currents that say that they accept some parts of Marxism, and then address essential collective and human problems claiming that they are beyond its purview, that concern us the most in their capacities as counterrevolutionary factors.

It is clear that idealists and fideists, having established their views upon the explanation of the natural hierarchy of values, tend to situate the problems of sex and love in a sphere and a level that is far above the economy, which is vulgarly understood as the satisfaction of the need to eat and related needs. If the element that elevates and distinguishes the species homo sapiens from the other animals really derives not from the physical effect of a long evolution in a complex environment of material factors, but descends from the penetration of a particle of an immaterial cosmic spirit, it is clear that in the reproduction of one being by another, of one thinking brain by another, we would need a more noble relation that that of the everyday filling of the stomach. If, even without depicting this personal spirit as immaterial, it is admitted that in the dynamic of human thought there is an evident virtue and a force that pre-exists or exists outside the bounds of matter, it is clear that the mechanism that substitutes the generated ego for the generative ego, with its own essential qualities, hypothetically pre-existent to any contact with physical nature and all cognition, must be sought in a more arcane domain.

For the dialectical materialist it is unforgivable to assume that the economic structure, in whose forces and laws the explanation of the political history of humanity is sought, embraces only the production and consumption of the more or less wide range of goods that are necessary to keep the individual alive; and that the material relations between individuals are limited to this domain, and that the play of forces that unite these innumerable isolated molecules composes the norms, rules and laws of social reality; while a whole series of vital satisfactions are left out of this construction; and for many dilettantes these include the ones that extend from sex-appeal to aesthetic and intellectual pleasures. This interpretation of Marxism is terribly false, it is the worst kind of anti-Marxism that is currently popular, and besides relapsing into an implicit but inexorable bourgeois idealism, it also constitutes a return, with no less harmful consequences, to full-blown individualism, which is another essential trait of reactionary thought; and this makes both the biological as well as the psychological individual central categories and standards of reference.

The material factor does not “generate” the superstructural factor (juridical, political, philosophical) by means of a process that takes place within an individual, nor by way of a hereditary generative chain of

individuals, leaving the “comedies” of the economic base and its cultural culmination to be taken care of later by a social process. The base is a system of palpable physical factors that embraces all individuals and determines their behavior, even at an individual level, a system that comes into existence when these individuals have formed a social species, and the superstructure is a derivative of these conditions of the base, determinable according to the study of these conditions and subject to calculations on that basis, without concerning ourselves with the thousands of particular behaviors and of their petty personal variations.

The error that we are addressing is therefore an error of principle, which, by leading the examination of the causes of historical processes towards ideal factors that are outside of physical nature, on the one hand, and on the other by the leading role it grants to the ridiculous Individual citizen, leaves dialectical materialism no field of operations, so that it is even rendered incapable of balancing the books at a bakery or a delicatessen.

2

The position that denies the validity of Marxism on the terrain of sex and reproduction along with all its rich derivations is ignorant of the opposition between the bourgeois and communist conceptions of the economy, and therefore turns its back on the powerful conquest achieved by Marx when he demolished the capitalist schools. For the latter the economy is the totality of relations that are based on the exchange between two individuals of objects that are mutually useful for their self-preservation, and they include labor power among these useful objects. From this they deduce that there never was and never will be an economy without exchange, commodities and property. For us, the economy includes the full range of activity engaged in by the species, by the human group, that influences its relations with the physical natural environment; economic determinism rules over not only the epoch of private property but over the entire history of the species.

All Marxists consider the following theses to be correct: private property is not eternal; there was a time of primitive communism when private property did not exist; and we are advancing towards the era of social communism; the family is not eternal, much less the monogamous family—it appeared very late and in a more advanced era will have to disappear; the state is not eternal—it appears in a quite advanced stage of “civilization” and will disappear along with the division of society into classes.

It is clear that none of these truths can be reconciled with a view of historical praxis that is based on the dynamic of individuals and on a concession, however minimal it may be, to their autonomy and initiative, their liberty, conscience, will and all other such trivialities. The truths enumerated above are only demonstrable after having accepted that the determining element is an exhaustive process of adaptation and organization of the human collectives in the face of the difficulties and obstacles of the time and place in which they live, resolving not the thousands of millions of problems of adaptation faced by the individuals, but that other perspective that tends towards a unitary viewpoint, that of the prolonged adaptation of the species as a whole to the demands imposed on it by external circumstances. This conclusion is unavoidable in view of the increase in the number of members of the species, the toppling of the barriers that separate them from each other, the dizzying multiplication of the available technical means, which can only be managed by way of collective institutions composed of innumerable individuals, etc.

For a primitive people one could very well suppose that sociology is about how to get food, from the very moment when it was no longer obtained by the powers of individual effort, as is the case with animals; but public sanitation, obstetrics, eugenics and, tomorrow, the annual birth quota, are also part of sociology.

Individual and Species

3

The individual self-preservation in which the mysterious principal motor force of events is always sought is nothing but a derivative and secondary manifestation of the self-preservation and development of the species, independently of the traditional benefits conferred by a natural or supernatural providence, the play of the instincts or of reason; and this is all the more true for a social species and a society with some highly developed and complex aspects.

It might appear to be too obvious to point out that everything could very well be explained by individual self-preservation, as the basis and motor force of all other phenomena, if the individual were immortal. In order to be immortal he would have to be immutable, exempt from aging, but it is precisely the nature of the living organism and especially the animal organism, to undergo an unavoidable and uninterrupted transformation from within itself of every one of its cells, since it hosts within its body an impressive chain of movements, circulation and metabolism. It is absurd to postulate an organism that lives by continuously replacing the elements it has lost and remaining self-identical, as if it were a crystal that, immersed in a solution of its own chemically pure solid substance, diminishes or grows according to a cyclic variation of temperatures or external pressures. Some have even spoken of the life of the crystal (and today of the atom) since they can be born, grow, shrink, disappear and even duplicate and multiply.

This might seem too banal to mention, but it is useful to reflect on the fact that the fetishistic conviction held by many (even many who pass themselves off as Marxists) regarding the primacy of the factor of individual biology is nothing but an atavistic reflection of primeval and crude beliefs concerning the immortality of the personal soul. In no religion has the most vulgar bourgeois egoism, which displays a fierce contempt for the life of the species and for compassion for the species, been implanted more deeply than in those that claim that the soul is immortal, and in this fantastic form considers the fate of the subjective person to be more important than that of all the others.

It is unpleasant to meditate on the fact that the movement of our poor carcass is only transitory, and as a substitute for the afterlife intellectualoid illusions arise—and today, existentialist illusions—concerning the distinctive stigma that every subject possesses, or believes he possesses even when he sheepishly follows the fashionable trends, and passively imitates all the other human puppets. It is at this point that the hymn of praise is intoned for the ineffable virtues of the emotions, of the will, of artistic exaltation, of cerebral ecstasis, which are only attained within the individual unit—precisely where the truth is the exact opposite.

Returning to the material way that events unfold right under our noses, it is obvious that any complete, healthy and adult individual, in the full possession of his faculties, can devote himself—we are referring to an economy of an elementary nature—to the production of what he needs to consume on a daily basis. The instability of this situation, individual by individual, would soon lead to its termination (and of the species if the latter were a senseless conglomeration of individuals connected with each other only by the principle of maximization of personal gain at the expense of the others) if it were to lack the flow of reproduction that characterizes an organic group, in which individuals who just look out for themselves are rare, and in which there are elderly persons who cannot work so hard, and very young children who need to be fed so they can produce in the future. Any economic cycle would be unthinkable, and we would not be able to devise any economic equations, without introducing into the calculation these essential magnitudes: age, abilities, health. We would thus have to elaborate the vulgar economic formula of a parthenogenic and unisexual humanity. This cannot be verified, however. So we have to introduce

the sexual factor, since reproduction takes place by means of two heterogeneous genders, and the hiatus in productive activity necessitated by gestation and rearing have to be taken into account, too….

Only after having addressed all these issues can we say we have drawn up the conditional equations that totally describe the “base”, the economic “infrastructure” of society, from which we shall deduce (casting aside once and for all that puppet called the individual which cannot perpetuate or renew itself, and which is less and less capable of doing so as he proceeds along this great road) the whole infinite range of the manifestations of the species which have only in this way been rendered possible, right up to the greatest phenomena of thought.

In a recently-published article, a journalist (Yourgrau, in Johannesburg), in his review of the theory of the general system of Bertalanffy, who sought to synthesize the principles of the two famous rival systems, vitalism and mechanicism, while reluctantly admitting that materialism is gaining ground in biology, recalls the following paradox which is not easy to confute: one rabbit alone is not a rabbit, only two rabbits can be a rabbit. We see how the individual is expelled from his last stronghold, that of Onan. It is therefore absurd to address economics without dealing with the reproduction of the species, which is how it was approached in the classical texts. If we turn to the Preface of *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* this is how Engels approaches one of the basic pillars of Marxism:
“According to the materialistic conception, the determining factor in history is, in the final instance, the production and reproduction of the immediate essentials of life. This, again, is of a twofold character. On the one side, the production of the means of existence, of articles of food and clothing, dwellings, and of the tools necessary for that production; on the other side, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species. The social organization under which the people of a particular historical epoch and a particular country live is determined by both kinds of production: by the stage of development of labor on the one hand and of the family on the other.”

From its theoretical foundations, the materialist interpretation of history organizes the data concerning the relative degree of development of technology and productive labor and the data regarding the “production of human beings” or the sphere of sexuality. The working class is the greatest productive force, according to Marx. And it is even more important to know how the class that works reproduces, studying how it produces and reproduces the mass of commodities, wealth and capital. The classical dispossessed wage worker of antiquity was not officially defined in Rome as a worker, but as a proletarian. His characteristic function was not that of giving society and the ruling classes the labor of its own body, but that of generating, without controls or limits, in his rustic little apartment, the day laborers of tomorrow.

The modern petty bourgeois, in his vacuity, thinks that the latter function would be much more pleasant for him than the former function, which is much more bitter. But the petty bourgeois, who is just as revolting and as philistine as the big bourgeois, necessarily faces this function, too, with every kind of impotence.

4
Likewise, the first communities prepared for productive labor with the rudimentary technology that was then available, and prepared to serve the purposes of mating and reproduction, education and the protection of the young. The two forms are in continuous connection and therefore the family in its diverse forms is also a relation of production and changes as the conditions of the environment and the available forces of production change.

In this essay we cannot recapitulate the entire story of the successive stages of savagery and barbarism that the human race has traversed, and which are characterized by their different ways of life and kinship structures, and we refer the reader to the brilliant work of Engels.

After living in the trees feeding on fruit, man first became acquainted with fishing and fire, and learned to navigate the coasts and rivers so that the various tribes came into contact with one another. Then came the hunt with the use of the first weapons, and in the stage of barbarism, first the domestication of animals arose and then agriculture, which signaled the transition from a nomadic to a sedentary lifestyle. The sexual forms did not yet include monogamy or even polygamy; the latter was preceded by matriarchy, in which the mother exercised moral and social dominance, and the group family in which the men and the women of the same gens lived together in a fluid succession of pairing relationships as Morgan discovered in the American Indians who, even when they adopted the ways of the white man, even when they had adopted monogamy, called their paternal uncles “father”, and their aunt, “mother”. In these phratries, where no constituted authority ruled, there was no division of property or of the land, either.

One might consider that it is one of the traits of the higher animals to display an embryonic organization for tending to and defending their offspring, but this is due to instinct, and that it is only the rational animal, however, man, that provides himself with organizations with economic purposes, while instinct remains dominant in the sphere of the bonds of sex and family. If this were really true, then the existence of intelligence, which is commonly admitted to be a substitute for instinct and something that neutralizes instinct, would cause the whole field of inquiry to be divided into two. But all of this is metaphysics. A good definition of instinct appeared in a study by Thomas (La Trinitè-Victor, 1952) (if we quote a recent study by a specialist we do so only for the purpose of showing many people that the theories of Engels or Morgan, revolutionaries who were persecuted on the conceited terrain of bourgeois culture, were not “dated” or “superseded” by the latest scientific literature…): Instinct is the hereditary knowledge of a plan of life of the species. Over the course of evolution and of natural selection—which in the animal realm, we can admit that it derives from a clash of the individuals as such against the environment, but only in a physical, biological way—the obedience of the members of the same species to a common behavior is determined, especially in the reproductive realm. This behavior accepted by all is automatic, “unconscious” and “irrational”. It is understandable that this mode of behavior is transmitted via heredity, along with the morphological and structural characteristics of the organism, and the mechanism of transmission should be enclosed (although there is much yet to be discovered by science) in the genes (not in the geniuses, my dear individualists!) and in other particles of the germinative and reproductive liquids and cells.

This mechanism, for which each individual serves as a vehicle, only provides the rudimentary normative minimum of a plan of life that is suitable for confronting environmental difficulties.

In social species collaboration in labor, no matter how primitive, obtained greater results, and transmitted many other customs and guidelines that would serve as rules. For the bourgeois and the idealist the difference lies in the rational and conscious element that determines the will to act, and this is when the free will of the fideist appears, and the personal freedom of the Enlightenment. Nor is this essential point exhausted by these variations. Our position is that we are not adding a new power to the individual, thought and spirit, which would mean reexamining all the data with respect to the physical mechanism from the perspective of this alleged vital principle. To the contrary, we add a new collective power derived completely from the needs of social production, which imposes more complex rules and orders, and just as it displaces instinct, as it applies to guiding individuals through the sphere of technology, so too does it

displace instinct from the sexual sphere as well. It is not the individual that caused the species to develop and become ennobled, it is the life of the species that has developed the individual towards new dynamics and towards higher spheres.

What there is of the primordial and bestial, is in the individual. What is developed, complex and ordered, forming a plan of life that is not automatic but organized and organizable, derives from collective life and was first born outside the minds of individuals, in order to become part of them by difficult paths. In the meaning that we, too, can give, outside of all idealism, to the expressions of thought, knowledge, and science, involves products of social life: individuals, without any exceptions, are not the donors, but the recipients and in contemporary society they are also the parasites.

The fact that from the beginning, and ever since, economic and sexual regulation have been interconnected for the purpose of imposing order on the associated life of men, can be read between the lines of all the religious myths, which according to the Marxist evaluation are not gratuitous fantasies or inventions without content in which we must not believe, as the fashionable bourgeois free-thinkers proclaim, but rather the first expressions of collective knowledge in the process of its elaboration.

In the Book of Genesis (Chapter 2, Verses 19 and 20) God, before creating Eve and therefore before the expulsion from the terrestrial paradise (in which Adam and Eve had lived unaccompanied, even physically immortal, on the condition that they could easily gather all the nourishing fruits, but not those of science) creates all the species of animals from the earth, presenting them to Adam, who learned to call them by their names. The text gives the explanation for this incident: *Adae vero non inveniebatur adjutor similis ejus*. This means that Adam had no helper (cooperator) of his own species. He would be given Eve, but not to put her to work or to impregnate her. It seems to have been stipulated that it would be lawful for them to adapt the animals to their service. After they committed the grave error of beginning with the wise serpent, God altered the fate of humanity. It was only after they had been exiled from Eden that Eve would “know” her companion, bearing him children that she would give birth to in pain, and he would in turn have to earn his living by the sweat of his brow. Thus, even in the ancient but complex wisdom of the myth, production and reproduction are born simultaneously. If Adam domesticated animals, it was with the help, now that he had *adjutores*, of workers of his own species, *similes ejus*. Very rapidly the Individual had become nothing, immutable, unmovable, deprived of the bitter bread and the great wisdom, a sacred monster and abortion consecrated to leisure, truly affected by the lack of labor, of love and of science, to which the alleged materialists of the present century still want to sacrifice stupid incense: in its place appears the species that thinks because it labors, among so many *adjutores*, neighbors and brothers.

Biological Heredity and Social Tradition

5

Ever since the first human societies, the behavior of the members of the groups had become uniform by way of shared practices and functions that, having become necessary due to the demands of production and even of sexual reproduction, took on the form of ceremonies, festivals and rites of a religious character. This first mechanism of collective life, of unwritten rules that were nonetheless neither imposed nor violated, was made possible not by inspirations or innate ideas of society or of morality that were appropriate for the animal called man, but by the determinist effect of the technical evolution of labor.

The history of the customs and usages of primitive peoples, before the times of written constitutions and coercive law, and the shock produced in the life of the savage tribes when they first came into contact with the white man, can only be explained by utilizing similar investigative criteria. The seasonal periodicity of the festivals related to plowing, sowing and harvesting is obvious. At first the time of love

and fertility was also seasonal for the human species which, due to subsequent evolution, would become, unlike any other animal, constantly ready to mate. African writers who have assimilated the culture of the whites have described the festivals relating to sex. Each year the adolescents who have reached puberty have certain ligatures untied that had been attached to their sexual organs since they were born, and this bloody operation carried out by the priests is then followed, amidst the excitation produced by the noise and drinking, by a sexual orgy. Evidently, this type of technique arose to preserve the reproductive capacity of the race under difficult conditions that could lead to degeneration and sterility in the absence of any other controls, and perhaps there are even more nauseating things in the Kinsey report concerning sexual behavior in the capitalist era.

That the capacity for generation and production should be conjointly guaranteed is an old Marxist thesis, as is proven by a lovely quote from Engels about Charlemagne's attempt to improve agricultural production in the last years of his realm by the establishment of imperial estates (not kolkhozes). These were administered by monasteries, but failed, as was the case throughout the entire course of the Middle Ages: a unisexual and non-reproducing collective did not respond to the demands of continuous production. For example, the Order of Saint Benedict might appear to have ruled by means of a communist code, since it severely prohibited—imposing the obligation to work—any personal appropriation of the smallest product or good, as well as any consumption outside of the collective refectory. But this rule, due to its chastity and sterility, which rendered its members incapable of reproducing, remained outside of life and outside of history. A parallel study of the orders of monks and nuns in their first phase might perhaps be able to shed some light on the problem of the scarcity of production with respect to consumption in the Middle Ages, particularly of some of the surprising conceptions of Saint Francis and Clare of Assisi, who did not conceive of self-mortification to save their souls, but rather of social reform to help feed the starved flesh of the disinherited classes.

6

All the norms of productive technique in fishing, hunting, the manufacture of weapons, and agriculture, becoming increasingly more complex with the passage of time, coordinated by the activity of the capable adults, the elderly, young people, pregnant and nursing mothers, and couples joined together for reproductive purposes, are transmitted from generation to generation by a double road: organic and social. By the first road the hereditary elements transmit the attitudes and physical adaptations of the generative to the generated individual, and the personal secondary differences come into play; by the second road, which is becoming increasingly important, all the resources of the group are transmitted by way of an extra-physiological but no less material method, which is the same for everyone, and which resides in the "equipment" and "tools" of all types that the collectivity has managed to give itself.

In some of the articles in the "Thread of Time" series[1] it was shown that up until the discovery of more convenient modes of transmission like writing, monuments, and then the printing press, etc., man had to rely principally on the memory of individuals, elaborating it with collective common forms. From the first maternal admonition we proceed to the conversations about obligatory themes and the litanies of the elderly and collective recitations; song and music are the supports of memory and the first science appears in the form of verses rather than in the form of prose, with musical accompaniment. A large part of the modern wisdom of capitalist civilization would not be able to circulate except in the form of horrifying cacophonies!

The course of development of all this impersonal and collective baggage that passes from some humans to others over the passage of time, cannot be explained except by approaching it systematically, but the law that governs it has already been outlined: this process increasingly does without the individual head as the organism is enriched, and everyone approaches a common level; the great man, who is almost

always a legendary personality, becomes increasingly more useless, just it is more and more useless to wield a larger weapon than anyone else or to be able to multiply figures in your head more quickly than anyone else; it will not be long before a robot will be the most intelligent citizen of this incredibly stupid bourgeois world, and if some people are to be believed, the Dictator of great nations.

In any event the social force always prevails over the organic force, which is in any case the platform of the individual spirit.

Here we may refer to an interesting new synthesis: Wallon, *L'organique et le social chez l'homme*, Collège de France, 1953. Although he criticizes mechanistic materialism (that of the bourgeois epoch, and thus one that is operative on the scale of the individual), the author discusses examples of the systems of communication between men in society and quotes Marx, whose influence we may also discern from the language in this same part of the book. In his conclusion, however, he describes the failure of idealism and of its modern existentialist form with an apt formula: "Idealism was not content with circumscribing the real within the limits of the imaginary (in our minds). It has also circumscribed the image of what it considers to be real!" And after reviewing some recent examples, he draws the sensible conclusion: "Among the organic impressions and imaginary mental constructs, mutual actions and reactions never cease to be exhibited that show just how empty are the distinctions that the various philosophical systems have established between matter and thought, existence and intelligence, the body and the spirit." From the large number of such contributions one may deduce that the Marxist method has offered science without an adjective (or with the adjective of 'contraband-') the opportunity to take advantage of its discoveries, and thus overcome its handicap, for one hundred years.

Natural Factors and Historical Development

7

Over the course of a long process the living conditions of the first gentile organizations, the communist phratries, continued to develop, and naturally they did not all develop at the same rate, which varied according to the physical conditions of their environments: the nature of the soil and geological phenomena, the geography and altitude, waterways, distance from the sea, the climatology of the various zones, flora, fauna, etc. Over the course of fluctuating cycles the nomadic lifestyles of the wandering hordes gave way to the occupation of a fixed homeland, and to a decreasing availability of unoccupied land as well as more frequent encounters and contacts between tribes of different kin-groups, but also more frequent conflicts, invasions and finally enslavement, one of the origins of the nascent division into classes of the ancient egalitarian societies.

In the first struggles between gentes, as Engels reminds us, because slavery and mixing blood were not allowed, victory meant the merciless annihilation of all the members of the defeated community. This was the effect of the requirement that not too many workers should be admitted into a limited terrain and of the prohibition against breaking sexual and generative discipline, factors that were inseparable from social development. Later relations were more complex and mixing of populations and instances of breeding outside the authorized groups became more frequent, and were more easily accomplished in the fertile temperate regions that hosted the first large, stable population centers. In this first phase humans did not yet want to leave the prehistoric stage. Concerning the influence of geophysical factors in the broadest sense of the term, one may also refer to the comparison made by Engels regarding the great productive advance obtained with the domestication of animals, not only as a source of food but also as a force of labor. While Eurasia possesses almost all of the world's animal species susceptible to domestication, America had only one, the llama, a large, sheep-like species (all the other species were introduced after the European conquest). This is why the peoples of the Americas were "arrested" in terms of social development compared to the peoples of the old world. The fideists explain this by claiming that in the

time of Columbus redemption had not yet reached this part of the planet, and that the light of the eternal spirit had not yet illuminated those heads. Evidently one reasons in another manner if one explains everything not by the absence of the supreme Being, but by the absence of a few quite ordinary animal species.

But this method of reasoning was accepted by the Christian colonists who attempted to exterminate the aboriginal Indians as if they were wild animals, replacing them with African negro slaves, thus unleashing an ethnic revolution whose consequences only time will tell.

Prehistory and Language

8

The passage from the racial to the national factor may in a very general manner be assimilated to the passage from prehistory to history. For a nation must encompass a whole in which the ethnic aspect is just one among many others and in very few cases is it the dominant one. Thus, before we enter the terrain of the historical scope of the national factor the problem of the other factors that constitute the totality of the racial factor must be addressed; and first of all, language. No other explanation can be provided for the origin of language and of dialects than the one that is derived from the material environment and the productive organization. The language of a human group is one of its means of production.

Everything we said above, based on the strict connection between the bonds of blood in the first tribes and the beginning of social production with certain tools, and on the basis of the preponderance of the relation between the human group and the physical environment over the initiative and the orientation of the individual, is found in the central axis of historical materialism. Two texts separated by a half-century are there to confirm this. In the “Theses on Feuerbach” of 1845, Marx said: “the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations.” By social conditions, we Marxists mean blood, the physical environment, tools, and the organization of any particular group.

In a letter from 1894, which we have often employed to combat the prejudice about the function of the individual (the Great Man, the Guignol) in history, Engels responds to the following question: what role is played by the moment (see point three) of race and historical individuals in the materialist conception of history of Marx and Engels? As we recently recalled, Engels, thus pressed to assume a position on the plane of the individual and Napoleon, who was obviously in the back of the questioner’s mind, in order to overthrow the whole question immediately, with respect to the question of race gave us no more than a single tap of the chisel: “But race is itself an economic factor.”

The cretinous representatives of the bourgeois pseudo-culture can laugh when we go back in time to trace the immense line that leads from the beginnings to the final result, as the powerful and deeply entrenched Catholic school does in the renowned trajectory that leads from primitive chaos to the eternal blessedness of creation.

The first groups were based on a strictly pure kinship and are group-families. They are likewise work-groups, which is to say that their “economy” is a reaction on the part of all of them to the physical environment in which each one of them has the same relation: there is no personal property, or social classes or political power or state.

Since we are not metaphysicians or mystics—and we are therefore not under any obligation to pour ashes over our heads and meditate on such stains that have besmirched the human species and which must be cleansed—we have no problem accepting the emergence and further development of a thousand forms of mixture of blood, division of labor, the separation of society into classes, the state and civil war. At the end of the cycle, however, with a generalized and untraceable ethnic amalgamation, with a productive technology that acts upon the environment with such power that it allows for the regulation of events on the planet, we see, with the end of all racial and social discrimination, the new communist economy; that is, the worldwide end of individual property, from which transitory cults had grown into monstrous fetishes: the person, the family, the fatherland.

From the very beginning, however, the economy of each people and its degree of productive technological development was just as much of a particular identifying characteristic as was that of the ethnic type.

The latest research into the mists of prehistory has led the science of human origins to acknowledge other starting points in the appearance of the animal man on the earth, and in the evolution of other species. One can no longer speak of a "genealogical tree" of all of humanity or of its branches. A study by Etienne Patte (Faculty of Sciences at Poitiers, 1953) effectively refutes the inadequacy of this traditional image. In the evolutionary tree all the forks between two genuses or species are themselves irrevocable: as a rule the two branches never reconnect. Human generation, on the other hand, is an inextricable net whose spaces are continually being reconnected with each other: if there had not been interbreeding between relatives every one of us would have 8 great-grandfathers in three generations, or every century, but in a thousand years each person would have more than a billion ancestors, and assuming an age for the species of six hundred thousand years, which seems likely, the number of ancestors for each of us would be an astronomical number with thousands of zeroes. It is therefore a net rather than a tree. And besides, in the ethnic statistics of the modern peoples the representatives of ethnically pure types comprise a minuscule percentage. Hence the felicitous definition of humanity as a "*sungameion*", which is Greek for a complex that is totally mixed in every sense: the verb, *gaméo*, refers to the sexual act and the marriage rite. And one can refer to the somewhat simplistic rule: the cross between species is sterile, that between races is fertile.
We can understand the Pope's position when, denying all racial differences, a very advanced point of view in the historical sense, he wants us to speak of races of animals but not of men. Despite the eagerness with which he follows the latest scientific discoveries and their often marvelous correspondence with dogma, he has not been able to abandon the biblical (the Bible is more Jewish than Catholic on the philosophical terrain) genealogical tree that descends from Adam.

Another author of a manifestly anti-materialist tendency, however, cannot resist rejecting the old separation of methods between anthropology and historiography, since the former must seek positive data, while the latter finds the data already available and prepared and above all arranged in a chronological series. No one doubts that Caesar lived before Napoleon; but it is a very big problem to know who came first, the Neanderthal or *proconsul africanus*….
The power of the materialist method, however, applied to the data supplied by research, easily establishes the synthesis between the two methods, although race was one of the most decisive economic factors in the prehistoric gens, and the nation, a much more complicated entity, in the contemporary world. Only in this manner can one properly situate the function of languages, at first common to a narrowly defined consanguinary and cooperative group without any connections with external groups, or only with warlike connections, which are today shared by populations that inhabit vast territories.

At first those groups that had a common circle of reproduction and productive tools and capacity for all that was necessary for material life also had a common phonetic expression. One may say that the use of sounds for communication purposes between individuals first arose among the animal species. But the modulation of the sound that the vocal organs of any particular species of animal are capable of emitting (a purely physiological inheritance in the structure and in the functional possibilities of these organs) falls far short of the formation of a language with a certain set of vocables. The vocable does not arise to designate the person who speaks or the person to whom the speech is directed, a member of the opposite sex or a part of the body or light, clouds, land, water, food or danger. Language composed of vocables was born when labor based on tools was born, the production of objects of consumption by way of the associated labor of men.

Social Labor and Speech

9

All common human activity for productive purposes demands, for useful collaboration, a system of communication among the workers. Starting from the simple effort involved in raiding or self-defense, for which instinctive incitements such as pushing or animal cries suffice, at the moment when action is necessary at a certain time or place, or with a particular means (primitive tool, weapon, etc.), and through a very long series of failed attempts and corrections, speech arose. This procedure is opposed to that of the idealist illusion: an innovator imagines the new “technological” method in his brain without having ever seen it before, which he explains by telling the others of his kind, and directs them to implement it with his orders. The way we see this process, it is not a series that proceeds from thought, then to speech, and only then to action, but precisely the reverse.

One more demonstration of the real natural process of language is found once again in a biblical myth, that of the Tower of Babel. Here we are already in the presence of an authentic state wielding immense power, with formidable armies that capture prisoners, and in possession of a huge captive labor force. This power engaged in vast construction projects, especially in its capital (the technological abilities of the Babylonians not only with regard to construction, but also hydraulic engineering and similar fields, is a matter of historical record), and according to the legend, the state sought to build a tower so high that its pinnacle would touch heaven: this is the standard myth of human presumption punished by the divinity, the same as the fire stolen by Prometheus, the flight of Daedalus, etc. The innumerable workers, overseers, and architects, are of distinct and scattered origins, they do not speak the same languages, they do not understand one another, the execution of their orders and plans is chaotic and contradictory and the building, once it reached a certain height, due to errors rooted in the linguistic confusion, collapsed into ruins, and the builders either died or else fled in terror from this divine punishment.

The complex meaning of this story is that one cannot build something if there is no common language: stones, hands, planks, hammers, and picks are no good if the tool, the instrument of production, lacks a word in the same language and with the same lexicography and formula, common to all and widely known. Among the savages of central Africa one finds the same legend: the tower was made of wood and was supposed to reach the moon. Now that we all speak “American”, it is child’s play to build skyscrapers, which are much more stupid than the wonderful towers of the barbarians and the savages.

There is thus no doubt about the Marxist definition of language, according to which it is one of the instruments of production. The above-cited article by Wallon does no less than refer, when it examines the most important doctrines, to the one that we follow: “according to Marx language is linked to the human production of tools and of objects that are granted definite attributes”. And the author chooses two magisterial quotations, the first from Marx (*The German Ideology*): “[Men] begin to distinguish themselves

from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence"; and the second from Engels (*The Dialectics of Nature*): "First labour, after it and then with it speech – these were the two most essential stimuli under the influence of which the brain of the ape gradually changed into that of man". And Engels, when he wrote that, did not know the results that, contrary to their expectations, would later be published by writers from the pure idealist school (Saller, *What Is Anthropology?*, University of Munich). Today the human brain has a volume of 1,400 cubic centimeters (we know—this goes for geniuses as well as for dummies like us!). A very long time ago, in the time of Sinanthropus-Pithecanthropus with his 1,000 cubic centimeters of brain, it would seem that this ancestor of ours already had the first notions of magic, as is attested by the nature of his burials, although he was frequently a cannibal; but besides using fire for some time, he had various tools: drinking bowls made from animal skulls, stone weapons, etc. But the discoveries made in South Africa have provided yet more surprises: about six hundred thousand years ago (the figure is from Wallon), a precocious ancestor of ours, with only 500 cubic centimeters of brain, already used fire, hunted and ate the cooked meat of animals, walked upright like us and—this is the sole rectification that needs to be made with regard to the data provided by Engels (1884)—it seems that he no longer lived in the trees like his close relative "australopithecus" but bravely defended himself from wild beasts on the ground.
It is odd that the writer from whom we take this information, disoriented by this data that serves to more firmly embed the materialist theory on its foundation, should take refuge from anthropology in psychology, in order to express his regrets concerning the decline of the individual who had been elevated by a mysterious extra-organic breath; and that in the modern epoch of overpopulation and mechanicism the individual degenerates by becoming the masses, ceasing to be a man. But who is more human: our friendly pithecanthropus with 500 cubic centimeters or the scientist with his 1,400 cubic centimeters, who devotes himself to hunting butterflies under the Arch of Titus in order to erect the pious equation: official science + idealism = despair?

Economic Base and Superstructure
10
The concept of the "economic base" of a particular human society extends beyond the boundaries of the superficial interpretation that restricts it to the remuneration of labor and to commodity exchange. It embraces the entire domain of the forms of reproduction of the species, or family institutions, and while technical resources and available tools and material apparatus of every kind form an integral part of it, its content is not limited to a simple inventory of materials, but includes all available mechanisms for passing on from one generation to another all social "technological knowledge". In this sense and as general networks of communication and transmission, after spoken language we must also include under the rubric of means of production, writing, song, music, the graphic arts, and the press, as they appear as means of transmission of the productive legacy. In the Marxist view, literature, poetry and science are also higher and more highly-differentiated forms of productive instruments and were born in response to the same requirement of the immediate life of society.

With regard to this issue questions of interpretation of historical materialism arose in the camp of the workers movement: what social phenomena really constitute the "productive base" or the economic preconditions, which explain the ideological and political superstructures that are characteristic of any particular historical society?

Everyone knows that Marxism opposed to the concept of a long and gradual evolution of human society the concept of sudden turning points between one epoch and another, epochs characterized by different social forms and relations. With these turning points the productive base and the superstructures change. For the purpose of clarifying this concept we have often had resort to the classical texts, both to establish

the various formulas and ideas in their correct context as well as to clarify just what it is that suddenly changes when the revolutionary crisis supervenes.

In the letters we quoted above in which Engels responded to the questions sent to him by young students of Marxism, Engels insists on reciprocal reactions between base and superstructure: the political state of a particular class is a perfect example of a superstructure but it in turn acts—by imposing tariffs, collecting taxes, etc.—on the economic base, as Engels recalls, among other things.

Later, during the time of Lenin, it was urgently necessary to clarify the process of the class revolution. The state, political power, is the superstructure that is most completely shattered in a way that we could call instantaneous, in order to give way to another analogous but opposed structure. The relations that govern the productive economy, however, are not changed so rapidly, even if their conflict with the highly developed productive forces was the primary motor force for the revolution. This is why wage labor, commerce, etc., did not disappear overnight. With respect to the other aspects of the superstructure, those that are most enduring and would survive the original economic base itself (that is, capitalism), are the traditional ideologies that had been disseminated, even among the victorious revolutionary working class, over the duration of the long preceding period of serfdom. Thus, for example, the legal superstructure, in its written and practically implemented form, would be rapidly changed—while the other superstructure of religious beliefs would disappear very slowly.

We have on many occasions referred to Marx's lapidary Preface to his*Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* of 1859. It would not be a bad idea to pause and consider this text before continuing with our examination of the question of language.
The productive material forces of society: they are, in particular phases of development, the labor power of human bodies, the tools and instruments that are used in its application, the fertility of the cultivated soil, the machines that add mechanical and physical energy to human labor power; all the methods applied to the land and to the materials of those manual and mechanical forces, procedures that a particular society understands and possesses.

Relations of production relative to a particular type of society are the "definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production." Relations of production include the freedom or the prohibition of occupying land to cultivate it, of using tools, machines, manufactured products, of having the products of labor to consume them, move them from place to place and to assign them to others. This in general. The particular relations of production are slavery, serfdom, wage labor, commerce, landed property, industrial enterprise. The relations of production, with an expression that reflects not the economic but the juridical aspect, can also be called property relations or also in other texts, forms of property; over the land, over the slave, over the product of the labor of the serf, over the commodities, over the workshops and machines, etc. This whole set of relations constitutes the base or economic structure of society.

The essential dynamic concept is the determinant clash between the forces of production, in their degree of evolution and development, and the relations of production or of property, the social relations (all equivalent formulas).

The superstructure, that is, what is derived from, what is superimposed on the base economic structure, for Marx is basically the juridical and political framework of any particular society: constitutions, laws, courts, military forces, the central government power. This superstructure nonetheless has a material and concrete aspect. But Marx makes the distinction between the reality in the transformation of the relations

of production and in the relations of property and law, that is of power, and this transformation such as it is displayed in the “consciousness” of the time and in that of the victorious class. This is (to this very day) a derivation of a derivation; a superstructure of the superstructure, and forms the mutable terrain of common sense, of ideology, of philosophy, and, in a certain way (insofar as it is not transformed into a practical norm), of religion.

Modes of production (it is preferable not to apply to this concept the term, “forms”, which is used for the more restricted concept, forms of property)—*Produktionsweisen*—are “epochs marking progress in the economic development of society” that Marx summarizes broadly as of the Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois types.
We must illustrate this with an example: the bourgeois revolution in France. Productive forces: agriculture and peasant serfs—the artisans and their workshops in the cities—the great manufacturing centers and factories, armories. Relations of production or forms of traditional property: glebe serfdom of the peasants and feudal authority over the land and those who cultivate it—the corporative bonds in the artisanal crafts. Juridical and political superstructure: power of the nobility and the church hierarchy, absolute monarchy. Ideological superstructure: authority of divine right, Catholicism, etc. Mode of production: feudalism.

The revolutionary transformation assumed the following form: immediately as the transfer of the power of the nobles and the church into the hands of the bourgeoisie; the new juridical-political superstructure is elective parliamentary democracy. The relations that have been abolished are: glebe serfdom and the artisanal guilds; the new relations that appear are: industrial wage labor (with the survival of independent artisans and small-scale peasant property), and free domestic trade, even with regard to the sale of land.

The productive force of the most important factories is enormously developed with the absorption of the former peasant serfs and artisans. The force of industrial machinery also develops to the same degree. The ideological superstructure undergoes a process of gradual replacement that begins before the revolution, and which has not concluded yet: fideism and legitimism are being replaced by free thought, enlightened values and rationalism.

The new mode of production which is spreading throughout France and even beyond it, replacing feudalism, is capitalism: in it, political power is not of the “people”, as it appears in the “consciousness” that this “period of transformation” has with regard to itself, but of the class of the industrial capitalists and of the bourgeois landowners.

In order to distinguish the two “strata” of the superstructure one may adopt the terms of the superstructure of force (positive law, state) and the superstructure of consciousness (ideology, philosophy, religion, etc.).

Marx says that material force, or violence, is itself an economic agent. Engels, in the passages quoted above, and in his book on Feuerbach, says the same thing when he states that the state (which is force) acts on the economy and influences the economic base.

The state of a new class is therefore a powerful resource for the transformation of productive relations. After 1789 feudal relations in France were dismantled due to the advanced development of the modern productive forces that had been emerging for some time. Even the restoration of 1815, although it did once again hand over power to the landowning aristocracy by reestablishing the legitimist monarchy, was unable to overthrow the relations of production, the forms of property, and neither stifled manufacturing industry nor did it restore the great estates of the nobles. The change in power and the transformation of the forms of production can proceed historically and for limited periods of time in opposite directions.

The burning issue in Russia, in October 1917? Political power, the superstructure of force that in February had passed from the feudal elements to the bourgeoisie, passed into the hands of the workers of the cities, supported in their struggle by the poor peasants. The juridical state superstructure acquired proletarian forms (dictatorship and dissolution of the democratic assembly). The ideological superstructures obtained a powerful impulse among broad layers of the population in favor of the ideological superstructure of the proletariat, despite the desperate resistance of the old ideological superstructures and that of the bourgeois or semi-bourgeois. The productive forces with an anti-feudal nature could proceed unopposed in liberated industry and agriculture. Could one say that the relations of production, in the years immediately following October, were transformed into socialist relations of production? Of course not, and such a transformation would in any case take more than a few months. Were they simply transformed into capitalist relations of production? It is not correct to say that all of them were transformed totally into capitalist relations of production because pre-capitalist forms survived for a long time, as everyone knows. But it would also be inadequate to say that they were moving in the direction of being transformed exclusively into capitalist relations.

Even disregarding the first measures of communism and anti-market policies implemented during the civil war (housing, bread, transport), and in view of the fact that power is an economic agent of the highest order, the transformation of the relations of production under a democratic bourgeois state is one thing and the same process under the proletarian political dictatorship is another.

The mode of production is defined by the totality of relations of production and political and juridical forms. If the entire Russian cycle up until today has led to the full-fledged capitalist mode of production and that today in Russia socialist relations of production do not exist, this is related to the fact that after 1917, after October, the proletarian revolution in the West did not take place, the importance of which did not just lie in its capacity to bolster the soviet political power so that the Russian proletariat would not lose it, which is what happened later, but above all to supply to the Russian economy productive forces that were available in excess in the West, and in this manner assure the transition to socialism of the Russian relations of production.

The relations of production are not immediately transformed at the moment of the political revolution.

Once it was established that the further development of the productive forces in Russia was the other condition, just as important as the consolidation of political power (Lenin), a formulation of the following kind is incorrect: the only historical task of Bolshevik power after October was to pursue the transition from feudal to bourgeois social relations. Until the end of the revolutionary wave that followed the first world war, which lasted until about 1923, the task of the power that had arisen in October consisted in working for the transformation of the feudal social modes and relations into proletarian ones. This work was carried out by the only means possible at the time and therefore it followed the royal road: only later was it possible to formulate the claim that we are confronted by a state that is not socialist, nor does it demonstrate a tendency in that direction. The relations of production after October are actually part capitalist and part pre-capitalist and to a quantitatively minimal extent are post-capitalist; the historical form or, more precisely, the historical mode of production, cannot be defined as capitalist, but as potentially proletarian and socialist. This is what matters!

In this way one escapes from the impasse of the formula: bourgeois economic base, proletarian and socialist superstructures. And this is accomplished precisely by not denying the second term, which prevailed for at least six years after the conquest of the dictatorship.

11

The Stalinist theory that language is not a superstructure with respect to the economic base constitutes a false way of posing the problem that we need to solve, since the result that Stalin seeks to obtain lies elsewhere: at every step of the transition from one historical mode of production to the next we always find a change, both in the superstructure as well as the base or economic structure, a change in the power of the classes and of the position of the classes in society. But the national language does not follow the avatars of either the base or the superstructures since it does not belong to a class but to all the people in a particular country. Therefore, in order to save language and linguistics from the effects of the social revolution, we have to lead them (gradually, together with the national culture and the cult of the fatherland) along the banks of the turbulent river of history, outside of the terrain of the productive base as well as that of its political and ideological derivations.

According to Stalin (*Marxism and Problems of Linguistics*), over the last few years in Russia, "the old, capitalist base has been eliminated in Russia and a new, socialist base has been built. Correspondingly, the superstructure on the capitalist base has been eliminated and a new superstructure created corresponding to the socialist base…. But in spite of this the Russian language has remained basically what it was before the October Revolution".

The merit of these gentlemen (it is all the same whether this was written by Stalin, or whether it was written by Secretary X or by Department Y) is the fact that they have demonstrated a profound understanding of the art of simple, clear presentation, accessible to all, as has so often been said for the last hundred years in bourgeois cultural propaganda, and above all presented in a brazenly concrete manner. But this presentation that seems so direct and accessible is nothing but a con job, it is a complete relapse into the most vapid sort of bourgeois thinking.

The entire process is supposed to have taken place "correspondingly". How simple! Not only must we respond by pointing out that this process has not taken place, but also that even if it did, it would not have happened like that. In this formula that might have been drafted by a municipal clerk there is not a trace of dialectical materialism. The base influences the structure and has an active character? And in what sense does the derivative superstructure react in turn so that it is not totally malleable and passive? And with what cycles and in what order and at what historical velocity does the transformation and the process of substitution take place? Bah, these are Byzantine discourses! Enough of this moving the lever to the right and then to the left: Elimination! Creation! By God, out with the creator, out with the eliminator! This kind of materialism does not function without a demiurge, everything is converted into something that is conscious and voluntary, and there is no longer anything that is necessary and determined.

In any case, this argument can be shifted onto real ground: the economic base and the superstructure, by way of complex vicissitudes, had passed from being feudal under the Czar to being fully capitalist at the time of Stalin's death. Since the Russian language is basically the same, the language is not a part of the superstructure nor does it form part of the base.

It would appear that this entire polemic is directed against a school of linguistics that suddenly fell under suspicion, and that the leading figure of this school is the Soviet university professor, N. Y. Marr, with whose works we are not acquainted. Marr had said that language forms part of the superstructure. Listening to his accuser, we think that Marr is a good Marxist. His accuser says of him: "At one time, N. Y. Marr, seeing that his formula—'language is a superstructure on the base'—encountered objections, decided to 'reshape' it and announced that 'language is an instrument of production.' Was N. Y. Marr right

in including language in the category of instruments of production? No, he certainly was not." (Stalin, *op. cit*.).
And why was he mistaken? According to Stalin there is a certain analogy between language and the instruments of production, because the latter can also have a certain indifference with respect to classes. What Stalin means is that, for example, both the plow and the hoe can be used in the feudal, the bourgeois, and the socialist society. The difference, however, for which Marr was condemned (and Marx and Engels: labor, the production of tools in combination with language) is this: the instruments of production produce material goods, but language does not!

But the instruments of production do not produce material goods, either! The goods are produced by the man who uses the instruments of production! These instruments are employed by men in production. When a child first grabs the hoe by the blade, the father shouts at him: hold it by the handle. This cry, which is later transformed into a regular form of "instruction", is, like the hoe, employed in production.

Stalin's dull-witted conclusion reveals that the error is his: if language, as Stalin claims, were to produce material goods, then charlatans would be the richest people on earth! Yet is this not precisely the case? The worker works with his arms, the engineer with language: who earns more? It seems to us that we once recounted the story of that provincial landowner who, sitting in the shade and smoking his pipe, was constantly shouting, 'swing that pick!' to the day-laborer he had hired, who was sweating and silently working. The landowner knew that even a brief let-up in the pace of the work would reduce his profits.

Dialectically, it seems to us that Marr had not mended his ways despite the spotlight that was directed on him: dialectically, because we are not familiar with him or his books. We have also said, for example, that poetry, from its very beginnings as a choral song for the transmission of memories, with a magical-mystical-technological character, the first means of transmitting the social patrimony, has the character of a means of production. That is why we included poetry among the superstructures of a particular epoch. The same is true of language. Language in general, and its organization into verses, are instruments of production. But a particular poem, a particular school of poetry, relative to a country or a century, because they are differentiated from the preceding and following poems and schools, form part of the ideological and artistic superstructure of a particular economic form, of a particular mode of production. Engels: the upper stage of barbarism "Begins with the smelting of iron ore, and passes into civilization with the invention of alphabetic writing and its use for literary records.… We find the upper stage of barbarism at its highest in the Homeric poems, particularly in the *Iliad*." Using this model we can also seek out other works and show that *The Divine Comedy* was the swan song of feudalism and that the tragedies of Shakespeare were the prologues to capitalism.
For the last Pontifex Maximus of Marxism the distinctive means of production of an epoch is forged iron but not alphabetic writing, because the latter does not produce material goods! But the human use of alphabetic writing was indispensable, among other things, for the capability to produce the specialty steels of modern metallurgy.

The same thing is true of language. It is a means of production in every epoch, but individual expression by means of language is part of the superstructure, as was the case with Dante Alighieri who did not write his poem in the Latin of the classics or the Church, but in the vulgar Italian, or as was the case of the language reform that marked the definitive abandonment of the old Saxon tongue and its replacement by modern literary German.

The same goes for the plow and the hoe. While it is true that any particular instrument of production can be found that spans two great social epochs separated by a class revolution, it is also true that the entire

set of tools of any particular society “defines” it and “compels” it—due to the open conflict between the relations of production—to assume the new, rival form. In barbarism we find the potter’s wheel and in capitalism the modern turntable with a reliable precision motor. And now and then a tool disappears in order to be converted, as in the classic case of the spinning wheel mentioned by Engels, into a museum piece.

Likewise with the plow and the hoe. The society of industrial capitalism cannot eliminate the small-scale, inefficient farming that requires the backbone of pithecanthropus, that was once so proudly erect, to be twisted and bent. But a communist organization with a complete industrial base will undoubtedly only engage in mechanized farming. And in this manner the language of the capitalists will be destroyed, and one will no longer hear those common formulas employed by the Stalinists who try to make us believe that they are marching forward together with that all-too-contradictory hodgepodge: morality, liberty, justice, popular rights, progressive, democratic, constitutional, constructive, productive, humanitarian, etc., which precisely comprise the apparatus thanks to which the most wealth ends up in the pockets of the loudmouths: a function that is identical with that of certain other, material, tools: the foreman’s whistle, the policeman’s handcuffs.

The Idealist Theory of National Language
12
To deny that human language in general has an origin and a function as a productive instrument, and that the superstructures of class societies include (even among those that are not immediately but gradually replaced) the local and contingent spoken and written language, is equivalent to a complete regression to idealist doctrines, and amounts to politically embracing the bourgeois postulate of the transition to a common language on the part of the literate people of diverse dialects and the erudite persons of an entire politically united country, a real linguistic revolution that heralded the advent of the capitalist epoch.

Since, according to the text that we are examining, language is not a superstructure of the economic base, nor is it a productive instrument, we have to ask: exactly how is it defined?

Let’s see: “Language is a medium, an instrument with the help of which people communicate with one another, exchange thoughts and understand each other. Being directly connected with thinking, language registers and fixes in words, and in words combined into sentences, the results of the process of thinking and achievements of man's cognitive activity, and thus makes possible the exchange of thoughts in human society” (Stalin, *op. cit.*). This is therefore supposed to be the Marxist solution of the problem. We do not see how any orthodox traditional ideologist could object to this definition. It is clear that according to this definition humanity prospers by means of a labor of research elaborated in thought and formulated in ideas, passing from this individual phase to a collective one involving its application by way of the use of language, which allows the discoverer to pass on the results of his discovery to other men. And so the materialist development with which we are concerned here (in conformance with the usual quotations from our basic texts) is completely discarded: from action to the word, from the word to the idea, this being understood not as a process that is carried out by an individual, but by society; or more correctly: from social labor to language, from language to science, to collective thought. The function of thought in the individual is derivative and passive. Stalin’s definition is thus pure idealism. The presumed exchange of thoughts is the projection of bourgeois commodity exchange into the realm of fantasy.
It is very strange that the accusation of idealism falls upon the disgraced Marr, who, by upholding the thesis of changes in language, apparently reached the point where he could predict a decline in the function of language, which would then give way to other forms. Marr is accused of having thus hypothesized that thought could be transmitted without language, and therefore of having become mired

in the swamp of idealism. But in this swamp those who presume they are floating high above Marr are the most pitiful. Marr's thesis is depicted as in contradiction with this passage from Karl Marx: Language is "the immediate reality of thought…. Ideas do not exist divorced from language."

But is it not the case that this clear statement of the materialist thesis is totally denied by Stalin's definition mentioned above, according to which language is reduced to a means for the exchange of thoughts and ideas?

We shall reconstruct Marr's bold theory in our own way (we may do so thanks to the possession of a theory of the party that transcends generations and borders). Language is—and this is where Stalin stops—an instrument by means of which men communicate with each other. Does communication among men have nothing to do with production? This is what bourgeois economic theory maintains, according to which it appears that each person produces for himself and that he only encounters the other persons by way of the market, to see if he can cheat them. The correct Marxist expression would not be "language is a medium, an instrument with the help of which people communicate with one another, exchange thoughts and understand each other", but "language is a medium, an instrument with the help of which people communicate with one another and help each other produce". We therefore recognize that it is correct to consider language as a means of production. And as for that metaphysical "exchange thoughts and understand each other", six hundred thousand years have passed and it would appear we have all gone to the same school and we still do not understand it!

Language is thus a technological means of communication. It is the first such means. But is it the only one? Certainly not. Over the course of social evolution an increasingly more diverse series of such means has appeared, and Marr's speculation that other means might someday largely replace the spoken language is not so far-fetched. Marr is by no means saying that thought as an immaterial expression on the part of an individual subject will be transmitted to the other subjects without taking the natural form of language. Marr is evidently suggesting, with the formula that has been translated as a "process of thinking", that it will develop in forms that will be beyond language, not with reference to the metaphysical individual invention, but to the legacy of technological knowledge typical of a highly developed society. There is nothing eschatological or magical about this.

Let's take a look at a very simple example. The helmsman on a galley issued his orders "out loud". Just like the pilot of the sailing vessel and the skippers on the first steamships. "Full Steam Ahead … Full power … Back to half power …" The ships became much bigger and the captain shouted as loud as he could to issue orders to the boiler room, but this soon proved to be unsatisfactory, and after a period when voicepipes (a truly primitive invention) were used, a mechanical telephone with a crank was introduced, and later an electrical telephone, which connected the signaling quarters with the engineer. Finally, the instrument panel of a great airliner is full of displays and readouts that transmit all kinds of information from all parts of the plane. The spoken word is indeed being replaced, but by means that are just as material as it is, although obviously not as natural, just as modern tools are less natural than a cut-off piece of a branch used as a club.

We need not enumerate all the stages in this very long series. The spoken word, the written word, the press, the infinity of algorithms, of symbolic mathematics, which have now become international; which is what happens in all the fields of technology and general services which are regulated by conventions of open access for the transmission of precise information concerning meteorology, electronics, astronomy, etc. All electronic applications, radar and other such technologies, all types of signal receivers, are so many more new means of connection among men, which have been rendered necessary due to the

complex systems of life and production, and which already in a hundred different ways bypass the word, grammar and syntax, whose immanence and eternity is defended by Stalin, who subjected Marr to such a formidable onslaught.

Is it possible that the capitalist system will cease to consider that the mode of conjugating the verb “to have”, or the verb “to value”, or of declining the possessive adjective and declaring that the personal pronoun must be the basis of any utterance, is eternal? Someday the use of the words “Your Honor” and “Your Lordship”, just like the old “Thou”, will make people laugh, just like the humble servant and the good business deals made by the travelling salesmen.

References and Distortions

13

In all Marxist analyses the thesis that the demand for a national language is a historical characteristic of all the anti-feudal revolutions is of fundamental importance, since this national language was necessary to unite and establish communication between all the compartments of the emerging national market, in order to facilitate the transfer from one part of the national territory to another of the proletarians that had been liberated from glebe serfdom, and in order to fight against the influence of traditional religious, scholastic, and cultural forms that relied in part on the use of Latin as a common language of the learned, and in part on the diversity of local dialects.

To justify his novel theory of extra-classist language—a theory that is truly novel in the Marxist sense—Stalin strives to overcome the contradiction, evidently invoked from various angles, with texts from Lafargue, Marx, Engels, and even … Stalin. The good example offered by Lafargue is dismissed in summary fashion. In an article entitled, “The French Language Before and After the Revolution”, Lafargue discussed an unforeseen linguistic revolution that took place in France between 1789 and 1794. That is too short a period of time, Stalin says, and if a very small number of words disappeared from the language, they were replaced by new ones. But the words that disappeared were precisely those words that were most closely related to the relations of social life. Some were proscribed by laws passed by the Convention. There is a well-known counterrevolutionary anecdote: “What is your name, citizen?” “Marquise de Saint Roiné.” “*Il n’ya plus de marquis!*” (There are no more Marquis!) “De Saint Roiné!” “*Il n’y a plus de ‘de’!*” (There are no more noble prefixes for names!) “Saint Roiné!” “*Il n’y a plus de Saints!*” “Roiné!” “*Il n’y a plus de rois!*” (There are no more kings [*rois*]!) “*Je suis né!*” (I was born!) shouted the unfortunate. Stalin was right: the verb form “*né*” has not changed.

In a text entitled “Saint Max”, which we confess we have not read, Karl Marx said that the bourgeoisie have their own language, which “itself is a product of the bourgeoisie” and that this language is permeated with the style of commercialism and of buying and selling. In fact, the merchants of Amberes, during the depths of the Middle Ages, were able to understand the merchants of Florence, and this is one of the “glories” of the Italian language, the mother language of capital. Just as in music you see the words “andante”, “allegro”, “pianissimo”, etc. everywhere, so too in every European marketplace one heard the words “firma”, “sconto”, “tratta”, “riporto” and everywhere the pestilential jargon of commercial correspondence was assimilated, “in response to your request…”. So what answer does Stalin provide for this indisputable quotation? He invites us to read another passage from the same text by Marx: “… in every modern developed language, partly as a result of the historical development of the language from pre-existing material, as in the Romance and Germanic languages, partly owing to the crossing and mixing of nations, as in the English language, and partly as a result of the concentration of the dialects within a single nation brought about by economic and political concentration, the spontaneously evolved speech has been turned into a national language.” So? The linguistic superstructure is still subject to the same process as the state superstructure and the economic base. But just as the concentration of capital,

the unification of national exchange, and political concentration in the capitalist state are not instantly realized in their final form, since they are historical results linked to bourgeois rule and its cycle, the transition from local dialects to a unitary language constitutes a phenomenon that also proceeds in accordance with all these factors. The market, the state and power are national insofar as they are bourgeois. Language becomes national insofar as it is the language of the bourgeoisie. Engels, who is always cited by Stalin, says, in*The Condition of the Working Class in England*: the English "working-class has gradually become a race wholly apart from the English bourgeoisie…. The workers speak other dialects, have other thoughts and ideals, other customs and moral principles, a different religion and other politics than those of the bourgeoisie."
The patch applied here is also threadbare: Engels does not admit, by saying this, that there are class languages, since he is talking about dialects, and dialect is a derivative of the national language. But have we not established that the national language is a synthesis of dialects (or the result of a struggle among dialects) and that this is a class process, linked to the victory of a particular class, the bourgeoisie?

Lenin must therefore be forgiven for having recognized the existence of two cultures in capitalism, one bourgeois and the other proletarian, and that the campaign in favor of a national culture in capitalism is a nationalist campaign. Emasculating Lafargue, that valiant fellow, might be easy, but to then go on and do the same to Marx, Engels and Lenin is a difficult task. The answer to all of this is that language is one thing and culture is another. But which comes first? For the idealist who acknowledges abstract thought, culture is before and above language, but for the materialist, for whom the word comes before the idea, culture can only be formed on the basis of language. The position of Marx and Lenin is therefore as follows: the bourgeoisie will never admit that its culture is a class culture, since it claims that it is the national culture of a particular people, and thus the overvaluation of the national language serves as a major obstacle that stands in the way of the formation of a proletarian and revolutionary class culture, or rather, theory.

The best part is where Stalin, in the manner of Filippo Argenti, engages in self-criticism. At the 16th Congress of the party he said that in the era of world socialism all the national languages would be combined into one. This formula seems to be very radical, and it is not easy to reconcile it with the other one offered some time later concerning the struggle between two languages that ends with the victory of one of them which absorbs the other without the latter leaving a trace. The author then attempts to exculpate himself by saying that his detractors had not understood the fact that it was a matter of two very different historical epochs: the struggle and the merging of languages takes place in the midst of the capitalist epoch, while the formation of the international language will take place in the fully socialist epoch. "To demand that these formulas should not be at variance with each other, that they should not exclude each other, is just as absurd as it would be to demand that the epoch of the domination of capitalism should not be at variance with the epoch of the domination of socialism, that socialism and capitalism should not exclude each other." This jewel leaves us stupefied. Have not all the propaganda efforts on the part of the Stalinists been devoted to maintaining that the rule of socialism in Russia not only does not exclude the existence of capitalism in the West, but in addition that the two forms can peacefully coexist?

Only one legitimate conclusion can be drawn from this whole shameful display. Russian power can coexist with the capitalist nations of the West because it, too, is a national power, with its national language that is fiercely defended in all its integrity, far removed from the future international language, just as its "culture" is far removed from the revolutionary theory of the world proletariat.

The same author, however, is forced at a certain point to recognize that the national formation of languages strictly reflects that of the national states and national markets. “Later, with the appearance of capitalism, the elimination of feudal division and the formation of national markets, nationalities developed into nations, and the languages of nationalities into national languages.” This is well said. But then he stumbles and says that, “History shows that national languages are not class, but common languages, common to all the members of each nation and constituting the single language of that nation” (Stalin, *op. cit.*). History dictated this lesson when it relapsed into capitalism. Just as in Italy, where the nobles, the priests and the educated elites spoke Latin, and the people spoke Tuscan, in England the nobles spoke French and the people spoke English, so too in Russia the revolutionary struggle led to the following result: the aristocrats spoke French, the socialists spoke German and the peasants spoke what we shall not deign to call Russian, but rather a dozen languages and a hundred dialects. Had the movement continued in accordance with Lenin’s revolutionary designs it would soon have had a language of its own: everyone would have spoken a garbled version of “international French”. But Joseph Stalin did not understand any of this French, either: only Georgian and Russian. He was the man of the new situation, a situation in which one language drags ten others along with it and in order to do so employs the weapon of literary tradition; the new situation was that of an authentic ruthless nationalism, which, like all the others, followed the law of concentration with regard to language by declaring it to be an intangible cultural patrimony.
It is unusual—or perhaps not so unusual if this movement does not refuse to exploit the sympathies and the support of the foreign proletariat for Marxist traditions—that the text claims to support that decisive passage from Lenin: “Language is the most important means of human intercourse. Unity of language and its unimpeded development form one of the most important conditions for genuinely free and extensive commercial intercourse appropriate to modern capitalism, for a free and broad grouping of the population in all its separate classes.” It is therefore quite clear that the postulate of national language is not immanent but historical: it is linked—usefully—to the appearance of developed capitalism.

It is clear, however, that everything changes and is turned upside down when capitalism falls, and with it commercial society and the division of society into classes. The national languages will perish along with these social institutions. The revolution that fights against them is alien to and an enemy of the demand for a national language, once capitalism has been defeated.

Personal and Economic Dependence
14
It constitutes a radical departure from historical materialism to limit it to the epochs during which directly commercial relations between possessors of not only products but also of productive instruments, including land, prevailed. For the theory is also applicable to the preceding epochs before the appearance of the distinction between private possessors due to the establishment of the foundations of the first hierarchies in the family and gender relations. This error, that consists in leaving to non-determinist explanations all that relates to generative and family phenomena, is altogether consonant with the restoration of the linguistic element of the class dynamic; it always involves toleration of the fact that decisive sectors of social life should be withdrawn from the domain of the laws of dialectical materialism.

In a text expressly intended to criticize the Marxist interpretation of history, and claiming that the latter is reduced (as unfortunately occurs with some unwary and inexperienced followers of the communist movement) to deducing the developments of the political history from the conflict between classes that participate in different ways in economic wealth and its distribution, it is taken for granted that there was a time when there was already a complete organization of the state type and the social contest was not

between classes of rich patrician landowners, impoverished plebian peasants and artisans, and slaves, because it was based on the authority of the father of the family.

The author of this text (DeVinscher, *Property and Family Power in Ancient Rome*, Brussels, 1952) distinguishes two stages in the history of juridical systems: one, the most recent, responsible for the well-known civil law that the modern bourgeoisie has embraced as its own, providing for the free disposal of any object and "fee simple ownership", whether in real property in land or property in other goods, which we may call the "capitalist" stage, and another, much older stage in which the civil administration and its legal codes were very different, in that they largely prohibited instances of transfer and sale except in cases where they were strictly regulated on the basis of the family order, which was patriarchal. This was supposed to be a "feudal" stage, if we contrast this feudalism and capitalism in the ancient world with respect to the characteristic feature that they contained a social class that was lacking in the Medieval and Modern eras, that of the slaves. The latter were excluded from legal rights because they were considered to be things, rather than persons subject to law: within the circle of free men, the citizens, a constitution based on the family and on personal dependence preceded the later one that was based on the free alienation of goods, in which the seller and the buyer engaged with their mutual consent.
The author attempts to refute the "priority that historical materialism has clearly granted to the notions of patrimonial right in the development of institutions". This would be true if the base to which historical materialism refers were the pure economic phenomenon of property, to patrimony in the modern sense, and if, moreover, this base did not embrace the entire life of the species and group and all the discipline of its relations that had arisen from environmental difficulties, and above all the discipline of generation and family organization.

As everyone knows and as we shall see in Part 2, in the ancient communities or phratries there was neither private property nor institutions of class power. Labor and production had already appeared and this is the material base, which is much more extensive than the one that is narrowly understood as juridical and economic in Marxist terminology: we shall demonstrate that this base is bound up with the "production of the producers", that is, the generation of the members of the tribe that is carried out with strict adherence to absolute racial purity.

In this pure gens there is no other dependence or authority than that exercised by the healthy and vigorous adult member of the tribe over the young members who are trained and prepared for a simple and serene life in society. The first authority arose in connection with the first limitations imposed on sexual promiscuity, and this authority was the matriarchy, in which the mother is the leader of the community: but during this era there was not yet any division of the land or anything else. The basis of such a division was created by the patriarchy, which was at first polygamous and later monogamous: the male leader of the family is a real administrative and military leader who regulates the activity of the children and also of the prisoners and that of the conquered peoples who became slaves. We are on the threshold of the formation of a class state.

Once this point is reached it is possible to understand in broad outlines the old Roman legal status, which lasted a millennium (Justinian definitively erased its last traces), the *mancipium*. People and things were in the power of the *pater familias*: the wife or wives, the children, who are free, the slaves and their offspring, the cattle, the land and all the tools and provisions produced on it. All of these things were at first only alienable by way of a rare and difficult procedure called *emancipatio*, or if acquirable without payment, which form of conveyance was called *mancipatio*. This is the source of the famous distinction between *res mancipii*, inalienable things, and *res nec mancipii*, things that can be sold at will, which form part of the normal *patrimonium*, things that are susceptible to increase or decrease.

Thus, in the second stage, when there was no longer anything that was *res mancipii*, and everything was an article of unrestricted commerce (between parties who are not slaves), economic value came to prevail and it became obvious to everyone that struggles for political power were based on the interests of opposed social classes, according to the distribution of land and wealth; in the first stage, economic value and patrimonial right as a license for free acquisition were replaced by the personal *imperium* of the leader of the family, whose prevailing form of organization recognized the three categories of*mancipium*, *manus* and *patria potestas*, which were the pivots of the society of that epoch.
For the Marxist it is obviously an elementary error to assert that in the first stage of relations economic determinism does not apply. The mistake is based on the tautology that in the commercial order everything proceeds between "equals" and that personal dependence disappears to give way to the exchange between equivalents, in accordance with the famous law of value. But Marxism precisely proves that the unlimited and "Justinianian" commercial exchange of products and instruments led to a new and heavy yoke of personal dependence for the members of the exploited and working classes.

Thus, many people opt to take the easy way out whenever the question arises of a social relation that pertains to the family, since in their view such a relation is supposed be explained not by way of the productive economy but by so-called "emotional" factors, therefore completely falling prey to idealism. The system of relations based on generation and the family also arises in correspondence with the quest for a better way of life for the group in its physical environment and for its necessary productive labor, and this correspondence is found within the laws of materialism just as when it addresses the later stage of the separate exchanges between individual possessors of products.

But there can be no doubt that the Marxism that is unable to see this succumbs to the idealist resurrection, by admitting if even for only one second that in addition to the factors of economic interest that are crystallized in the possession of private patrimony and in the exchange of private goods (including among these exchangeable goods human labor power), there are also other factors that are foreign to the materialist dynamic, such as sex, family affection, love; and above all by falling victim to the insipid banality that these factors at certain moments supersede and radically transform the factor of the economic base by their superior forces.

Instead, it is only on the basis of the cornerstone of the efforts to assure the immediate life of the species, which inseparably combine the production of food and reproduction, subordinating if necessary individual self-preservation to that of the species, that the vast and exhaustive edifice of historical materialism is founded, which embraces all the manifestations of human activity including the latest, most complex and grandiose ones.

We shall conclude this part with Engels (*The Origin of the Family…*) again, in order to show the customary fidelity of our school, and its repugnance towards any kind of novelty. It is always the development of the productive instruments that is found at the basis of the transition from the patriarchal *imperium* to free private property. In the higher stage of barbarism, the social division of labor between artisans and farmers, and the difference between city and country, had already appeared…. War and slavery had already existed for quite some time:
"The distinction of rich and poor appears beside that of freemen and slaves—with the new division of labor, a new cleavage of society into classes. The inequalities of property among the individual heads of families break up the old communal household communities wherever they had still managed to survive, and with them the common cultivation of the soil by and for these communities. The cultivated land is allotted for use to single families, at first temporarily, later permanently. The transition to full private

property is gradually accomplished, parallel with the transition of the pairing marriage into monogamy. The single family is becoming the economic unit of society."

Once again, the dialectic teaches how the individual family, that presumed fundamental social value so highly praised by fideists and enlightened bourgeoisie, which is linked to society based on private property, is also a transitory institution, and denies that it has any basis outside of its material determination—a basis that the fideists and bourgeoisie, on the other hand, assert must be sought in sex or love—and that the individual family will be destroyed after the victory of communism, now that its dynamic has already been studied and condemned by materialist theory.

- 1.A series of articles published first in *Battaglia Comunista* and later in *Il Programma Comunista* during the 1950s and 1960s. "Il Battilocchio nella storia", no. 7, April 3-17, and "Superuomo ammosciati", no. 8, April 17-30, 1953, on the function of the celebrity; "Fantasime carlailiane", no. 9, May 7-21, 1953, on the same question as it is reflected in the field of art. [For an English translation of "Il Battilocchio nella storia", see "The Guignol in History", available online at: http://libcom.org/library/guignol-history-amadeo-bordiga. American Translator's Note.]
- 2.The essay on Stalin and linguistics—which is discussed in part in the article, "Church and Faith, Individual and Reason, Class and Theory",*Battaglia Comunista*, no. 17, 1950—was preceded by the following note: "The digression is not inappropriate in this arrangement of the material utilized in the report, since it involves the analysis of the doctrine expounded by Stalin with regard to linguistics, all of which is based on the distinctions, employed in a hardly consistent manner, between base and superstructure".

Part 2
THE MARXIST INTERPRETATION OF THE POLITICAL STRUGGLE AND OF THE IMPACT OF THE NATIONAL FACTOR IN THE HISTORIC MODES OF PRODUCTION
From Race to Nation
1
The transition from the ethnic group or "people" to the "nation" takes place in relation to the appearance of the political state, with its fundamental characteristics such as the exclusive territory and the organization of an armed force—and therefore after the end of primitive communism and the formation of social classes.

Setting aside all literary movements and all idealist influences, we refer to the category of race as a biological fact, and the category of nation as a geographical fact. However, the nation as a historically defined reality is one thing, and nationality is another, and by nationality we mean a group that derives from two factors, the racial and the political.

Race is a biological fact, since, in order to classify a particular animal according to its race, we do not ask ourselves where it was born, but who were its parents, and if both parents (something that is very rare in today's world) were of the same ethnic type, the individuals in question having been born to such parents would belong to that type, and are classified precisely as a race. Those lovely pigs, which have spread everywhere now, with a reddish color, known as Yorkshires, so named after the county in England where they were originally bred and rigorously selected, which—the Pope is right about this—can only be accomplished with beasts but not with humans, at least when the latter, including both sexes, are not confined as was the case with some types of slaves. The same is true of Breton cows, Danish dogs,

Siamese cats, and so on; the geographic name only expresses a fact related to the location where these varieties were originally bred.

Similar things happen to people, too, and today, in the United States of America (apart from the blacks, since in some states of the union “miscegenation” is still outlawed) one may also behold a Primo Carnera, whose father and mother were Friulians, but who is an American citizen, and many Gennaro Espositos of Neapolitan blood, but extremely proud of having obtained “*a carta e’ citatino*” [citizenship papers—in Neapolitan in the original—Note of the Spanish Translator].
The classification of men as members of a nation is carried out according to a purely geographical, rather than biological or ethnic, criterion, and depends on the place where they were born, generally speaking, except in those rare and complicated cases of people born onboard ships at sea and other similar instances.

But everywhere the difficult conundrum arises of nations that include more nationalities, that is, not just more races—which are gradually becoming biologically indistinguishable as pure types—but more groups that are distinguished by language and also by customs, habits, culture, etc.

If we can still define as a “people” the nomadic horde formed by the merger of tribes of a similar race that traversed whole continents in search of lands to provide for their needs, and often invaded the territories of other peoples who were geographically stable in order to pillage them or to settle in them, obviously, until this last event takes place, we have no right to apply to this horde the term “nation”, which refers to a place of birth, which is unknown and a matter of indifference to those who form part of a human mass that, with its belongings and its wagons that constitute its main form of housing, forgets the topography of its itinerary.

The concept of a fixed abode for a human group implies that of the confines within which it limits its zone of residence and labor, and the mainstream historian often says that it implies protection within these confines against other groups, and therefore the established organization of guards and armies, a hierarchy, a power center. To the contrary, however, the origin of hierarchies, of power, of the state, is traceable to the increasing density of the human population, ultimately leading to territorial disputes, and this trend proceeds in relation to the internal processes of social groups, during the course of their development from the first forms of the clan and the tribe, from the moment when the cultivation of the soil and agricultural production have reached the point of technological development where farming is consistently practiced in seasonal cycles on the same fields.

The Emergence of the State
2
The premise of the origin of the state is the formation of social classes, and the latter is determined in all peoples with the division of the arable land among individuals and families and with the parallel phases of the division of social labor and functions, from which is derived a distinct position of the diverse elements with respect to general productive activity, defining distinct hierarchies with functions such as the primitive artisanate, military action, magic-religion (which is the first form of technical science and of the school), a position that is in turn separated from the immediate life of the gens and the primitive family.

Here we must not attempt to recapitulate the Marxist theory of the state in its entirety, but the latter is of the greatest interest for us with regard to the task of establishing the identity of the structures of the historical collectivities defined as the nation, structures which are much more complex than the banal view according to which each individual, taken in isolation, is united by way of a direct bond with the land

in which he was born, the nation being the totality of personal molecules that are similar to one another—a concept that is not at all scientific and which is identified with the class ideology of the modern ruling bourgeoisie.

The theory of the state that does not define the latter as an organ of the people, of the nation or of society, but as an organ of the class power of a particular class, fundamental in Marx, was integrally restored by Lenin in the face of the systematic theoretical and political deterioration to which it had been subjected by the socialists of the Second International, and Lenin precisely based his restoration on the systematic explanation of the origin of state forms contained in the classic work by Engels on the origin of the family and of property, which has served as our guide to pre-history. During that era the ethnic element entered into play in a still pure and so to speak virgin condition, within the primitive community, in order to work, fraternally and congenially in the ancient and noble—in the concrete sense of the term—tribe and gens, an epoch that is spoken of by the myths of all peoples with their fabulous tales of a golden age of the first men who did not know crime or bloodshed.

From this brilliant work by Engels we shall once again grasp the thread that must lead us to the explanation of national struggles, and to the materialist conclusion that they do not comprise an immanent factor, but a historical product that exhibits certain beginnings and cycles, and which will conclude and disappear in the conditions that are now fully elaborated in the modern world; this view of ours is completely original and can by no means be identified with the refusal to consider, in the framework of our doctrine and especially in our action, which is inseparable from our doctrine (our doctrine, that is, the doctrine that accords with our worldwide and century-old movement, and not with one or many individual subjects), the extremely important process of nationality, and much less with the monumental historical blunder of declaring it to be something that has already been liquidated in its relations with the proletarian class struggle, in the contemporary international political structure.

The process, with respect to ancient Greece, and therefore to the highest historical form of the era of classical Mediterranean antiquity that ended with the fall of the Roman Empire, is synthesized by Engels as follows:

“Thus in the Greek constitution of the heroic age we see the old gentile order as still a living force. But we also see the beginnings of its disintegration: father-right, with transmission of the property to the children, by which accumulation of wealth within the family was favored and the family itself became a power as against the gens [compare this with the other quotation from the text that appears at the end of Part 1]; reaction of the inequality of wealth on the constitution by the formation of the first rudiments of hereditary nobility and monarchy; slavery, at first only of prisoners of war, but already preparing the way for the enslavement of fellow-members of the tribe and even of the gens; the old wars between tribe and tribe already degenerating into systematic pillage by land and sea for the acquisition of cattle, slaves and treasure, and becoming a regular source of wealth; in short, riches praised and respected as the highest good and the old gentile order misused to justify the violent seizure of riches….” [We once again note that this adjective, “gentile”, must be understood to mean “belonging to the gens”, and is not to be confused with the less ancient concept of the aristocracy as a class: in the gens, which did not know classes, everyone is of the same blood and therefore equal; we shall not adopt the term democracy, which is spurious and contingent, nor that of pancracy, because although the first part of the word denotes “all”, the second part denotes “power”, something that was unknown at the time: nor was it a pan-anarchy, because anarchy indicates a struggle by the individual against the state, and therefore between two transitory forms, and it is often the case that the latter form causes the wheel of history to roll forward. In the gens there was a simple communist order, but one that was limited to a racially pure group, an order

that was therefore ethno-communist, while “our” communism, to which our historic program is oriented, is no longer ethnic or national, but is the communism of the species, made possible thanks to the cycles of property, power and the productive and commercial expansion that history has traversed….—Bordiga’s note.]

The passage continues:

“Only one thing was wanting: an institution which not only secured the newly acquired riches of individuals against the communistic traditions of the gentile order, which not only sanctified the private property formerly so little valued, and declared this sanctification to be the highest purpose of all human society; but an institution which set the seal of general social recognition on each new method of acquiring property and thus amassing wealth at continually increasing speed; an institution which perpetuated, not only this growing cleavage of society into classes, but also the right of the possessing class to exploit the non-possessing, and the rule of the former over the latter.

“And this institution came. The state was invented.”

And it was also Engels who defined the territorial criterion:

“In contrast to the old gentile organization, the state is distinguished firstly by the grouping of its members on a territorial basis. The old gentile bodies, formed and held together by ties of blood, had, as we have seen, become inadequate largely because they presupposed that the gentile members were bound to one particular locality, whereas this had long ago ceased to be the case. The territory was still there, but the people had become mobile. The territorial division was therefore taken as the starting point and the system introduced by which citizens exercised their public rights and duties where they took up residence, without regard to gens or tribe.”

States without Nationality

3

In the ancient Asiatic-Oriental empires that had been politically consolidated prior to the Hellenistic empires, we observe complete forms of state power in relation to the concentration of enormous wealth in land and goods in the hands of nobles, satraps and sometimes theocrats, and the subjection of enormous masses of prisoners, slaves, serfs and pariahs of the land, but one cannot yet speak of a national form even though the characteristics of the state form are present: political territory and armed forces.

The obvious objection that may be made with reference to the Jewish People allows us an opportunity to contribute a useful clarification of the last passage from Engels quoted above.

It might seem that confusion could arise between the territory that in a less distant epoch defines the fully developed state form, and the bond of the members of the gens to a particular territory, a bond that was later broken even though the inviolable bond of blood itself survived.

A territory belonged to the gens, but not in the modern political sense, nor in a strictly productive economic sense, either. Engels meant to say that the gens is distinguished from the other gentes, besides by its name, by its territory of origin, not by the different successive territories of residence and common labor. The bond of the Iroquois Indian with his land of origin has been broken for centuries, not only from the moment when white civilization rounded up the few survivors in stupid reservations, but from the time when the various lineages had engaged in terrible warfare with one another, destroying

each other but being very careful not to mix, even at the cost of traveling thousands of kilometers through immense forests (many of which were later reduced to deserts by capitalist technology, bourgeois philanthropy having used them to test atomic weapons).

The Jewish people were the first to possess a written history, but by the time it was written it was a history of class division, featuring landowners and dispossessed persons, rich people and servants, clearly having surpassed the stage of primitive communism, whose only memory is Eden, because already in the second generation we have Cain, the founder and inventor of class struggle. The Hebrews then had an organized state, very carefully organized, with precise hierarchies and strict constitutions. This people did not, however, become a nation, any more than their barbarian enemies the Assyrians, the Medes or the Egyptians did. And this in spite of the enormous difference between the racial purity of the Hebrews and the indifference of the satraps and Pharaohs with respect to the swarms of servants, slaves and sometimes functionaries and military commanders of other ethnic origins or colors who surrounded their thrones, and their harems of white, black and yellow women, all the fruit of military raids or the subjugation of free primitive tribes or of other states that previously existed in the heart of Asia or Africa.

The Hebrews, divided into twelve tribes, were not assimilated by other peoples, not even after they were defeated in war. The tribes and gentile organizations, now traditionally transformed into monogamous patriarchal families, did not lose the link of pure blood, the name of their countries of origin or their tedious genealogical traditions (note that despite the strict adherence to paternal descent, the Israelites fully tolerated conjugal unions with women of other races), not even after the great deportations, as in the legendary Babylonian and Egyptian captivities. The mythical bond with the promised land is a pre-national form, because even when the ethnic community that has been preserved in such a pure form returns to the country of its origin, to its ethnological cradle, it cannot politically organize in that country with any historical stability and the territory continues to be invaded by armies coming from other distant powers. The wars of the Bible are tribal struggles rather than wars of national liberation or of imperial conquest, and the territory remained the scene of historic clashes between peoples who aspired to hegemony in this strategic area of the ancient and modern world.

Nor were the Greeks of the Trojan War a nation, but rather a federation of small states that were territorially adjacent and contained ethnically diverse communities, in view of the different origins of Ionians and Dorians and the convergence on the Hellenic peninsula of very ancient migrations coming from all points of the compass. Even productive forms, state constitutions, customs, languages, and cultural traditions varied widely among the small allied military monarchies: so, too, in the historic wars against the Persians, Greek unity was only temporary, and subsequently gave way to bloody wars for predominance over the Peloponnese and all of Greece.

The Hellenic Nation and Culture

4

National factors are nonetheless evident in ancient Greece in the social organization of Athens, Sparta and other cities, and even more clearly in the Macedonian state that not only unified as a country but rapidly became the center of one of the first imperial conquests in the ancient world. The literature and the ideology of this first nationalism would not only be translated in the Roman world, but would also supply the script for the national intoxication of the modern bourgeoisie.

The Lacedaemonian state, just like the Athenian state (or the Theban state), was not just a complete state in the political sense with a precisely defined territory and its own juridical institutions, and with a central power from which civil and military hierarchies emanated, but attained the national form insofar as

the social fabric—although preserving the division between rich and poor classes with respect to agricultural and artisanal production and the already highly developed domestic and foreign trade, and assuring the political power of the economically powerful strata—allowed for a legal and administrative framework that applied the same formal norms to all citizens, and among these norms was the equal participation in the votes of the popular deliberative and elective assemblies. This juridical superstructure substantially performed a function that is analogous to that which Marxism denounced in the bourgeois parliamentary democracies, but between these two historical modes of social organization there is a basic difference: today anyone can be a citizen, and it is recognized that the same law is valid for all; among the Greek city-states, the citizenry, which alone comprised the real nation, excluded the class of slaves, who were extremely numerous during certain periods, and were deprived by law of any political and civil rights.

Despite such features, and despite the class conflict between aristocrats and plebeians, between rich patricians and merchants on the one hand and simple workers on the other, who lived on charity, this social form was accompanied by several major advances both with regard to labor and technology and therefore in the applied sciences, and in pure science: in relation to participation in the productive processes on foundations of equality and liberty, despite class exploitation, language occupied a position of the first rank, and literature and art reached very high levels, establishing the national tradition that was utilized for the benefit of the leaders of society and the state to bind all the citizens to the fate of the nation, forcing them to serve in the military, and to make any other sacrifice or contribution in case of danger to the national entity and its essential structures.

Literature, historiography and poetry fully reflect the assertion of these values, making patriotism the main motor force of all social functions, exalting by every means the fraternity of all the citizens of the state, condemning the inevitable and frequent civil wars and intestine struggles, customarily presented as conspiracies against those who hold power, promoted by other groups or persons who wanted it for themselves, but which were actually nothing but the expressions of the conflicts of class interests and the discontent of the popular masses of the citizens who had been nourished on many illusions but were tormented by the low standard of living even during the periods of the greatest splendor of the “polis”.

National solidarity is not, however, a pure illusion and mirage created by the privileged and the powerful, because in a determinate historical phase it is the real effect determined by economic interests and by the requirements of the material forces of production. The transition from primitive, localized farming in Greece—which despite its favorable climate is largely arid and rocky, and which could only feed a small, slightly developed population—to the most intense commercial navigation from one end of the Mediterranean to the other, which brought products from distant countries and disseminated those fabricated by the Greek artisans who practiced an increasingly more varied assortment of crafts that represented an authentic ancient type of industry, and which in particular allowed the inhabitants of the ports to undergo a major transformation in their ways of life, this transition, as we were saying, could not have taken place under a closed and despotic state form, like the great empires of the continent, but only under a democratic and open form, which not only supplied citizens and helots, but skilled craftsmen for building the numerous merchant ships, and the workers of the city, the armories and the administrative labor oversight bodies, which were necessary—although on a much-reduced scale compared to now—for this first form of capitalism that achieved such unforgettable splendor.

Whenever new forms of labor appear and become established—forms of labor which are, as always, subjected to exploitation, but which are no longer bound by localized immobility and the fossilization of age-old technologies of labor—they cause, during their ascendant phase, in the superstructure, a vast

development of science, art and architecture, reflecting new ideological horizons opened up to societies that had previously been bound to closed and traditional doctrines. During the waning of feudalism the phenomenon of the Renaissance appeared, understood as a European event: many people think that the golden age of the Greek period is culturally unsurpassable, but this is nothing but literature. We may nonetheless point out that the “bridge” of “national humanity” that spans economic inequalities, by excluding the slaves, who were considered as semi-animals and not as human beings, was much more solid than the one that would be introduced in its historical edition fifteen or twenty centuries later, and which claims to have overcome the social abyss that divides the owners of capital from the disinherited proletariat.

Engels reminds us that at the high point of the splendor of Athens, the city contained only ninety thousand free citizens as opposed to three hundred sixty five thousand slaves—who not only worked the land but also supplied the workers for those industries we mentioned above—and fifty thousand “freedmen” (ex-slaves) and foreigners who did not enjoy the rights of citizenship.

It is quite plausible that this social structure provided the way of life of these ninety thousand elect with a qualitatively more advanced degree of “civilization” than the one that is granted to the modern “free” peoples of contemporary capitalism, despite the greater resources of the latter.

This does not, however, constitute a reason to participate in the ecstatic admiration expressed for the Greek preeminence in thought and in art, and not only because these great achievements were constructed on the blood and labor of a group of slaves that numbered more than twenty times the number of free men: the free citizens, before the time of Solon, were so intensively exploited by a landowning plutocracy that the terms of a mortgage could lead to the enslavement of a free citizen who was declared to be an insolvent debtor, so that the free citizenry, because it did not want to sink to the level of the scorned slave (the pride of the free Athenians reached such a degree that rather than become thugs they consented to allow the formation of a state police corps staffed by well-compensated slaves, in which a slave would be authorized to manumit free men), ultimately became an authentic Lumpenproletariat, a stratum of the depths of poverty, whose revolts against the oligarchs dissolved the glorious republic.

Engels made some comments that nicely encapsulate the Marxist position with respect to apologetics for the great historical civilizations. The Iroquois Indians were incapable of developing those forms that had been attained by the original Greek gens, which was totally in conformance with the gens studied in modern America by Morgan (similar forms are described today in the newspapers by explorers of the Andaman Islands in the Indian Ocean, an expedition carried out by Italians under the authority of the new Indian regime, among primitive groups that were until recently isolated from the rest of humanity). The Iroquois lacked a series of material conditions of production relating to geography and climate that were available to the Mediterranean peoples…. Within the restricted circle of their real economy, however, the Iroquois communists “did control their own production”, which they determined and distributed in accordance with human need.

With the impulse that took Greek production towards its glorious differentiation, as represented by the Parthenon, the Venus of Phidias or the paintings of Zeuxis, as well as the Platonic abstractions that modern thought has yet to discard, the products of man that were beginning to be transformed into commodities circulated through monetized markets. Whether he was a free man or a slave according to the canons of the codes of Lycurgus or Solon, man began to be the slave of productive relations and to

be dominated by his own product. The tremendous revolution that will free him from these chains, whose most formidable links were forged during the “golden” ages of history, is still nowhere in sight.

“The Iroquois were still very far from controlling nature, but within the limits imposed on them by natural forces they did control their own production (…) That was the immense advantage of barbarian production, which was lost with the coming of civilization; to reconquer it, but on the basis of the gigantic control of nature now achieved by man (…) will be the task of the next generations.”

Here one beholds the heart of Marxism, and here one sees why the Marxist smiles when he sees some naive individual ecstatically admiring one stage or another of human evolution, attributing the highest honors in every domain to the work of sublime investigators, philosophers, artists and poets, without regard to class and party interests, as contemporary stupidity repeatedly says. We do not want to crown “civilization”, but to knock it off its foundations.

The Roman Nation and Force

5

The factor of nationality reached its highest expression in ancient Rome during the era of the Republic, further developing the model offered by Greece for culture in the positive field of organization and law. On the basis of the Roman nation the empire was erected, which tended to be a single state organized throughout the entire known human world of the time, but was unable to resist the pressure imposed by the rapidly multiplying populations in distant and unknown lands that had themselves entered into the great cycle of productive development, which from the small gens had led the Mediterranean peoples to an immense empire, and which was in turn subject to pressure from the urgent material requirement of the vital spread of the species.

The national process in Italy was unlike the one that took place in Greece insofar as in Italy there were no little cities that were capitals of little states, with their own customs and a high degree of productive development that was largely shared equally by all of them, that were fighting for hegemony over the peninsula. In Italy, after the disappearance of the preceding civilizations which, although they had achieved advanced types of production and had indisputably developed certain state powers, cannot however be considered to be nations in the proper sense of the word, Rome became the exclusive center of a state organization with certain well defined juridical, political and military forms that rapidly absorbed the other communities and incorporated an ever-expanding territory, rapidly extending beyond the borders of Latium and reaching the Mediterranean and the Po. While the important productive forces of a zone of that enormous size were coordinated with those of Roman society, the social and state organization of Rome and its administrative and judicial systems were applied everywhere and in an increasingly uniform manner.

Although not as rapidly as in Greece, the agricultural productive base was integrated, with a complex division of labor, with artisanal production, commerce, maritime trade and manufacture: very soon, however, the military conquest of lands beyond the Ionian and Adriatic Seas made it possible for the cultural and technical organization that were features of Greek life and that of other peoples to be rapidly absorbed.

The social system was substantially the same, with the contribution of slave labor always playing a leading role. But the spread of mercantilism, more slow but more profound, caused the scale of differences to be more marked even within the society of free men: at the base of the social organization and of the laws themselves was the census that classified the Roman citizens according to their wealth.

The Roman citizen was obliged to perform military service, while weapons were absolutely forbidden to the slave and the freedman, right up to the last years of the empire. The legionary army is the real national army that Greece never possessed; Alexander the Great did not have such an army, either, despite his impetuous advance to India, where death finally halted the youthful commander, but this was actually the outermost limits allowed by the overwhelming superiority of the western state form with respect to the ones that existed among the various principalities of Asia. This so often assayed worldwide organization rapidly collapsed by being divided into smaller states, not because there was not another Alexander, but because state centralism was still in its infancy.

The Roman organization, besides being a state organization, was also a national one, both due to the direct participation of the citizenry in war and to the establishment in every occupied zone of a stable network of roads and fortifications, as well as the agricultural colonization that took place at the same time, with the granting of land to soldiers, and the immediate establishment of the Roman productive, economic and legal forms. Roman expansion was not just a raid aimed at seizing the putative treasures supposedly possessed by legendary peoples, but the systematic dissemination of a particular mode of production that was constantly spreading, crushing all armed resistance, but accepting the productive collaboration of the subject peoples.

It is no easy matter, however, to establish Rome's national boundaries, which varied with the passage of time, much less to attribute to it an ethnographic profile, since everyone knows that from the racial point of view prehistoric Italy, just like historic Italy, was never unified, nor could it ever have materially had any unity since it has been a crossroads from the north and the south, the east and the west, for a long succession of human groups since time immemorial. Even if we were to admit that the primitive Latins (after they abandoned Troy) constituted a single race, by the time they came to Latium their neighbors the Volscians, Samnites, Sabines, not to speak of the mysterious Etruscans, the Ligurians, etc., had been differentiated as separate peoples for a very long time.

The *civis romanus* with its laws and its proverbial national pride rapidly spread from the *Urbe* throughout all of Latium, organizing the Italic peoples by municipalities, to which, under the centralist state form, no autonomy could be conceded, preferring instead, a few centuries later, to call every free man who lived in them a Roman citizen, with all the inherent rights and duties.
The national reality is here brought to its most potent expression in the ancient world, accompanied by the greatest historical stability known up to the present time. Very far removed, therefore, from the ethnic community of blood, the members of this great community, the free citizens, divided into social classes extending from the great patrician latifundist with villas in every corner of the empire to the poor peasant and proletarian of the *Urbe* who survived hard times thanks to the distribution of grain by the state, were able to coexist due to a general economic system of production and exchange of goods and products, governed by the same inflexible legal code that the armed force of the state caused to be respected without exceptions throughout its immense territory.
The history of social struggles and civil wars within the *Urbe* is classic, but the disorders did not reduce the solidarity and the homogeneity of the magnificent edifice constructed for the purpose of administering all the productive resources of the most distant countries, filling these countries with enduring public works devoted to productive functions of every type: roads, aqueducts, baths, markets, forums, theaters, etc.

The Decline of Nationality

The decline and fall of the Roman Empire closed the period of ancient history when nationality and organization into national states were decisive factors in the development of the evolution of the productive forces.

National solidarity, which did not prevent periods of violent class struggles between free men of different social and economic status, had a clear economic base until, due to the masses of slaves, the development of the system of production that was common to the citizens of the nation provided a constant supply of new resources that raised the general standards of living, such as the replacement of simple pastoral lifestyles with fixed agriculture, the application of irrigated horticulture to large-scale systems, and the replacement of primitive semi-nomadic lifestyles by the division of the land and its subjection to buying and selling just like slaves and cattle. The agrarian and subsequently urban economy of the Romans originally emerged from the primitive collective economy of the local gentile institutions, which was replaced because it could not feed a population that was rapidly expanding, largely as a result, among other factors, of the good climate. Engels provides a brief but comprehensive explanation of these origins, showing that the laws of the ancient Romans were derived from their primitive gentile constitutions, and refuting the old theories Mommsen and other historians (see the final chapter of the preceding section where he refutes a recent author who denied that historical materialism is applicable to that period).

If the system of Roman law governing the sale of land and commerce in movable goods represented the “necessary” superstructure of a new productive economy with a greater output than primitive tribal communism, and if this fact explains its appearance, the economic facts that will explain the political and historical events of its decline are different. Because of the increase in wealth obtained by trading over an immense expanse and by exploiting slave labor, an extremely deep class divide emerged on the “national front”, which had previously been so solidly united. The small farmers who had fought for the fatherland and assiduously colonized conquered lands were expropriated and dispossessed in ever increasing numbers, and the slaves who formed part of the wealth of the landowners (at a higher level than the flocks and herds) replaced them on their fertile fields, plunging them into ruin. The coexistence of free men and slaves was viable with a low-to-medium density of population, assuring the slaves of their material life and reproduction, and assuring the free men of the wide range of satisfactions offered by such flourishing eras; due to the reduction in the amount of colonizable land beyond the borders of Italy, however, and as a result of the new emigrant and demographically expanding peoples in motion on the other side of the borders, and with an increasing number of people who aspired to own their own parcel of land, an unavoidable crisis ensued in conjunction with a regression in the methods of cultivation. The latter degenerated to the point where neither animals nor slaves could be kept alive, and as disorganization spread it was the owners themselves who freed their slaves, who then went on to swell the masses of poor free men who were without work or land.

This magnificent construction relaxed its bonds between regions and could no longer intervene in local crises of subsistence. While shortages were exacerbated by the demographic factor, human groups were reduced to impoverished local economic circuits, narrow circuits that were no longer those of the ancient gentile constitutions, and whose situation could not be modified due to the profound changes that had taken place and the new relations between productive instruments, products and needs…. The nation that had become an empire had to be divided into tiny units, which no longer had the powerful connective fabric of the law, of the magistracy, of the armed forces, that emanated from a single center, and lost the common Latin language, the culture, the proud tradition…. The great, “natural”, fundamental national and patriotic reality, which would be linked with the famous “human essence” was, to the great discomfiture of the idealists, preparing to allow itself to undergo a total historical eclipse that would last a thousand years.

“In earlier chapters we were standing at the cradle of ancient Greek and Roman civilization. Now we stand at its grave. Rome had driven the leveling plane of its world rule over all the countries of the Mediterranean basin, and that for centuries. Except when Greek offered resistance, all natural languages had been forced to yield to a debased Latin; there were no more national differences (…) all had become Romans. Roman administration and Roman law had everywhere broken up the old kinship groups, and with them the last vestige of local and national independence (…) The elements of new nations were present everywhere (…) But the strength was not there to fuse these elements into new nations….”

The barbarians were coming, with the freshness of their gentile structure, but they were not yet mature enough to create a state formation by founding real nations. The shadow of the feudal Middle Ages had appeared: and as Engels said, this too was a necessity inherent to the development of the productive forces.

The Social Structures of the German Barbarians
7
The peoples who brought an end to the Roman Empire with their waves of invasions also originally possessed a gentile and matriarchal organization, and a communist system of cultivation of the land. When they first came into contact with Rome, they were between the middle and the higher stage of barbarism, and were beginning to make the transition from a nomadic to a sedentary lifestyle. Their military organization was beginning to give way to the formation of a class of military chiefs who elected the king and who were accumulating vast wealth, seizing the land from the free peasants, who were previously all members of the gens and the tribe, and thus free and of equal status. The state also began to emerge among these peoples, and the foundations were gradually laid that would lead many centuries later to the modern rebirth of the nation.

The information available concerning the German peoples located throughout Europe north of the Danube and east of the Rhine depicted them as having a system of agricultural production governed in common by families, gentes and marks, followed by a type of occupation of the land characterized by its periodic redistribution with the lands that were not totally held in common being set aside as fallow land for later cultivation. During this period, crafts and industry were completely primitive: there was no commerce and no money circulated, except for Roman coins in the border zones of the empire, along with a certain quantity of imported manufactured goods.

All of these peoples were nomadic during the time of Marius, who repelled the hordes of Cimbrians and Teutons from the Italian peninsula, which they were attempting to occupy be crossing the Po; many of them were still nomadic during the time of Caesar, who observed them on the left bank of the Rhine, and they are only described as sedentary in the time of Tacitus, one hundred fifty years later. They had evidently undergone a complicated process related above all to their rapid population growth, but we lack primary historical documentation for this period: at the time of the fall of the Empire there were six million of them, according to Engels, in an area that is now home to about one hundred fifty million people.

The class distinctions between the military chiefs who possessed land and power and the mass of peasant-soldiers (since there were no slaves and therefore the only people who did not bear arms or were exempt from the obligations of warfare were those who worked the land) led to the formation of authentic states, as they occupied a fixed territory and chose a stable king or emperor, even for life but not yet hereditary in the context of a dynasty. Once this point was reached the gentile order had already been overthrown, since the tradition of the popular assembly of the community is completely altered in

favor of the assembly of chiefs or noble electors, which constituted the foundation of an openly class-based power.

This process was undoubtedly accelerated by the conquest of the territories of the declining Roman Empire, in which the invading peoples settled. Rather than its reorganization, their revolutionary task was the destruction of the corrupt Roman Empire; as Engels said, they liberated the subjects of Rome from their parasitic state, whose socio-economic foundations collapsed, and the invaders obtained in exchange at least two-thirds of the imperial territory.

The new organization of agricultural production in these lands, in view of the relatively small numbers of the occupying forces and their tradition of communist labor, left vast tracts unassigned, not only of forests and pastures, but also cultivated lands, and the German forms of law either prevailed over the Roman forms, or the two forms existed side by side. This made possible a fixed territorial administration of these nomadic peoples, and Germanic states arose that for four or five centuries ruled the old Roman provinces and Italy itself. The most important of these states was that of the Franks, which served as a defensive rampart against the occupation of Europe by the Moors, despite yielding some territory to pressure from the Normans, and thus enabled populations to remain in the territories they occupied, forming a complex ethnic mixture of Germans, Romans and, in the kingdom of the Franks, the indigenous Celts. These Germanic states were not nations, however, due to this recent crowding together of heterogeneous ethic types, traditions, languages and institutions: but they were states because they finally had stable borders and a unified military force.

“And, further, however unproductive these four centuries appear [the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th centuries A.D.], one great product they did leave: the modern nationalities, the new forms and structures through which west European humanity was to make coming history [the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries]. The Germans had, in fact, given Europe new life, and therefore the break-up of the states in the Germanic period ended, not in subjugation by the Norsemen and Saracens, but in the further development of the system of benefices and protection into feudalism….”

Before we conclude this part of our text with the description of the features of the medieval constitution, in which the “national” factor is substantially excluded, we want to point out that in the classic Marxist doctrine not only is the organization of the ancient barbarian and nomadic gentile constitutions into states considered to be a historically positive development, which benefited the peoples of the Mediterranean peninsulas for more than one thousand years, but so is the development of the national character of these states, their development in the direction of nationality, that is, towards a community that is circumscribed not just by certain racial characteristics, but also by the language and traditions and customs of all the inhabitants of an extensive and stable geographic territory. While the historical idealist sees in nationality a general fact that is always and everywhere present wherever there is civil life, the Marxists attribute it to particular cycles. We have recounted the history of the first historical cycle, and it was that of the great national democracies “superimposed” on the masses of slaves, but with free men divided into social classes. We shall discuss the second cycle in Part 3, that of the democracies of free men, now without human slaves. In this second historical cycle the reality of the nation accompanies a new class division: that of capitalism. The nation and its material influence are perfected in capitalism and bourgeois democracy, but not before, since the formation of nation states will be indispensable so that the passage to modern capitalism in the various geographic areas may be accomplished.

Feudal Society as Non-national Organization

The economic relations that define the feudal order explain how the feudal type of production led to the origin of a specific corresponding historical form of the political state, but one lacking a national character.

To explain how the encounter between two such heterogeneous types of production—the agrarian community of the barbarian peoples and the regime of private landed property of the Romans—led to the feudal system that is in turn based on agrarian production, and to emphasize the Marxist conclusion that the states of classical antiquity, above all in their best periods, had a national character, which would be lacking in the medieval order, it is necessary to recall the most noteworthy characteristics of their respective relations of property and production.

In the barbarian order, until slavery appeared, the farmer was a free member of the community, but the land was not subdivided in individual parcels nor was any part of it set aside for individual consumption, nor were agricultural products regulated, harvested and consumed in accordance with individual control.

In the classical order of antiquity, the agricultural worker was essentially the slave, and slavery prevailed not just in agriculture but also in the already highly developed and differentiated sector that produced manufactured goods, which is why it is correct to state that the Greco-Roman world had an authentic industrialism and in a certain sense a real capitalism: capital, instead of being constituted by the land and the instruments of production was formed above all by living men, while today, for example, in an enterprise the land, the machines and the draft animals are capital. This ancient capitalism did not have generalized wage labor as a corresponding term, since it was rare for a free man to work for a wage.

Because the slaves, however, who constituted the fundamental labor force of society (perhaps at first they were the common property of all the free men), were goods that could be owned, their distribution was unequal and this resulted in the division of the category of free men into two classes: citizens who owned slaves, and citizens without slaves, without property in men. It seems that even the wise Socrates himself aspired, in his impoverished status as a philosopher, to buy at least one slave boy.

The citizen without slaves was therefore incapable of living on the labor of others, and so he had to work. He did not work like a slave, of course, but like a free man, that is, without taking orders from a master. And for this reason he had to participate in the regime of landed private property. The free worker is a landowning peasant who disposes of his piece of land according to his wishes, obtaining products with the labor of his own two arms. Other free men who were not rich and who did not own slaves engaged in free craft labor or the liberal professions (which were not conceded, at least as an intellectual activity, to slaves).

When this cycle is complete all the arable land is reduced to an allodial good. The allod is private property in the land, with full rights to sell it or to buy other land. This means that the new land that was conquered by Rome was immediately divided among the victorious (Roman) soldiers who became colonists. For allodial rights to be freely exercised, however, it is necessary for circulating money to exist with which various products can be purchased, including the slaves normally associated with the possession of land.

The few goods that were not distributed in the ancient regime by way of parcelized individual ownership and remained in the hands of the state or of local administrative entities comprised, as opposed to allodial goods, the public domain. The fact that the private *allodium* predominated over the public domain required the existence of a circulating medium, and therefore of a general market to which all the free citizens of the entire territory could have access: this condition was completely fulfilled in Greece and Rome. The type of production of classical antiquity therefore presented, for the first time, unlike the

system of production under barbarism with its restricted circles of labor-consumption, a domestic national market (and also the beginnings of an international market). The territorial state is a national state not only when its power reaches the whole territory by way of armed force (as was also true of the Egyptians, Assyrians, and later of the Salian Franks and the Burgundians, etc.), but also when the trade in the products of its labor and of goods extends throughout its entire territory and between the most distant points of that territory. In the juridical superstructure this is expressed by the exercise of the same rights on the part of the citizenry in all parts of the state. Only then is the state a nation. In the framework of historical materialism, a nation is therefore an organized community in a territory in which a unified domestic market has been formed. Corresponding to this historical result is a parallel degree of community of blood, and even more of language (you cannot do business without speaking!), of habits and customs….

The classical economic environment gave birth to the phenomenon of accumulation, as also takes place in modern capitalism: we then find those who have many slaves and those who have none, those who have a lot of land and those who hardly have enough to till with their bare hands. This concentration led to destructive results and transformed slave labor into an economically counterproductive factor as the land was relentlessly being divided into smaller and smaller parcels. In this context and with these relations in mind Pliny wrote that "*latifundia Italiam perdidere*" ["the latifundia are the ruination of Italy"—Note of the Spanish Translator], and in the superstructure of morality the enslavement of man became an infamy…. Contemporary compilers of agrarian laws actually went so far, with regard to aspects of technological and social development, to identify slavery with the odium of capitalist exploitation of agricultural labor. But let us return to our examination of Medieval agricultural labor.

With the collapse of the Roman agrarian economy that had become technologically retrograde and unproductive, the general fabric of commerce by which movable wealth circulated throughout the entire empire also collapsed, and the range of all types of needs of the population that could be satisfied also contracted. The barbarians, however, arrived with a tradition of not being such big consumers, and for them, after the brief hiatus of the dissipation of the loot they obtained in the cities, which went into decline at this time, the real wealth that they had conquered was the land. But they were too late, since the social division of labor was already too highly advanced for all the land seized from the Roman landowners and latifundists to be worked in common, or managed as part of the public domain of the new powers. What emerged was a mixed type of allodial and public domain lands. Part of the land was appropriated for the common use of the communities (civic customs that have survived to this day), and another part was definitively divided in an allodial form, which was completely precarious in the period when new waves of conquerors were constantly arriving, and another part was shared out by way of periodic redistributions (even today this institution of re-allotment of the land has survived in cadastral legislation, in Austria, for example).

The free peasants who took possession of the much desired and fertile Mediterranean lands would rapidly obtain greater yields than the gangs of slaves. And in this context the productive forces of so many previously unused arms and of the rich terrain scorned by the wealthy Romans underwent a powerful resurgence. Because of the collapse of the Roman administrative network with its communications and means of transport, however, trade collapsed as well, regressing into a type of local production characterized by the direct local consumption of the product.

This economy without commerce characterized the Middle Ages, whose states possessed legal systems and territorial armies, but did not have united territorial markets: as a result, they were not nations.

If the members of the old gentile institutions had already lost their social equality during the course of the migrations and conquests, they would soon also lose, together with the semi-common and semi-allodial

control of the occupied lands, their liberty and their autonomy as well. The process entailing the concentration of territorial property into the hands of military chiefs, functionaries, favorites of the king's court, and religious bodies had commenced.

The slaves of antiquity were replaced by a new class of serfs, who did all the manual labor themselves, above all, the robbery and extortion of the free laborers. Farming land that was divided into many parcels presupposed a stable order, which in the Roman state was guaranteed by its judges and its soldiers, but which now was lacking not only because new armed peoples frequently came to the fertile lands, but also because struggles broke out between the lords and chieftains of a single ineffectively centralized power.

The free peasant needed security more than freedom, since security was the basic element of the Roman juridical order, which was now rehabilitated and held up as a model. By surrendering his freedom he found security, or at least a better chance of cultivating the land for himself and not for other predatory elements, who deprived him of his tools and equipment along with his entire harvest.

This form was known as commendation (and not recommendation as some texts call it), which is basically nothing but an agreement between the peasant farmer and the armed and warlike lord. The feudal lord guaranteed stability in the territory where the labor was performed, and the peasant handed over to him part of his crop or else part of his labor time. But the security of not being expelled from the land he farmed was transformed into the obligation not to leave it. He was no longer a slave, who could be sold, but he was not a free peasant, either: he was the serf of the glebe.

The Bases of the Modern Revolution

The defense waged by Engels on behalf of this form as opposed to latifundist slavery is completely Marxist. The new form allows, for example in the France of the semi-savage Celts, an enormous development of productivity and an enormous increase in the stable population, so that the periodic famines (the consequence of the abolition of trade between regions and provinces) and the Crusades (an attempt to reopen the trade routes of antiquity) did not reduce this population two centuries later.

Thus, the revolution that accompanied the fall of the Roman Empire at the hands of the barbarian migrations served the further development of the social productive forces.

The destruction of general commerce and of the markets that once embraced the furthest reaches of nation and empire condemned the newly-fertilized and colonized Europe to a very long period of molecular economic life, its populations dispersed and reduced to tiny islands, a Europe that still was the home of stable peoples who gradually became culturally and technologically more advanced, an advance that corresponded with the organization of the countries that were consistently occupied by humans, although the class that at that time formed the vast majority of the population, the class of the serfs bound to the glebe, was excluded from any social advancement.

As Fourier had so felicitously intuited, however, while the slaves of antiquity had not engaged in any real victorious liberation struggles, for the European peoples the basis of a distant but formidable revolutionary uprising against the ruling classes and institutions of the feudal epoch had been prepared.

While the modern urban proletariat was making its appearance in history, the national demand was the main cause of this immense revolution, and was conducive to the liberation of the modern citizen from the chains of his servitude by situating him at the level of the ancient citizen. If the modern bourgeois

revolution literally uses and abuses the echo of the Greco-Roman glories—"*qui nous délivrera des Grecs et des Romains?*"—it is nevertheless true that it was a revolutionary ferment with a gigantic force. The national revolution and its demand are not ours, nor do they mean the conquest of an irrevocable and eternal benefit for man. But Marxism observes it with interest, and even with admiration and passion, and when it arose in history, in decisive moments and locations, it participated in this struggle on its side.

It is necessary to study the degree of development of the cycles, identifying the crucial places and moments. If one thousand years have transpired between the development of the primitive Mediterranean peoples and those of continental Europe, the termination of the modern national cycle in the West could be said to have been accomplished, but from the revolutionary point of view, the cycle of the peoples of other races remains open and will continue to remain open for a long period, with its own different cycles and continents. And this is above all why it is so important to shed light, in a Marxist and revolutionary sense, upon the role of the national factor.

Part 3

THE MOVEMENT OF THE MODERN PROLETARIAT AND THE STRUGGLES FOR THE CREATION AND SELF-DETERMINATION OF NATIONS

Feudal Obstacles to the Emergence of Modern Nations

1

The organization of feudal society and its state posed an obstacle to the bourgeois drive towards the formation of the modern unitary nation due to its decentralized nature in a horizontal and vertical sense. While each one of the recognized "orders" possessed its own rights and to a certain extent was forbidden to intermarry with other orders and thus constituted quasi-nations, the feudal domains, for their part, because they were characterized by a closed economy with respect to the force of human labor power, caused the groups of serf workers to form small unfree nations.

Picking up where we left off at the end of Part 2 of this study on the history of the classical nation and its fate after the fall of the Roman Empire, the barbarian invasions and the formation of the medieval states, it would not be a bad idea to enumerate those aspects of feudalism that militated against the historical reemergence of the nation. The nation, then, is a geographic circuit within which economic traffic is free, the positive law is common for all, and to a great extent there is an identity of race and language. In the classical sense, the nation excluded the masses of slaves and included within these relations only the free citizens; in the modern, bourgeois sense, the nation includes all those who were born in it.

If, prior to the first great Greco-Roman historic stage, we found states that were not nations, and if we once again find such states after this stage and before the bourgeois stage, we never find a nation without a state. Our entire materialist analysis of the national phenomenon is therefore based at every step on the Marxist theory of the state, and the latter is the difference between the bourgeoisie and us. The formation of nations is a real physical fact like any other, but once the nation is united as a state, it always appears divided into social classes, and the state is not an expression—as the bourgeoisie say—of the whole nation as an aggregate of persons, or even of municipalities or districts, but is the expression and the organ of the interests of the economically ruling class.

At this point we have confirmed the truth of two theses: national unity is a historical necessity and is also the precondition, along with the unitary domestic market, the abolition of the estates, and positive law that is the same for all subjects of the state, for the future advent of communism; and the centralized state not only does not exclude the class struggle but causes the class struggle against it to rise to its highest pitch, just as it accentuates the international nature of this struggle in the arena of the socially developed world.

The economy of feudal society was predominantly agrarian. The members of the aristocratic order divided the possession of all the land not only with regard to its topographic boundaries, but above all to establish their personal domination over groups of the peasant population. Due to their privileges the nobles formed, in a certain sense, a “nation”: they did not intermarry with serfs, artisans or bourgeoisie, and they possessed their own laws and judges belonging to their own order. Their hereditary possession of the land in its pure form was not alienable, and was ruled by a title or investiture granted by the higher feudal hierarchy and ultimately, within certain limits, by the king. The bearing of arms was the privilege of this order just like the prerogatives of command; when it was necessary to mobilize large armed contingents, the latter were composed of mercenaries and were often recruited from other countries.

The class of serfs did not form a nation, not only because it did not have any central representation or expression, but also because it was reproduced in closed circles that were kept separate from each other; it was legally subservient to the lord and the legal codes varied according to the zones or the opinions of the lords. The physical boundary for the serf was not the state frontier nor was he under the jurisdiction of the central state power, since both frontiers and power were encompassed by the fief of his immediate lord.

Now we must speak of the ecclesiastical order, which at various stages was very closely aligned with the power of the aristocratic order. But the ecclesiastical order was not a nation and did not define a nation, because it was incapable of genealogical continuity due to the celibacy of the priests as well as the fact that its boundaries were extra-national. The Catholic Church, as its name indicates, is international, or, more precisely, in its organizational and doctrinal features it is international and interracial. This particular superstructure was the product of an economy based on closed units. The serf was the only element that provided labor power, and he consumed part of it in the form of a fraction of the products of the land: local needs were limited in such a way that they were supplied by locally manufactured products, with a completely embryonic division of labor, and the first artisans were barely tolerated (those very famous artisans who, while the peasants inhabited their lands in isolation, were concentrated in the “burg” at the foot of the lord’s castle, and who were later to become the terrible, destructive and revolutionary bourgeoisie). The lord and his small crew of henchmen consumed the quota brought by the peasants to the castle, or which was produced by the corvée labor of the peasants on the lord’s own estate. It is clear that, since a small, privileged minority exercised control over a large quantity of products, their needs gradually increased and therefore so did their demand for manufactured articles, even if the little princesses still ate with their hands and changed their shirts only on special occasions.

This was the origin of the material conflict, the starting point of that whole immense struggle that would invoke the high-sounding words, Fatherland, Liberty, Reason, Criticism, and Idealism against the feudal obstacles to the free circulation of persons and things, and the demand for domestic freedom of trade throughout the entire state, and then for universal freedom of trade, that would allow the lord to enjoy his wealth, but would also whet the appetites of the merchants who would one day proceed to buy with money the sacred and so avidly sought feudal lands: those who deluded themselves that they were gaining a fatherland, would instead obtain within the confines of the state a single currency, a stock exchange, and a unified system of tax collection, conditions that would make possible the eruption of capitalist productive forces.

Feudal Localism and Universal Church

2

In medieval society the productive and economic base was not national but sub-national, with respect to sites of labor and locations of markets. The linguistic, cultural, scholastic, and ideological superstructure

was not national because it was concentrated around the Roman Christian Church, with a universal dogma, ritual and organization. But the power of the Church did not extend so far as to overcome feudal particularism, since the Church strictly supported the interests and enactments of the landowning nobility.

The classical nations had already attained the unity of personal and commercial law within their political frontiers, because agrarian production, which was also fundamental at that time, made it possible to amass commodities and money thanks to the labor of the slaves, and also thanks to the overwhelming inequality that existed, which was not only permitted but tolerated by Roman law, with regard to the number of slaves that were possessed by free citizens, as was also the case with the allodial possession of the land.

After the suppression, clarified in the light of determinism, of this slave type of production, the road to the general flow of manufactured commodities would be opened up by another means—the bourgeoisie—and their production would be carried out in tandem with the development of agriculture, only to enormously—and irrationally—surpass it in the capitalist epoch.

But with Rome the classical nation had become more than just a nation; it was a territorial political universe with an organized power that extended throughout the entire non-barbarian world.

The ineluctable crisis of this mode of production, which had led to fantastic levels of accumulation favored by state centralism and its dictatorship over the provinces, and by the concentrated ownership of land and slaves in the hands of a few super-powerful rich people, had facilitated for the invading barbarians the task of reducing this immense unitary organization into fragments.

In the Middle Ages this universalism was attained under a very different form, in the powerful organization of the Christian Church of Rome. We shall not pause here to examine in detail the great historical process, which can be grasped in the light of the same social tendencies, relating to the Eastern Empire that survived for centuries after the fall of the Western Empire, and which, although it was capable of diverting the Germanic attack from the northwest was incapable of repeating this achievement with regard to the Asians from the southeast, leading, by way of essentially analogous paths, to the fragmentation of a unity that had long been merely symbolic.

In Western Europe the need to develop general commercial exchange in opposition to the feudal parcelization of the land took the form of a demand to reconstruct centralism, which had given the classical Roman world a degree of power, wealth and wisdom that seemed beyond the reach of the feudal states. But the response to this demand could not be that of the “Guelphs”, who opposed the German Empire of the time and its bellicose ruling class with the international influence of the Church, even though this was attempted in the midst of the imperial conflict with the class forces of the first citadels of the new bourgeois class: the Italian cities, ruled by master craftsmen, artisans, bankers and merchants, who had already made inroads throughout all of Europe.

The Church in fact constituted in all the states that arose from the dismemberment of the Empire—after the first centuries of resistance—a common superstructure that served the power of the feudal lords and their monarchs. Precisely because they were not national societies, the functions this superstructure performed transcended the limits of their political borders. National languages spoken by the “people”, or “the common folk”, did not yet exist. The language of the priests in all parts of feudal Europe was Latin, while the masses of the serfs spoke dialects that were incomprehensible to people living ten or twenty kilometers away, so that one could not travel to find work or money, but only to fight, and this is why they

rarely needed a common tongue. Latin, however, was not just the language of religious ritual, which was of little importance, but was the only existing cultural vehicle, practically the only language that could be read and written everywhere.

Latin, and only Latin, was taught to the members of the noble order, and this means that education, assimilated by the Church, remained an inter-state structure, even though members of other classes were admitted, and besides the “young lords” and the future priests and friars, a few children of the bourgeoisie of the cities were also allowed to attend school, but the dispersed peasants (and this situation has not yet been totally overcome today, in some unfortunate provinces of nations as noble as … Italy and Yugoslavia!) were absolutely excluded.

It was through this unitary sieve that all high culture passed—the same topics and texts were discussed in Bologna, Salamanca, Paris and London—but so did the practical culture itself and, ultimately, this is where the entire bureaucratic, civil, judicial and military element came from: any class that possessed a culture, possessed some kind of “national culture” in only the vaguest sense, and only after the year one thousand did “national literatures” emerge.

The bourgeoisie themselves adapted to everything and paid their tribute to this social nexus, which is a superstructure of the dominant type of production, but at the same time it is an inevitable means of labor, and while the banker did business with Amberes or Rotterdam from Florence, he did so by way of a commercial correspondence in Latin, even though this Latin summarily butchered the resurrected Caesar and Cicero; no less than the Latin used in the Mass.

The entire Catholic ideological structure, however, despite the scale of this edifice that went far beyond the differences of blood, race and language that separated men, is historically bound to the defense and preservation of the feudal type of servitude. This collaboration began from below with the collaboration of the priest and the local lord, who shared the tithes and taxes from the exploited peasantry, whose status as subjects was strictly connected with their bond to the soil and to the fief where they were born. On the other hand, monastic communities and the major religious orders, although not without a struggle with the lords, possessed vast tracts of land under the form of a productive relation that was completely identical with the feudal form, both of which shared the requirement that this possession of land, bodies and souls was inalienably bound to the title, aristocratic on the one hand and ecclesiastical-hierarchical on the other, to the land.

Universalism and Political Centralism

3

Although in Italy the first struggles of the bourgeoisie, organized in small city-republics but still incapable of creating an inter-regional economy, were supported by the Papacy and the Guelphs, Dante anticipated the modern bourgeois forms by invoking the monarchy as the first historically possible form of centralized state, although he did not expressly formulate a true national policy due to his Ghibelline universalism that postulated a single European power.

When Dante wrote his treatise *De Monarchia*, he adopted the Ghibelline position, despite the fact that his family supported the Guelphs. In the theory of history expressed by Dante the demand for a united central power is fundamental, and the sterile battles between municipal families and feudal lords is rejected. The new demand for universalism rested on the formidable tradition of the Roman Empire, rejecting and combating the universalism of the Catholic Rome; this is why Dante condemned the political power and

policies of the papacy and invoked the German Emperor as the great monarch who would unify all of Europe in one centralized state: Germany and Italy, and then France and the other countries.
Should we include Dante's political doctrine in the Medieval period because it does not contain the essential bourgeois demand of separate nationalities, or to the contrary do we perceive it as an anticipation of the modern bourgeois era? We must obviously choose the latter viewpoint. The institution of the absolute monarchy arose, in the midst of the Middle Ages, as the only form of centralized state that could effectively engage in the struggle against the federalism of the feudal lords and their pretensions to local self-government. At the side of these centrifugal forces one also finds the obscurantism of the clergy and of Rome; meanwhile, the great royal courts—a brilliant example of which, that of Frederick II of Swabia in Palermo, is lauded by Dante—cleared the way for the new productive forces and for commerce, and therefore the support of the arts and the exchange of ideas outside the scholastic dictatorship. The Swabian king was not exactly a national king, but the accounts of his atheism, culture and interest in art are not entirely legendary, and it is certainly true that he was the founder of the first industries and manufacturing enterprises, precursors of the social forms that were alien to the retrograde ignorance of the aristocracy, which was expert only in the use of arms. The first form that capitalism mobilized against the old regime of landowners was the central monarchy with its court in a great capital city, where artisans, artists and men of knowledge opened up new horizons for material life.

The Latin treatise *De Monarchia* is one of the first ideological manifestations of this modern demand and is in this sense revolutionary, anti-feudal and anti-Guelph: the anti-clericalism of the future would make extensive use of the invectives of this great poem directed against the papacy. And if the straightforward national demand is not explicit in Dante, and if he foresees an Italy that is politically united, despite the feudal lords, but only as a province of the transalpine Empire, this is because in Italy the modern bourgeoisie was born early, but with a municipal and local character, which did not diminish the importance of this first manifestation of the living forces of the future, but it was socially subjugated, due to reasons inherent to the change in the geographic routes of the nascent system of commercial exchange, before the vision of a powerful united capitalist state within national boundaries could be conceived. This did not detract from the fact that it was in this country that Dante himself chose to write literature in the vulgar Italian language, paving the way for the decisive dissemination of the Tuscan dialect in competition with the one hundred dialects that extended from those of Lombard origin to those influenced by the Saracens.

The Revolutionary Demands of the National Bourgeoisie

4

According to the Marxist interpretation of history each period of transition from one mode of production to another witnesses on the one hand the mobilization of the ruling class to defend its economic privileges by means of the employment of the apparatus of power and the influence of its traditional ideologies, and on the other the struggle of the revolutionary class against these institutional and ideological interests. This revolutionary class, in a more or less well-defined and comprehensive manner, engages in a propaganda campaign featuring new ideologies within the old society, new ideologies that contain the consciousness of its own conquests and of the future social mode of production. The modern bourgeoisie developed particularly interesting and suggestive systems, which constituted veritable weapons of struggle, in the different European nations, and all these systems revolved around the great demand for national unity and independence. The beginning of the modern age and the end of the medieval era is situated by the history textbooks either in 1492 or 1305. The first date is that of the discovery of America, and is significant in the history of the bourgeoisie—a truly epic saga of bourgeois history is offered by Marxism, from the incomparable synthesis of the *Manifesto*to the other classical descriptions—as the date that marks the opening up of the transoceanic routes, the formation of the fabric of the world market, and of the awakening of extremely powerful forces of attraction that, in the form of demand for manufactured

commodities, drove the advanced white race to the war of overproduction. And in parallel with this powerful development, the center of the vigorous growth of industry shifted, and it shifted precisely from north-central Italy to the heart of extra-Mediterranean, Atlantic Europe.
1305, on the other hand, is the date when Dante wrote the *Comedy*, and at that time in Italy the demands of the anti-feudal and anti-ecclesiastical revolution had already made much headway, although in a very limited geographic area. Because Roman traditions had originated within the peninsula, and however much the contributions of new barbarian blood may have had an impact, the organizational forms of the Germanic peoples encountered major resistance in Italy and the feudal regime never really attained a high degree of development there.
Because of the advantages of its location amidst navigable seas, Italian trade and exchange rapidly recovered by establishing the division of labor on new foundations. Although the municipal system had collapsed with the rise of petty local lords and hereditary autocratic monarchies, agrarian serfdom did not, however, become predominant, and a large part of the population continued to be composed of independent peasants and artisans and small- and medium-scale merchants. For these same reasons, the bourgeoisie did not emerge as a national class during this period, a transition that would only take place several centuries later on a larger scale. Because of the setback it suffered in Italy, the capitalist revolution was postponed for a long time, but in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries it was victorious in England and France, and subsequently in Central Europe.

In this way the appearance of a new mode of production, limited to a restricted circle, would fail and therefore have to wait for several more generations to reemerge. Its historical recovery, however, would take place within a much more extensive circuit. This is why we must not lose sight of the fact that the communist revolution, crushed in 1871 in France, had to wait until 1917 to attempt to conquer not just France but all of Europe; and now that it has been defeated and deprived of all significance, as occurred to the limited bourgeois revolution of the Italian cities, it will be able to reemerge after a long period, on a world scale, and not just in the zones occupied and controlled by the white race.

In the period between the 12th and the 15th centuries, it might appear that the demands for the equality of citizens before the law, political liberty, parliamentary democracy and a republic were illusions that had been dissipated by history, but their force only increased due to an important historical advance on a European scale that seems quite obvious to us today. Actually, it is only in appearance that the demands of the modern proletariat for the violent overthrow of the democratic capitalist state, the dictatorship of the working class and the destruction of the economy based on money and wage labor, have been dormant and forgotten.

Throughout this entire period the bourgeois classes and groups, wielding greater influence due to the changes in the productive forces and techniques and the rise of mercantile exchange, never ceased to proclaim at every opportunity the new demands by fighting for them, until they succeeded in a totalitarian manner in smashing the feudal order and imposing their own power.

The artisan and the merchant refused to consider themselves as subject serfs of a petty local lord: both took flight, although this was at first very dangerous, and from one district to another they travelled across the state territory, their labor and their business being in demand, although it was very easy for the nobles to ambush them and take everything they had accumulated, as considerable masses of wealth had formed in the hands of individuals who were not members of the traditional orders and hierarchies. These pioneers of a new way of life demanded the right to be citizens of the state rather than the subjects of a noble: in its first form they aspired to be subjects of the king, as absolute ruler. The monarch and the dynasty were the first expressions of a central power that embraced all the people and the whole nation.

The link between the state and the subject, the fundamental pillar of bourgeois law, was therefore beginning to be directly established without mediation by way of the fragmentary feudal hierarchies.

If we want to see this process operating in the domain of the economic base, we need only recall the picturesque historical incident that could be entitled, “The King of England Does Not Pay”. The House of Bardi, the great bourgeois bankers of Florence, advanced to the King of England a colossal sum in gold florins for military expenses: but the King, having lost the war in question, paid back neither the interest nor the principal on the loan: the bank failed and the Florentine economy suffered a terrible blow. The old banker died frustrated, not having been able to find a jurisdiction before which he could bring charges against the deadbeat. In the bourgeois system he could even have done so before an English judge, and he would have been paid.

If we want to depict the juridical aspect of this process, we may refer to the play written by Lope de Vega, *El mejor alcalde, el Rey* [*The Best Mayor, the King*], in which the king plays the role of the hero, but the main demand is always bourgeois. In a provincial town a certain Don Rodrigo abducted a youth. The boy’s father, after Don Rodrigo laughed in his face, went to Madrid and petitioned the king; the latter, in disguise, returned with him to the town, unarmed, with a small bodyguard; he assumed the position of judge and severely condemned the local lord, ordering him to release the boy and pay indemnities. The concept that every citizen could obtain justice from the king against the abuses of provincial power, expressed the bourgeois demand for centralism.
Some years later the Miller of Sanssouci became famous for his confrontation with King Frederick of Prussia, who wanted to expropriate the miller’s land to expand his pleasure park. The miller left his interview with the king saying, “There are judges in Berlin!”. The judge would condemn the king in the name of the king, and this would appear to be a masterpiece of the bourgeois concept of the law: but only a few years later the bourgeois itself, due to revolutionary exigencies, would show more resolution and would condemn the king to decapitation.

To the extent that in the old states ruled by the landowning nobility, as in the classical cases of France and England, the importance of commerce and manufacture grew in relation to the agrarian economy, and to the extent that large banking firms, the state debt, the protectionist system, and a centralized and unitary system of tax collection were emerging, the bourgeoisie demanded more privileges from royal power, that is, the central administration. Within the ideological superstructure, by culturally and politically demanding these new postulates, all these unitary systems are described and extolled as the expression not of a dynasty that ruled by divine right, recognized and invested by the religious power, but of all the people, of the totality of the citizenry, in a word, of the nation. Patriotism, that ideal that was eclipsed after its exaltation in classical antiquity, became the motto of the new civil demands and very soon inflamed (since it arose from the demands of the merchants and manufacturers) the intellectuals, writers and philosophers, who adorned the eruption of the new productive forces with a marvelous architecture of supreme principles and literary decorations.

The Iridescent Superstructures of the Capitalist Revolution
5
Just as the preconditions for the revolutionary struggle of the modern proletariat were established by the full development of the capitalist mode of production, the doctrine and program of the international communist revolution are established once the critique of bourgeois ideologies is fully developed, ideologies which assumed diverse national characteristics precisely because every bourgeois revolution is national and possesses its characteristics of constructing in its own particular way what Marx defines as the way an era “thinks about” itself.

In Italy, as we have already pointed out, the economic content of the bourgeois form emerged precociously, but proved insufficient to assume control of society: its political content, although of great historical importance, was limited to the control of small, free city-republics, and their artisans, merchants or commercial navigation. These forms were incapable of historically engaging in the constitution of a national power. If, however, on the one hand, this first bourgeois society would be reabsorbed by European feudal society despite its military victories against the German emperor, on the other hand its effects on the ideological and above all artistic “superstructure” were to leave their mark on later centuries. The rehabilitation of the political forms of the Roman world and the free classical institutions created by the citizens of the first republics, would be even more distinctly reflected in the organization of states and nations, in the flourishing of the new technology and of the great splendor of renaissance art, which drew upon and emulated the classical models. At the same time the literature and science that challenged the conformist domination of the Catholic and scholastic culture acquired the same impulse, by returning to and reinterpreting the study of the classic texts that provided material that was very relevant due to the social demands of the epoch. This immense movement is therefore the product of a particular development of conflict and of transition from one mode of production to another, the flash after the explosion of a new society within the old one, but which was still incapable of breaking the last chains, and only shook them with a historic earthquake; that is all, even if it could be explained and elaborated in a better way, without, however, having to resort to strange bedroom congresses of battle-tested spermatozoids that gave rise to architects, painters, sculptors, poets, musicians, thinkers, scientists, philosophers, etc., all of the first magnitude.

And there were artists, poets and ideologists, with their memorable and famous works, who never ceased to praise, even when they found themselves in situations of political and social servitude, the concept of the Italian fatherland and nationality, concepts that are incessantly and insistently repeated by their modern-day imitators, who are usually not at their level.

In Germany—and this has been addressed many times in the invectives of Marx and Engels—where one must speak of a series of miscarriages of the birth of the Nation, another great phenomenon took place: the Reformation, which spread to one degree or another throughout all of Europe.

The social struggle of the new strata against the old rule of the feudal princes, who were supported by the Church, was incapable of being crystallized in lasting political results, but it was not just limited in this first stage to the critique of artistic or philosophical schools, either, since it unfolded within the Church and was situated on the terrain of religious dogma. A process of fragmentation of the unified Church into diverse national churches which escaped from the rule of Rome then took place, not only modifying the articles of the mystic doctrine to one extent or another, but above all breaking the bonds with the ecclesiastical hierarchy and replacing it with the new national hierarchies. While a national language is one of the aspects by means of which the bourgeois nation state appears in history, another no less important aspect is religion. What happened in Germany was most impressive with regard to religion and the national church. It was the agitation of the new classes that lay behind the Reformation: bourgeoisie and master craftsmen of the German cities, as much as the peasant serfs of the countryside, looked to Luther as the person who would lead their struggle against the princes, the bastions of the feudal and aristocratic landed structure, but Luther not only rejected Münzer who commanded the defeated but glorious insurrection of the peasants against the minor princes, but did not want to lead the peasants against the great principalities, either.

While the limits and the bonds of medieval society were broken in Italy only in literature and in Germany only in religion, as expressions of immature or crushed revolutions, in the first pure historical case of a

bourgeois revolution, that of England, the social economy was shaken to its deepest structural foundations. There, for climatological and geographical reasons, agricultural production never could have fed a dense population, and manufacturing and industrial production, unknown until that point in any country, underwent explosive growth. Tenant farmers accumulated large sums of money while an increasing number of peasants were expelled from the land and proletarianized: in this way the capitalist conditions of production were much more intensely imposed than elsewhere and the manufacturing bourgeoisie acquired great importance. The nobility and royalty were defeated in battle and, despite the brief period of the revolutionary republic and the death of Cromwell, the bourgeoisie quickly seized power by means of a new revolution, under a form that still persists: parliamentary monarchy. There can be no question that the geographical conditions, as much as the productive conditions, contributed to confer upon the United Kingdom the character of a single nation in contrast to the others, as the sea was its only geographical boundary. But as Engels pointed out in his *Critique of the Draft Social-Democratic Program of 1891* (in which Engels proposed, for a Germany that was still divided into many small federated states, the demand, “one and indivisible republic”), in the two British Isles one finds at least three nationalities, with subdivisions along both linguistic as well as racial and religious lines. With the passage of time the Irish, of Celtic race, Catholic and formerly speakers of Gaelic, which is now almost extinct, will become substantially differentiated; and the Scottish people still conceive of themselves as very different from the English, taking into account different influences and social traditions, as is also the case in Wales, and the effects of a series of invasions and migrations: Romans, Saxons and finally Normans. The British Isles therefore feature a mixture of races, traditions, dialects and languages, some of them literary, religions and churches; but it was there that the first formation of that historic reality called the unified nation state took place, which corresponds to the establishment of the capitalist social mode.
In France the structure of the national state was being constructed by way of the civil war between the classes. Its geographical boundaries are precisely defined, except for the historical oscillation of the frontier on the Rhine, by seas and mountain chains. A rapid process led to the formation of a single language and a literature that was closely connected with that language and which absorbed the first literary manifestations of the Middle Ages by erasing their differences: this same process gradually also affected the ethnological diversity of France, which was quite significant. We must not forget that this nation typically took its name from the Franks, a Germanic people originally from the east that crushed or subjugated the indigenous Bretons and Celts. We therefore have two peoples of a non-Latin origin, but this did not prevent their language from being formed from the Latin root. The need for national unity was thus not territorial but social, and the bourgeoisie were soon able to obtain recognition as the Third Estate with representation in the Estates General which possessed a consultative function for the real power. When this proved insufficient, the struggle became directly political. There was no industrialism in France that was comparable to the British industries, and the economic schools of thought in the two countries were expressions of this fact: the English adopted the theory and apologetics of productive capitalism, while the French began with the agrarian Physiocratic school, and then proceeded to adopt the mercantilist doctrine that did not see value as emerging from productive labor but from trade in products.

Politically, there were no hesitations: the French bourgeoisie constructed their doctrine of the state by aspiring directly for power: sovereignty was not derived from inheritance or from divine right but from the consultation of the opinion of the citizens; dogma collapsed and reason was victorious, the orders and guilds were destroyed, and electoral democracy, parliament and a republic would be established. The other national form typical of the power of the bourgeoisie had been forged in the crucible of history.

In the transition from the feudal to the modern mode of production, a fundamental economic basis is the clash of the productive forces with the old relations, and the political, juridical and ideological superstructures emanate from this palingenesis of the economic base.

This cannot be reduced to a simple pharmaceutical prescription, however. The bourgeoisie had not carried out a world revolution but only the first round of the succession of national revolutions, and we have not yet seen the last of them.

From this brief summary of the fundamental study of the geographic “zones” and “historical periods” that we are undertaking with regard to the bourgeois revolution, in order to better understand the proletarian revolution—disregarding its national particularities, and embedding it within the spatio-temporal limits of its rich dynamic—we may emphasize the following chronological series: Italy—art; Germany—religion; England—economic science; France—politics. This is the integral superstructure of the capitalist productive base.

The feats of the bourgeoisie in history are evidently economic, political, artistic and religious at the same time. But the richness of its rise cannot be better summarized than with the words of the *Manifesto*: “Each step in the development of the bourgeoisie was accompanied by a corresponding political advance of that class. An oppressed class under the sway of the feudal nobility, an armed and self-governing association in the medieval commune: here independent urban republic (as in Italy and Germany); there taxable “third estate” of the monarchy (as in France); afterwards, in the period of manufacturing proper, serving either the semi-feudal or the absolute monarchy as a counterpoise against the nobility, and, in fact, cornerstone of the great monarchies in general, the bourgeoisie has at last, since the establishment of Modern Industry and of the world market, conquered for itself, in the modern representative State, exclusive political sway. The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.

“The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part.

“… The bourgeoisie finds itself involved in a constant battle. At first with the aristocracy; later on, with those portions of the bourgeoisie itself, whose interests have become antagonistic to the progress of industry; at all time with the bourgeoisie of foreign countries.”

The Proletariat Makes Its Appearance on the Historical Stage
6
With capitalist manufacture and industry the new social class of wage laborers was created. There is a historical convergence between the formation of this class in large masses and the greatest efforts on the part of the bourgeoisie to assume political power and constitute itself as a nation. The proletarian masses, after a first phase of chaotic reaction against machinery in a feudal-medieval sense, found their road alongside the revolutionary bourgeoisie, and it was on a national scale that the proletariat achieved class unity, but not yet class autonomy.

The history of the modern epoch was largely characterized by this struggle against a nobility that had too much autonomy and a church that was too universal, in order to found, after the victory and the integral rise to power of the bourgeoisie, the modern nations. If the class content, and the content of subversion of the old mode of production, is—according to Marxism—the same for every national bourgeoisie, it is just as evident according to our doctrine that the bourgeois revolutions, as national revolutions, possess, each and every one of them, an originality and a form of their own that possess a greater significance than an exclusive consideration of their local historical and geographical peculiarities would lead one to expect. And this serves, in accordance with the forced march of capitalist development, to explain why the nations founded in this manner stand together in the struggle against the old regime for class reasons, but fight tirelessly against each other as nations and as states.

With the new ruling class, the bourgeois Third Estate, there also appeared, in the first decades of the 18th century and even before, as the new and fundamental social element: the working class. The struggles for the conquest of power against feudalism and its clerical allies, and the struggle for the constitution of national units, was fully underway: the workers of the cities and the countryside participated fully in them, even when they had authentic class organizations and political parties of their own that anticipated the program of the overthrow of bourgeois rule.

As the real socialist and communist movement emerged, not only was it aware of the enormous complexity of this process as it constructed its theoretical critique, but it also established the conditions, epochs and places in which the proletarians must totally support bourgeois revolutionary movements and insurrections and national wars.

It would not be a bad idea in order to make this more clear, and to rapidly dispel the surprise of those who seem to be hearing these things for the first time, to refer once again to the *Manifesto*: “The proletariat goes through various stages of development. With its birth begins its struggle with the bourgeoisie.” And here Marx recalls the first, “reactionary” form of struggle: burning down factories, the destruction of machines and of foreign products, calls for a return to the medieval status of the artisans, something that had already been left behind.
This first stage suffices in itself to destroy the anti-historic position of those who simplify matters by saying: there are two classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat; everything is summed up by the fight of the latter against the former. But let us continue with our passage from the *Manifesto*.
“At this stage, the labourers still form an incoherent mass scattered over the whole country, and broken up by their mutual competition. If anywhere they unite to form more compact bodies, this is not yet the consequence of their own active union, but of the union of the bourgeoisie, which class, in order to attain its own political ends, is compelled to set the whole proletariat in motion, and is moreover yet, for a time, able to do so. At this stage, therefore, the proletarians do not fight their enemies, but the enemies of their enemies, the remnants of absolute monarchy, the landowners, the non-industrial bourgeois, the petty bourgeois. Thus, the whole historical movement is concentrated in the hands of the bourgeoisie; every victory so obtained is a victory for the bourgeoisie.”

Again, let us continue with this passage on the incessant struggles of the bourgeoisie and among the different national bourgeoisie. It continues as follows: “In all these battles, it sees itself compelled to appeal to the proletariat, to ask for help, and thus, to drag it into the political arena. The bourgeoisie itself, therefore, supplies the proletariat with its own elements of political and general education [we would translate this as “training”—Bordiga’s note], in other words, it furnishes the proletariat with weapons for fighting the bourgeoisie.”

The living conditions of the modern proletariat, “modern subjection to capital, the same in England as in France, in America as in Germany, has stripped him of every trace of national character”.

This passage, which precedes the other famous passage from the second chapter, the one that, quoted out of context, is so pleasing to the opportunism of every era (and now the most foolish of them all, the kind that takes the government of Tito as a model), corresponds to the precise historical thesis that we have followed in this reexamination and elaboration of the national question. The bourgeoisie everywhere possesses a national character and its program consists in giving society a national character. Its struggle is national and in order to conduct it the bourgeoisie must unite, transmitting this unity to the proletariat itself while it uses the proletariat as an ally: the bourgeoisie initiates its political struggle by constituting

itself within every modern state as a national revolutionary class. The proletariat does not have a national, but an international, character.

This does not imply the following theory: the proletariat does not participate in national struggles, only in the international struggle. The bourgeoisie has the national position in its revolutionary program; its victory destroys the non-national character of medieval society. The proletariat does not have the national position in its program, a program that it will put into practice with its revolution and its conquest of political power, and instead champions the position of internationalism. The expression, national bourgeoisie, possesses a specifically Marxist meaning, and during a particular historical stage it is a revolutionary demand. The expression, nation in general, possesses an idealist and anti-Marxist meaning. The expression, proletarian nation, possesses no meaning at all, neither in an idealist sense nor in the Marxist sense.

This provides the correct framework for understanding everything that relates to both the theory of history as well as the content of the program of the revolutionary class that engages in historical struggle.

The Proletarian Struggle and the National Sphere
7
Old and new polemical deviations have confused the programmatic internationalist position of the communist proletariat with the formally national nature of some of the first stages of its struggle. Historically, the proletariat cannot become a class and cannot create a class political party except within the national sphere, and even the struggle for power is waged in a national form insofar as it is oriented towards overthrowing the state of its own bourgeoisie. It is also possible that for a certain period of time after the proletarian conquest of power the proletariat might restrict its activity to the national sphere. But this does not obviate the essential historical opposition between the bourgeoisie, which aspires to constitute bourgeois nations, presenting them as nations “in general”, and the proletariat which rejects the nation “in general” and patriotic solidarity, since its duty is to construct an international society, even though it understands that up to a certain point in time the demand for national unity is useful, but always within the bourgeois camp.

With regard to the transitional stages from the bourgeois struggle for power to that of the proletariat, we shall turn to this other passage:

“Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself the nation, it is so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word.”

This passage, along with others, suffers in all existing translations from a certain erroneous gradualism in the use of terms: political organization, political force, political supremacy, political power, and finally dictatorship. The above passage follows, in the series of responses to bourgeois objections in the chapter, “Proletarians and Communists”, this other no less famous passage: “The Communists are further reproached with desiring to abolish countries and nationality. The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got.”[1] After this radical affirmation of principle the text cannot continue by saying: the workers have no nationality. It is a fact that the workers are French, Italian, German, etc. Not only because of race and language (we know that all such things make you laugh), but by their physical location in the different territories where the national bourgeois state governs, which is a very influential factor in the development of its class struggle, as well as in the international struggle. This is crystal clear.

To separate a few sentences of Marx from this context in order to make him say that the workers have as a program, after the defeat of the bourgeoisie, the founding of separate proletarian nations as an essential aspect of their revolution, is not only an illusion, but amounts to imposing on the proletariat, with its high degree of current development, the programs of the bourgeoisie, in order to keep it under the rule of the latter.

This becomes even more clear if we refer to the logical and historical succession, before it is declared that the proletariat does not have a national character, in the preceding chapter, “Bourgeoisie and Proletarians”.

We mentioned the description of the first stage of the struggle of the proletariat, which assumed the form of a struggle against industrial machinery; and then that of the next stage in which the proletariat united for the first time with the bourgeoisie in struggle: therefore a national alliance of the workers was formed, for a bourgeois goal.

Then the clash between the workers and the bourgeoisie in isolated enterprises and localities is described. A major step forward is taken when the local struggles coalesce “into one national struggle between classes”.

Here Marx is not referring to a stupid isolation of the proletarian nation, but to the contrary, to the radical supersession of the localist, autonomist federalism represented by the Proudhonian reactionaries and subsequently by other similar schools that were always combated by Marxism. A conflict that takes place only in the vicinity of Roccacannuccia or Turin is not a class struggle. Once the bourgeoisie has been victorious in its demand for national unity, our class struggle arises for the first time after national boundaries have been physically established. Now we see the other essential words: “But every class struggle is a political struggle.” This is the thesis thrown in the faces of the federalists, and economistic thinkers of all types: “But every class struggle is a political struggle.” And when there were no longer any petty independent powers of the nobility but only the power of the bourgeoisie that was manifested through its centralized national state, we encountered a political struggle from the very moment when the action of the proletarians is centralized within the boundaries of a nation. This is why, when in Europe and France the proletarians only fought as an assault force of the bourgeoisie, in England, with its high degree of industrial development, they already confronted the employers and the British state as a class.

We therefore do not find ourselves within the domain of the programmatic content of the proletarian struggle, but in a description on the one hand of its successive stages in time, and on the other of its stages in space, that is, of the perimeter within which the classes wage their struggles (the word stage at first served to measure distance rather than time [Latin: *stadium*, from the Greek *stadion*; a measure of distance—American Translator’s Note]). Now the bourgeoisie in its long struggle had regrouped the small feudal power centers into a single national stage of struggle, and was forced to fight on it.
Next we see it set forth explicitly: “Though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie.”

Therefore, the stages, or the successive phases in time can be classified with complete certainty as follows:

• The struggle of the worker against his employer in a primitive and local form.
• The national political struggle of the bourgeoisie and its victory, with the participation of the workers

united on a national scale.
• Local and enterprise-based struggles of the workers against the bourgeoisie.
• The united struggle of the proletariat of a particular national state against the ruling bourgeoisie. This amounts to the constitution of the proletariat as a national class, and the organization of the proletariat as a class political party.
• Destruction of bourgeois rule.
• Conquest of political power by the proletariat.

On this basis, in a contingent and formal and constitutional-juridical aspect, the proletariat, just as it constitutes itself as a class state (dictatorship), must also constitute itself as a national state, but all of this with a transitory character.

Nevertheless, the proletariat, which does not possess a national character, does not create this state as if it were a historically defining characteristic of its class (as was the case with the bourgeoisie). The character and the program of the proletariat and of its revolution are still totally international, and the proletariat which must now “settle matters with its own bourgeoisie” does not confront the nations where this has not yet taken place, but confronts the foreign bourgeoisie by joining in a unitary struggle together with the proletarians of the other nations.

To conclude: the proletarian movement in particular historical stages fights for the formation of nations, or favors the constitution of nations of the bourgeoisie. In this stage and the subsequent one in which one no longer speaks of alliances, the national postulate is defined as a bourgeois postulate.

The Proletarian Strategy in Europe in 1848
8
The *Manifesto*, and we are not speaking here of a doctrinal exposition or a description of the historical process, but of a strategic political orientation of the already created communist party, in the zone of influence of the countries subject to the reactionary Holy Alliance, calls for support of the insurrections of the bourgeois parties that were fighting against feudal absolutism and the oppression of nationalities, and that, if the bourgeoisie were to be victorious, this should be followed by a break of the alliance and the workers revolution.
We prefer to speak of strategy rather than of tactics, since the questions posed by the incandescent period when the *Manifesto* was published do not call for particular, local, or contingent solutions that would vary from one place to another by accounting for alternative choices with regard to specific actions. Tactics consist (as is the case in the army when it is being considered whether a unit is in a situation that favors attack, maintaining its position, or retreat) in determining the moment to initiate, for example, a local strike, or even to give the signal for an attack by an armed proletarian group in a neighborhood or village. Strategy embraces the general orientation of a military campaign or a revolution: either favorable conditions exist, or it is of little use, and is instead disastrous, to change it or reverse positions in the course of the campaign.
Without strategy there is no revolutionary party. For decades and decades the commentators on the *Manifesto* and our other fundamental texts have striven to find excuses for the strategic errors that Marx had committed in his perspective concerning the future action of the communists. This formidable text, however, and with an incomparable brevity, not only contains the interpretive theory of the modern historical process and of the general program of the society that must succeed capitalism, but also contains certain precise references with regard to time frames, postulating a rapid unfolding of the process, in the various zones, concerning the development of class struggles and wars.

It is not possible to dispense with a comprehensive view of the social and political forces in Europe, since the characteristic aspect of this historic period was the fact that, in parallel with the upheaval of the process of formation of nations, together with the lyrical praise for the bourgeois ideology, the movement that arose in Paris found an immediate echo in Vienna, Warsaw, Milan, etc., despite the fact that the resistance offered by the declining pre-bourgeois regime was not the same in the various countries of Europe. In this incandescent atmosphere, everything seemed to indicate that this was the last and decisive attack to overthrow the royal and imperial bastions of the old regime, and in the process putting an end to all kinds of obstacles that stood in the way of the spread of capitalism.

But the exceptional power of this basic proclamation of ours is to be sought in the declaration that, if on the one hand the first act in the drama consisted of the battle for democratic rights and national freedom and against the last survivals of serfdom and medieval obscurantism, on the other hand, within the new capitalist economy, there had already been in existence for about ten years on a grand scale a conflict between the productive forces and the relations of production that accompanied wage labor and industrial and agrarian commercialism, a conflict that was not directed against the forces of landed feudalism.

Those who today still praise increasing levels of production, and who present themselves as alleged revolutionaries, yet merely join in the chorus of the invitations issued to capital to invest and produce more, should recall the tremendous statement, which had already in 1848 foreseen the fall of the bourgeoisie, since society already had “too much civilisation, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce”.

The core thesis of the *Manifesto* is not that, in the stage that characterized the Europe of that time, Europe would become communist, but that in any period of violent transformation the system of productive relations could shatter and that already in that era it was evident that the relations of a capitalist type did not lead to equilibrium, but to greater contradictions within the limits of the productive forces. A century later the volume of these forces has become much larger, but so too has the thickness of the armored layers that protect the monstrous tank where capital houses these productive forces. The petty bourgeois, incapable of dialectically comprehending the comparison between a scientific prediction and a reality, and who also has not understood the old adage that says, “closing the barn door after the horse has already escaped”, will be horrified to hear a proposition like this: we were closer to the proletarian revolution in 1848 than we were in 1948, just as he will not understand the thesis that he is closer to a state of cretinism with his doctorate than he was when he graduated from elementary school. The European strategy of 1848 contemplated two formidable tasks for the working class of the different countries: to lend aid to help complete the bourgeois formation of independent national states; and to try to overthrow the power of the victorious bourgeoisie just as it was overthrowing the power of the remnants of feudalism.

History, its vicissitudes and the clash of material forces have caused the conclusion of this process to recede into the distance, but they have not undermined in the least the strategic basis of that time: one cannot win the second point if one has not won the first, that is, one must clear away the last obstacles that stand in the way of the organization of society into national states.

The first obstacle was raised in 1815 and was then reinforced after the defeat of Napoleon: the Holy Alliance of Austria, Prussia and Russia. The position of the*Manifesto* is that there will not be a European social republic if the Holy Alliance is not overthrown, and therefore it was necessary to fight, together with the revolutionary democrats of the time, to cast off the yoke of the Holy Alliance borne by the peoples of Central Europe, and at the same time it was necessary to unmask these democrats before the

proletarians by preparing for the time when, once bourgeois national liberation was assured everywhere with its elected democracies, an even more profound crisis would arrive that is the fruit of the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production, with the historic conflicts and outbursts that it would necessarily entail, instead of the idyllic equality of the citizens in the state and the nations of the world. If we could only be a little less gossipy and stupid than a salaried politician, who thinks that the course of history ends with the end of his term in office, we would see that this gigantic vision obtained its historic confirmation, however difficult it was to erode the Holy Alliance, even though the triumphant capitalist civilization is even harsher and more despicable.

The fourth chapter, devoted to strategy, analyzes, as everyone knows, the tasks of the communist party in the different countries. A brief commentary serves to establish that the communists in America, England and France, that is, the countries with a highly developed capitalist system, should only have relations with working class parties, while criticizing their critical defects and their demagogic illusions. Then comes the part (whose elaboration we shall outline in this final part of our exposition) relating to Poland and Germany, that is, the countries subject to the regimes of the Holy Alliance: here the support for bourgeois parties is legitimized: in Poland, the party that advocated the emancipation of the serfs in the countryside and national resurrection; in Germany, the parties of the bourgeoisie, because they fought against the monarchy, the nobility and (this is directed at our modern traitors) the petty bourgeoisie. And no less well-known and repeated in other documents is the fact that this proposal of common actions, with arms in hand, did not overlook for even one second the merciless critique of bourgeois principles and capitalist social relations, and next comes the schema of the bourgeois revolution as the immediate prelude to the proletarian revolution. History did not refute this, but postponed its realization: as we have said so many times, both revolutions failed.

Revolutionary Retreat and the Workers Movement

9

The struggles of 1848 did not lead to the general victory of the European bourgeoisie against the forces of absolutist reaction; much less were they capable of leading to a victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie, something that was only attempted in France. In the unfavorable period that followed, which lasted until 1866, the position of the Marxists oscillated between, on the one hand, the ruthless critique of the democratic and humanitarian bourgeois liberals, and on the other, providing the necessary encouragement to the struggles for the unity and independence of the nationalities, which were embodied in insurrections and wars between states (Poland, Germany, Italy, Ireland, etc.).

When, after the battles of 1848-1849, Marx and Engels drew up a balance sheet of that tempestuous period (which seemed so promising that even today popular opinion perceives it as more colorful than Europe and the world are in this terrible century with all its years of disasters and torments), they were convinced that the revolutionary phase would resume, but not in the short term. First, the theory would have to be systematized and then the organization, before it would be possible to think of a general victorious action: and there was no lack of time during which these tasks could be carried out.

In Germany and in all of Central Europe, as in Italy, the balance sheet of the struggle was the same: the insurgent bourgeois liberal revolutionaries in arms were defeated on the barricades; the workers, who had fought alongside them as allies, also suffered from the results of this serious defeat, so the subsequent situation of a dispute between bourgeois and workers over power never even arose. So it was not the communist revolution that was defeated, but the liberal revolution, and the workers had fought everywhere trying to save it from catastrophe, as was foreseen theoretically and expressed politically in the*Manifesto*.

The exceptions to this historical rule were England and France. In England the feudal reaction had already been militarily defeated over a century before and the country was already undergoing class conflicts between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie: where, as was the case with Chartism, these conflicts assumed an initial political form, even if it was in the form of vague programs full of democratic ideologies, the bourgeoisie had not hesitated for even a minute to violently repress them, although at the same time it had to make a series of legislative and reformist concessions mitigating the inhuman exploitation of the factory operatives.

France followed a different course, of extraordinary significance for the theory and politics of the proletarian revolution. After the defeat of Napoleon, which for Marx was a decisive defeat of the bourgeois revolutionary force by the European absolutist reaction (it is necessary to know the truth about this, in the face of all those who listen to the phrases about Caesar, the despot, the dictator, the person who stifled liberty in 1789 and suchlike stories; in a letter from Marx to Engels dated December 2, 1856, Marx writes that it is a "… historical fact that the intensity and the viability of all revolutions since 1789 may be gauged with fair accuracy by their attitude towards Poland. Poland is their 'external' thermometer. This is demonstrable *en détail* from French history. It is conspicuous in our brief German revolutionary period, likewise in the Hungarian. Of all the revolutionary governments, including that of Napoleon I, the *Comité du salut public* is an exception only in as much as it refused to intervene, not out of weakness, but out of 'mistrust'…."). Now let us review the series with which we are already familiar. Between 1815 and 1831, a Bourbon ruled, placed on the throne by Austria, Prussia and Russia after Waterloo. In 1831 the revolutionary insurrection in Paris overthrew the absolute monarchy and Orleans mounted the throne, with a parliamentary constitution. It was therefore a victory for the bourgeoisie, who were henceforth supported by the workers.
The bourgeois monarchy, however, openly favored the big landowners and financiers, and in February 1848 Paris rose again and proclaimed the republic. Bourgeois, petty bourgeois and workers proclaimed, as Marx enthusiastically recalled, the resplendent (without any knowledge of neon lights) slogan of 1793: "*Libertè, Egalitè, Fraternitè*".
This time the working class, which the new government immediately rebuffed by refusing to implement the social reforms it had promised in exchange for workers support, began the struggle to go further than their traitorous allies. This struggle took the form of the impressive battles of June 1848 described by Marx in that book that is both science and epic, *The Class Struggles in France*, which was first published serially in three issues of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung. Politisch-ökonomische Revue* in 1850. The crushing defeat of the workers historically established the capacity of the modern republican and democratic bourgeoisie to carry out more ruthless repressions than the feudal aristocracy and the despotic monarchy. From that moment we have possessed the complete revolutionary schema utilized against the opportunist wave of the first world war, and which had to be mobilized against the opportunism of the second world war as well. It is in these pages that we find the fundamental political thesis: Destruction of the bourgeoisie! Dictatorship of the working class! And also: Permanent revolution, class dictatorship of the proletariat! These are the "forgotten words of Marxism" reestablished by Lenin. And these were the words that were forgotten again, whose memory must be reestablished today against the renegades from Marxism and Leninism, and which Engels highlighted in his Introduction to the edition of 1895 by formulating the fundamental economic thesis: "*appropriation of the means of production* … and, therefore, the abolition of wage labour, of capital and of their mutual relations" (Introduction by Engels to the 1895 edition of *The Class Struggles in France*).
If the state, as in Russia, takes possession of capital without abolishing capital, it does the same thing as a bourgeois state. The state that economically abolishes capital, wage labor and the relations of exchange between capital and labor, can only be the state of the proletariat!

In France—but not in the rest of Europe—after 1848 the series of glorious alliances made with the Jacobin bourgeoisie was denounced by the workers, and it is precisely from 1848 that we possess our model—yes, model, the revolution is the discovery of a historic model—of the communist class revolution. These denunciations were not revocable since they were marked by the blood of tens of thousands of workers who fell at the barricades, three thousand of whom were bestially shot down by the bourgeois republic after they had surrendered and been taken prisoner.

Marx justified the fact that in 1852, during the coup d'état of Louis Napoleon, which was by no means a return to feudalism, the French proletariat, which certainly could not be accused of baseness, opposed with icy indifference the fall of that fake democracy. The Italian proletariat did not acquit itself nearly so well with that banal episode involving Mussolini, which was comparable to the French case!

The French nation is a conquest that is already assured by history. The proletariat no longer has any impediments standing in the way of its "liberation from its own national bourgeoisie". The workers of France, with the uprisings of June and the Paris Commune, have served this great mission with great honor since the conspiracy of Babeuf in the great revolution. But they belied their tradition in 1914 and 1939, which were two serious crises for the bourgeoisie. Here, too, the words of Marx are valid: "*A new revolution is only a consequence of a new crisis. The one, however, is as sure to come as the other*."

National Struggles after 1848

10

The development of the revolution in Germany in 1848 did not reach the stage of the political victory of the bourgeoisie and its establishment in power; and therefore the German proletariat, which at that time was not very numerous, did not reach the strategic point of attacking the bourgeoisie after having first supported it. From then on the position of the Marxist communists is that of favoring a process leading to the creation of a German national state and a liberal revolution against the Prussian dynasty and state, as a necessary transitional stage towards an open class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

The process leading to the formation of the German state is particularly complex from the historical point of view. We still do not have a united German national state: such a state did not exist before the first world war, and only Hitler finally created it with the forced annexation of Austria, which had been deprived after its defeat in the first world war of its rule over peoples of other nationalities. Today, after the second world war, the victors have divided the Germans into three states: East Germany, West Germany and Austria. But while both sides are talking about the reunification of the two Germanies, everyone is trying to isolate the weak and small Austria from them.

In order to characterize the position of Marxism on this issue we could provide innumerable quotations from the post-1848 period. The Prussian state is defined as a feudal and reactionary state that cannot be transformed into a bourgeois political state within its territory, and the Hohenzollern monarchy is also viewed as an adversary of the bourgeois revolution. Dynasty, aristocracy, army and bureaucracy, all are considered in terms of nationality as non-German, with influences and connections of non-national, Russophilic, Baltic and Philoslavic kinds. An indisputable basic element in the analysis of the formation of political nationality after the advent of capitalism, is the antagonism with the great bordering nationalities, and although this is fully applicable to the French, who are age-old enemies, it is completely missing from the eastern frontiers: within this process we must consider as particularly contradictory the wars of Frederick II, which, although they reinforced the power of Prussia, did so by transforming Prussia into a garrison-state.

With respect to the wars against Napoleon, they did not provide a suitable foundation for the German nation, either, since they were waged against the vanguard of the new bourgeois and national society formed by the armies of the Convention, the Consulate and the First Empire, and their nature was distorted due to the alliance with the oppressors of the nationalities, the autocrats of Russia and Austria. As a result, these wars could not serve as foundation for the process of German unification.

We must nonetheless obtain a clear understanding of the position of Marx and Engels, since on the one hand they refused to consider the Prussian state and territory as the basis for a modern nation, but on the other hand were not in favor of the preservation and independence of the small states and principalities. Prussia, without these minor states, or without preserving its hegemony over them, is not the German nation that was awaited for centuries, but one cannot speak of a Bavarian or Saxon nation, either, and the diminutive grand duchies are pure feudal residues. Marx and Engels never—because they had their sights set on the model of the neighboring “single and indivisible republic”—supported a federal system.

For Marx and Engels a democratic state centralization in which each citizen would be juridically German and a subject of the central power would have been a great step forward. Later, the revolutionary assault of the increasingly more numerous German working class would be directed against this united capitalist state.

After the defeat in 1850 of the domestic anti-feudal insurrection, with the full capitulation of the weak bourgeoisie to Prussianism, the change could only be expected to be brought by wars between states, wars based on national questions. Marx’s positions with regard to the war with Denmark in 1849, the Austro-French war of 1859, the Austro-Prussian war of 1866, and finally the Franco-Prussian war of 1871 which led to the creation of the empire although this empire would always retain a Prussian and Bismarckian imprint, are of particular interest.

In all of these wars, as we have pointed out on other occasions, Marx and Engels clearly took sides and supported the victory of one of the contenders, and engaged in political agitation in support of their views. Their positions were naturally far removed from apologetics for the bourgeois radicals and the national revolutionaries of various nationalities who were then travelling all over Europe and who are treated by Marx and Engels—even the most illustrious ones like Kossuth, Mazzini, Garibaldi and others (not to speak of the French of the same ilk who completely lacked any justification for the historical appearance of the bourgeois fatherland, such as Blanc, Ledru-Rollin and other pompous figures)—as phonies and sanctimonious donkeys. We must constantly keep this distinction in mind, so that our historical reconstruction is not ingenuously considered as just another example of the recent and contemporary nauseating praise lavished by “proletarians” on all the Churchills, Trumans, DeGaulles, Orlandos, Nittis and so many other present-day liberators and partisans. A few references and just one quotation will do, as we refer the reader to a few of our “Threads of Time” on the Nation, War, and Revolution (issues nos. 9 to 13 of *Battaglia Comunista*, 1950).
War between Piedmont and Austria in 1848 and 1849. Austria is condemned despite its being the victim of aggression, since this was a war for the formation of the Italian nation.

War between Prussia and Denmark in 1849 for the conquest of Schleswig-Holstein. Commonly condemned as a war of aggression on the part of Prussia; Marx and Engels support it, however, because its purpose was to incorporate ethnically German territories into the Prussian state.

War between Napoleon III in alliance with Piedmont against Austria in 1859, and subsequent conflicts in Italy in 1860. The position of Marx and Engels is clearly in favor of the constitution of the united Italian

state, and therefore in favor of the defeat of Austria; Engels demonstrated that German interests were not defended on the banks of the Mincio. Does that mean that Marx and Engels supported Bonaparte? Now we also see the text that also invoked the struggle against Bonaparte on the Rhine, proposed much later, against Russia. The Second Empire is also castigated for having defrauded the Italian nation in Nice, Savoy and also in Corsica. Marx would later refer to this in his text on the Paris Commune, ferociously stigmatizing the intervention in defense of the papacy and against Rome as the capital of Italy, as he did after the intervention of the Second French Republic crushed the Roman Republic in 1849.

Since we shall discuss the wars of 1866 and 1870 below, we shall submit the quotation that clarifies the thought of Marx: the necessary demand in support of the formation of the German nation, in order afterwards to overthrow the bourgeoisie; denunciation of the counterrevolutionary state ruled from Berlin.

The letter to Engels, dated March 24, 1863:

"… Vincke and Bismarck do, in fact, accurately represent the principle of the Prussian State; that the 'State' of Prussia (a very different creature from Germany) cannot exist either without Russia as she is, or with an independent Poland. The whole history of Prussia leads one to this conclusion which was drawn long since by Messrs Hollenzollern (Frederick II included). This princely consciousness is infinitely superior to the limited mentality of the subject that marks your Prussian liberal. Since, therefore, the existence of Poland is necessary to Germany and completely incompatible with the State of Prussia…. the Polish question simply provides further occasion for proving that it is impossible to prosecute German interests so long as the Hollenzollerns' own state continues to exist."

We see at every step, then, Germany, the German nation, German interests: clearly German national interests. This clearly expresses, with respect to a particular case—but one that was very important—the thesis that the unitary and centralized constitution of the national state is in the interest of the bourgeoisie, since it is the form of its class power, but it is also in the interest of the proletariat up until the moment of its realization, because from that moment on the scramble for political and class positions commences, by means of which the proletariat will overthrow the power of the national bourgeoisie.

The Polish Question
11

Complete solidarity with the demand for the national independence of Poland, oppressed by the Czar, was of fundamental importance because it was not just a matter of a historical opinion expressed in theoretical texts, but of a real and distinct political alignment of the forces of the First International. Not only did it offer and provide the most complete support of the forces of the European workers, but the Polish revolt is considered as a springboard for the resumption of a revolutionary situation and the general struggle on the whole continent.

We shall follow these manifestations of the texts and documents of our school in detail because we have to show that the opinion that Marxist politics, with regard to making evaluations and deductions as the different contingent situations arise, has no difficulty in changing course, is erroneous; to the contrary, the political decisions are rigidly bound, stage by stage, to a unitary view of the general historical course of the revolution and, in the case at hand, to the materialist-historical definition of the function of nationalities according to the succession of the great and typical modes of production.

The fragmentary and episodic utilization of these elements has been practiced for more than a half century by various tendencies, for the purpose of justifying the incessant reversals of opportunism and

eclecticism, which with each passing day claim to have elaborated a new doctrine and a new norm, shamelessly transforming the devils of yesterday into the angels of today, or vice versa.

The Polish question, however, is important even from other points of view. It might seem that a marked display of sympathy for the struggles for national independence possesses an almost Platonic dimension because it is limited exclusively to only writings and studies of a historical or social theoretical type, and also due to the fact that these efforts are not also translated onto the plane of political programs and action programs of the party, of the real and true communist proletarian party that during the period we are examining (1847-1871) already had assumed as its original and proper content the struggle between the proletariat and capitalism, and the destruction of that social mode of production. But it is not the writers Marx and Engels whom we shall call to testify, but Marx and Engels the international leaders of the communist movement. If someone after a superficial and juvenile reading, might deduce that the writings of Engels on the Po, the Rhine, Nice and Savoy were merely political-military studies undertaken during a lull in the class revolution, departing from the social-economic method (not to mention, in case this was not obvious, that within this conception it is permitted to open up parentheses and 'free trade zones' of every kind within the Marxist doctrine of the course of human affairs, in each and every one), it is very important to show that all the deductions he makes are born from an absolute adherence to the root of the materialist explanation of history and of the discernment of the collective human "journey" in time in the light of the development of the productive forces. No one should be allowed to forget this, even if they are holding a sword, or rather a scalpel, a pen, a paintbrush, a chisel or a saw, or the hammer and sickle.

A "situational" Marx and Engels are very much suited to the Kominform and similar congregations, and comprise the core falsification among all the miserable falsifications that circulate in that milieu.

In a letter dated February 13, 1863, Marx inquires of his friend Engels about the events in Poland. The news of that heroic insurrection in the cities and the countryside, which became a real civil war waged against the Russian forces, caused Marx to exclaim: "This much is certain, the **era of revolution** has now**fairly opened in Europe** once more. And the general state of affairs is good." But the memory of the bitter defeats of 1850 is still too fresh: "But the comfortable **delusions** and almost childish [this marks the first instance of the use of this adjective that was so frequently utilized by Lenin, but always in a non-disrespectful way--Bordiga's note] enthusiasm with which we welcomed the revolutionary era before February 1848, have gone by the board…. Old comrades … are no more, others have fallen by the wayside or gone to the bad and, if there is new stock, it is, at least, not yet in evidence. Moreover, we now know what role stupidity plays in revolutions, and how they are exploited by blackguards." So get going, idlers, you are not children anymore, but senile; rise up to the level of Karl Marx with regard to this point. This letter gives, with a handful of indications, which we shall complement by referring to subsequent letters, the balance sheet of the attitude of all the European political forces towards the Polish insurrection. The Prussian "nationalists", who turned into supporters of national independence in order to deprive the Viennese Emperor of his status as the leader of the German confederation and hypocritically proclaimed their sympathy with Italy and Hungary which were demanding their independence, were caught with their hands in the cookie jar: they were just so many filthy Russophiles and they closed ranks against the Poles. The Russian democratic revolutionaries (Herzen) were also put to the test; despite their Slavic predilections they had to defend the Poles against the Russian state (refusing to agree to support a proposal that once a constitution was granted by the Czar, Poland should continue to be a Russian province). The bourgeois governments of London and of Plon-Plon (Napoleon III) expressed their hypocritical support for the Polish cause due to their rivalries with Russia, but both were suspect, and the betrayal of the French is a matter of record; their agents were in constant contact with the right

wing of the Polish movement that would effectively back down, especially if the revolt were to suffer a setback.

Almost nobody could or wanted to create a European “democracy” out of insurrectionary Poland; and Marx immediately tried to get the International Workingmen’s Association, which had been formed in London on September 28, 1864, to publish a practical action program. Before the famous meeting in Saint Martin’s Hall, Marx addressed the English workers Association. He sketched out his plan in brief: a short proclamation to the workers of all countries on the part of the English—a meticulous treatise on the Polish question written about particular aspects by Marx and Engels. And just after September 1864 there were discussions within the General Council, over which Marx exercised a moral chairmanship although he had not officially accepted the position, concerning what kind of action to undertake. These discussions led to some debates of great interest that clarified the political problems of the moment.

Pro-Polish action is therefore included in all the documents that emanated from the party, from the workers International; and it was considered to be the principal lever for the maximum development of workers agitation in Europe by helping to precipitate the occasions for the emergence of a revolutionary movement. Therefore the elaborations concerning principles about the historic problem of the support of the internationalist proletariat for a national struggle have a great importance.

The International and the Question of Nationalities
12
Within the General Council of the First International and under the leadership of Marx, a series of interesting debates provides the elements for the rectification of errors of principle on the question of the historic struggles of nationalities. The tendency to ignore them instead of explaining them from the materialist point of view, rather than being evidence of an advanced internationalism is instead a manifestation of particularist and federalist positions derived from utopian and libertarian theories that Marxism had jettisoned.

The same congress of the International Workingmen’s Association that was convoked in solidarity with the Poles (it produced a letter from the English workers to the French workers with respect to Poland) also expressed support for the Armenians oppressed by Russia, and as Marx himself recounts, many elements who were radical democrats and who aroused the mistrust of the workers also attended this congress. Concerned about theoretical clarity but also about the power of the movement, at a historical moment when the demands for independence had a real revolutionary content, Marx arranged to have an unsuitable report shelved and drafted the powerful Inaugural Address, in which the struggle of the proletarian class in England and on the continent was given the greatest emphasis.

Marx’s famous letter of November 4, 1864, totally clarifies the position that should be taken with regard to the arrival of so many democrats in the workers ranks. This is interesting with regard to any attempt to form a correct evaluation of the activities of those who would today be accused of right-wing deviation with regard to the national question. A certain Wolff proposed a statute that he claimed was the same one adopted by the Italian workers societies: Marx writes that the latter “… are essentially associated **Benefit Societies**…. I saw the stuff later. It was **evidently** a concoction of *Mazzini’s*, and that tells you in advance in what spirit and phraseology the real question, the labour question, was dealt with. As well as how the **nationalities** question intruded into it.” When Eccarius asked him to attend the meeting of the subcommittee, Marx heard “a fearfully cliché-ridden, badly written and totally unpolished preamble**pretending to be a declaration of principles**, with Mazzini showing through the whole thing from beneath a crust of the most insubstantial scraps of French socialism.”

There was also, in the Italian declaration, “something quite impossible, a sort of central government of the *European* working classes (with Mazzini in the background, of course)”.
Finally, Marx drafted the Address, reducing the statutes from 40 to 10 articles, and read the text that would later become historical, accepted by all. His method, however, was not clearly illustrated in this text. Many of the people in attendance will not understand anything, he commented to Engels, and they are the types that would join the liberals in a campaign to demand universal suffrage.

Everyone knows that the famous Address, after the social and class part, contains a final paragraph referring to international politics, which states that the workers demand that the relations between states should be subject to the same moral norms that rule over relations between men. The phrase is repeated in the first address on the war of 1870, and not only expresses a bourgeois postulate, like all those concerning the national question, but expresses it in a purely propagandistic form. Marx will be excused for having had to act *fortiter in re, suaviter in modo*—harshly with regard to content, but gently with regard to form. But the false Marxists of our time have also fallen beneath the worst urine streams of the ultra-bourgeois democrats. Let us take a look at Marx’s true clarification:
“Insofar as **International politics** is mentioned in the ‘Address’, I refer to**countries** and not to **nationalities**, and denounce Russia, not the *minores gentium* [smaller nations]. The Sub-Committee adopted all my proposals. I was, however, obliged to insert two sentences about ‘**duty**’ and ‘**right**’, and ditto about ‘**Truth, Morality and Justice**’ in the preamble to the rules, but these are so placed that they can do no harm.”
On December 10, 1864, Marx summarized the debate on the proposal of Fox concerning the appeal on behalf of Poland. This good democrat went to great extremes in order to speak of “the concept of ‘class’, [or] at least a semblance of it”. But there was a point that did not escape Marx, an expression of sympathy for the French democracy that was almost extended as far as “Boustrapa” (Plon-Plon).

“I opposed this and unfolded a historically irrefutable tableau of the constant French betrayal of Poland from Louis XV to Bonaparte III. At the same time, I pointed out how thoroughly *inappropriate* it was that the **Anglo-French Alliance** *should* appear as the ‘core’ of the **International Association**, albeit in a democratic version.”
The proposal was accepted with Marx’s revisions, but the Swiss delegate Jung, representing the minority, voted against this “**altogether** ‘bourgeois’” text.
To get an idea of the degree of interest stimulated by the question of the revolt in Poland, we should point out that the General Council not only had direct contacts with the bourgeois Poles, but that in one session it even received representatives of the aristocracy, since they also formed part of the national anti-Russian union. These aristocrats assured the Council that they, too, were democrats, and that the national revolution in Poland was impossible without a peasant uprising. Marx restricted himself to asking himself whether these people really believed what they were saying.

Let us now move on to 1866: once again the Polish question was “the real bone of contention” in the Association. A certain Vésinier accused the International, no less, of having become “*a committee of nationalities in tow to Bonapartism*”. This aroused Marx’s wrath. “This ass” had attributed to the Parisian delegates, who to the contrary had considered it inopportune, a paragraph on Poland included in the agenda of the Geneva Congress. In this paragraph it was deplored that, “yielding to pernicious influences, questions such as the abolition of Russian influence in Europe that bear no relation to the aims of the Association, were included in the programme of the Geneva Congress, etc.” should be addressed.
Vésinier’s thesis is as follows: it is neither class-based nor internationalist to encourage a national war by the Poles against the Russians and to become enemies of Russia, because we must be for peace among the peoples. As justification for this position he recalled the iniquities of the Bonaparte regime and of the

English bourgeoisie, and the emancipation in Russia and Poland of the serfs, which only recently took place, and asserted “that it was the duty of the Central Committee to proclaim solidarity and fraternity among all peoples, *and not to put one of them alone beyond the pale of Europe*”. Vésinier then accused the Poles of using the Association “to help to restore their nationhood, without concerning themselves with the question of the emancipation of the workers”. Marx restricted himself to pointing out the howlers that all this nonsense and fairy tales were full of, depicting it as “the Muscovitist line pursued by Proudhon and Herzen” and saying that Vésinier “is just the fellow for the Russians. Of little merit as a writer…. But with talent, great **rhetorical power**, much energy and above all unscrupulous through and through”. Vésinier’s proposal was defeated; “we are commemorating their [the Polish] revolution on 23 January”. We are totally of the opinion that every armed revolution “against the existing social conditions” is worth more than any theory endowed with an exaggerated extremism and that the pacifism between the peoples that Vésinier invoked was really an embrace between the bourgeoisie of the West and the Czar of all the Russias, in the genuine or feigned belief that this served the interests of the working class.

The Slavs and Russia

13

The historical cycle of the formation of bourgeois nation states, which proceeded in parallel with the spread of industrialism and the formation of the great markets, spread to England, France, Germany and Italy; other lesser powers could be considered to be constituted nations: Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Holland, Sweden and Norway. The Marxist demand applied to the typical case of Poland, and we must evaluate it as a declaration of war against the “Holy Alliance” of Russia, Austria and Prussia. But this cycle would come to an end, in the Marxist view, leaving unresolved, among other problems, the problem of the Slavs of Eastern and Southeastern Europe.

In 1856 Marx had become interested in a book by the Pole Mieroslawski, openly directed against Russia, Germany and Pan-Slavism, in which the author proposed “a free confederation of Slavic nations with Poland as the Archimedean people”, which means the people of the vanguard, the pioneer of freedom. Something of this kind was to take place with the formation of the Little Entente of the Slavic states (Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Poland as the most important and homogeneous state) after the first world war and the dissolution of the Austrian Empire (1918). And everyone knows that lasted for barely twenty years, until there was another repartition between the Germans and the Russians in 1939.

Marx’s critique of Mieroslawski’s social theory is very interesting. Besides criticizing Mieroslawski for founding his great hopes on the English and French governments, Marx points out that he does not foresee the future major industrialization of many Polish cities and regions and bases his independent state on the “‘democratic’ Lechitic community”. At first the Polish peasants were united in free communities, in a kind of agrarian guild system, confronting a “dominium”, or territory under the military and administrative control of a noble; the nobles, in turn, elected the king. The land of the free peasants was soon usurped, one part by the monarchy and the other by the aristocracy, and the peasant communities were subjected to serfdom. Nonetheless, a “*peasant middle class*” survived, with the right to form a semi-nobility, a sort of “*Equestrian Order*”: but the peasants could become members of this order only if they participated in a war of conquest or in the colonization of virgin lands; this stratum in turn was transformed into a kind of “lumpen-proletariat of the aristocracy”, a kind of tatterdemalion nobility: “This kind of development is interesting”, Marx writes, “because here serfdom can be shown to have arisen in a purely economic way, without the intermediate link of conquest and racial dualism.” In fact, the king, the high and low nobility, and the peasantry were all of the same race and spoke the same language, and the national tradition was as old as it was strong. Marx’s thesis therefore establishes that the class yoke appeared with the development of the productive technical means, even within a uniform ethnic group,

just as in other cases it appeared as the result of a clash between two races and two peoples, in which case race and language, in turn, functioned as “economic agents” (Engels—see Part 1).
Evidently the Polish democrat did not foresee the appearance in the conflict of a real industrial bourgeoisie and much less that of a powerful and glorious proletariat, which in 1905 held their own against the Czarist troops, and even rose up during the second world war in a desperate attempt to take power in the martyred capital against the German and Russian General Staffs, ending up just like the communards of Paris, who fell in the crossfire of their enemies.

Marx’s attention never for even a moment strayed from Russia, since he considered the Czar’s army as the mobile reserve force of the European counterrevolution, always ready to cross the frontiers whenever it had to restore “order” by crushing any movement that sought to overthrow the states of the old regime, thus cutting off the road towards the different points from which the revolution of the proletariat could emerge. Almost ten years later, Marx was interested in the doctrine of Duchinski (a Russian professor from Kiev, who lived in Paris at the time). Marx relates that Duchinski maintained that “the real Muscovites, i.e., inhabitants of the former **Grand Duchy of Moscow**, were for the most part Mongols or Finns, etc., as was the case in the parts of Russia situated further east and in its south-eastern parts. I see from it at all events that the affair has seriously worried the St Petersburg cabinet (since it would put an end to *Panslavism* in no uncertain manner). All Russian scholars were called on to give responses and refutations, and these in the event turned out to be terribly weak. The purity of the Great Russian dialect and its connection with Church Slavonic appear to lend more support to the Polish than to the Muscovite view in this debate. (….) It has ditto been shown geologically and hydrographically that a great ‘Asiatic’ difference occurs east of the Dnieper, compared with what lies to the west of it, and that (as Murchison has already maintained) the *Urals* by no means constitute a dividing line. Result as obtained by Duchinski: Russia is a name usurped by the Muscovites. They are not Slavs; they do not belong to the Indo-Germanic **race** at all, they are *des intrus*[intruders], who must be chased back across the Dnieper, etc. Panslavism in the Russian sense is a cabinet invention, etc. I wish that Duchinski were right and **at all events** that this view would prevail among the Slavs. On the other hand, he states that some of the peoples in Turkey, such as Bulgars, e.g., who had previously been regarded as Slavs, are non-Slav.” (Letter from Marx to Engels, dated June 24, 1865).
We do not know if this passage from Marx’s letter was used in the recent bourgeois polemic against the Russian Revolution, since according to the common view the Russian people are Asiatic and not European (and furthermore, according to mainstream opinion, that is why they have to endure a dictatorship!). This racial thesis, absolutely inoffensive for authentic Marxism, is prejudicial to our contemporary Russians who follow in the footsteps of Stalin, and rely on a racial, national and linguistic tradition rather than on the class bond of the world proletariat.

In the Marxist sense, the fact that the Great Russians should be classified as Mongolians rather than as Aryans (we should not forget that famous phrase that Marx so often invokes: “*Grattez le Russe, et vous trouverez le Tartare*”, “scratch a Russian and you will find a Tartar”) is of fundamental importance with regard to the following question: is it necessary to await the formation of a vast capitalist Slavic super-nation that would include the whole Russian territory, or would at least extend to the Urals, in order to conclude the cycle in which the forces of the European working class must offer themselves up to the cause of the formation of nations, so that once this cycle is terminated the European revolution becomes possible? Marx’s response was that the formation of modern nation states as a premise for the workers revolution corresponds to an area that extends in the east as far as the eastern borders of Poland, and under certain circumstances might include the Ukraine and Little Russia as far as the Dnieper. This is the European area of the revolution, the first one that must be addressed, and the cycle that served as the

prelude to the next cycle characterized by purely class-oriented action, is the one that later came to an end in 1871.
We must not forget, in order to prevent ethnology from being transformed into the sole determining factor, that peoples of the Mongolian stock, that is, of the Finnish race, form nations in Europe (Hungary and Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia) which, because they are socially advanced, are within the European historical zone, and Marxism had a favorable view during this period of their attempts to win independence from the three regimes of the Holy Alliance.

The Wars of 1866 and 1870
14
As the Polish insurrection collapsed and this road by which the revolution might be resumed was closed, just as it was closed in 1848, Marx and Engels perceived that war between Austria and Prussia was approaching. Italy would undoubtedly participate in this war as a result of the pressing problem of Venetian independence, while the position of Russia and France remained in doubt; it was clear that a new period of upheaval was gathering momentum. Sedan would settle all accounts, and the only enemy of the revolution would be the French Empire, which would have to be defeated.

On April 10, 1866, Marx thought that it was the Russians who wanted war, because they had concentrated troops on the Austrian and Prussian frontiers, with the intention of taking advantage of the situation and occupying the other two parts of Poland. This would mean the end of the Hohenzollern regime, but the real objective was to eventually descend upon revolutionary Berlin in order to support the Hohenzollerns. Marx and Engels hoped that at the news of the first military defeat Berlin would rise.

It was something new that, despite the fact that they opposed Austria on the Venetian question, Marx and Engels nonetheless considered that an Austrian victory would be useful, with respect to its effects on the anti-Prussian revolution.

As for Napoleon III, the latter was no less hostile towards the proletarian cause than Alexander of Russia, and up to this point his dream had been “to become the fourth member of the Holy Alliance”, a dream that was now shattered.

After the outbreak of the war, the Council of the International debated the situation on June 19, 1866, vigorously addressing the problem of nationalities.

“The French, very strongly represented, **gave vent** to their cordial dislike for the Italians.” Marx revealed the fact that the French were at bottom against the Italo-Prussian alliance and would have preferred the victory of Austria. In this session, however, what was of greater importance than taking a position was the theoretical question: “The representatives of ‘*jeune France*’ (*non-workers*), by the way, trotted out their view that any nationality and even nations are ‘*des préjugés surannés*’ [outdated prejudices].” Here Marx drily commented: “Proudhonised Stirnerianism.” (Stirner is the philosopher of extreme individualism who, focusing everything on the subject’s “ego”, on the one hand helped inform the theory of the super-dictator of Nietzsche, and on the other, the theory that rejected the state and society, the basic theory of the anarchists: both theories are the quintessence of bourgeois thought. Proudhon on the economic and sociological terrain glorified the small autonomous group of producers who exchanged their products with the other groups.) Marx further clarified this condemnation, denouncing the retrograde nature of something that was being passed off as radical. As we have already pointed out, the position that Marx attacked did not involve the supersession of this historically bourgeois, but operative, postulate of the nation, but rather fell short of it.

“Everything to be broken down into small ‘*groupes*’ or ‘*communes*’, which in turn form an ‘association’, but not a state. Furthermore, this ‘individualisation’ of mankind and the *mutualisme* it entails are to proceed by bringing history to a halt in every other country and the whole world waits until the French are ready to carry out a social revolution. Then they will demonstrate the experiment to us, and the rest of the world, being bowled over by the force of their example [do you not get the impression that he could be speaking of today’s Russians?], will do the same. Just what Fourier expected from his *phalanstère modèle* [today they would say the socialist fatherland, the country of socialism…--Bordiga's note]. *D'ailleurs*, everyone who clutters up the ‘social’ question with the ‘superstitions’ of the Old World is a ‘reactionary’.”
On this occasion Marx, ordinarily so reluctant to engage in public activity, could not avoid speaking out against his future son-in-law Lafargue. His speech caused the English to break out in laughter when he pointed out that Lafargue, after abolishing nationality, had spoken in French, a language unknown to most of those present: “I went on to suggest that by his denial of nationalities he seemed quite unconsciously to imply their absorption by the model French nation.”

What was Marx’s position on this war? First and foremost, he favored a Prussian defeat. And in the same letter to Engels, rather than in an address to the Council (we must keep in mind the confidential nature of the writings that we are now quoting), he says: “For the rest, the position is difficult now because one must equally oppose the silly Italianism of the English, on the one hand, and the mistaken polemic against it of the French, on the other, and above all prevent any demonstration which would involve our Association in a one-sided course.” Therefore, in the war of 1866, Marx did not openly take the side of any of the belligerents, an attitude comparable to that of the Poles during the anti-Russian insurrection.

After the Austrian victories in Italy, Austria was defeated at Sadowa by Prussia, and Napoleon intervened as a mediator. On July 7, 1866, Marx wrote: “Beside a great Prussian defeat, which perhaps (oh but those Berliners!) might have led to a revolution, there could have been no better outcome than their stupendous victory.” Marx thought that the best interest of Bonaparte would have been served by an alternation of victories and defeats between the Austrians and Prussians, so that a strong Germany should not be formed with an overwhelming central hegemony, so that Bonaparte with his military force intact would become the arbiter of Europe. Marx also thought that Italy’s position was very dangerous and that Russia stood to gain no matter what happened. As everyone knows, Austria, accepting the mediation of France, surrendered Venice to France: in order to obtain Venice, the King of Savoy had to once again engage in a rapprochement with his former ally of 1859, who defiantly proclaimed his famous “*jamais*” [never] to the occupation of Rome.
With this panorama the position of the International is precise: the war will be unleashed by Bonaparte, who was equipping his infantry with needle-guns, when he saw the opportunity to strike (Marx in a letter dated July 7 considered the technological development of weaponry as an application of economic determinism—“Is there any sphere in which our theory that the *organisation* of labour is determined *by the means of production* is more dazzlingly vindicated than in the industry for human slaughter?”—and suggested to Engels that he should write a study on the topic; today it seems that everything is reduced to the following question: who has the atomic bomb?). The second point is that it is necessary for the France of Napoleon to be defeated in this war.
We have continually insisted concerning the proletarian policy with respect to a domestic and revolutionary war for national independence, such as the Polish insurrection of 1863 (or the Italian uprisings of 1848 and 1860), in which case the position to take was unambiguous and total. We shall not repeat everything that has been said about the war of 1870 between France and Prussia. The proclamations of the International totally ruled out any support for either the government of Bismarck or that of Bonaparte: concerning this question there is no doubt. But the International openly desired the defeat of the Second Empire (just as in 1815 it would have preferred the victory of the First Empire).

In the Address of the General Council dated July 23, 1870, the valiant opposition to the war demonstrated by the French sections is applauded, but then this oft-used phrase appears: for the Germans the war is a “war of defense” (which would later be the object of a historically indomitable commentary by Lenin). This phrase was followed by an open attack on Prussian policy and the invitation to the German workers to fraternize with the French: the victory of Germany would be a disaster and would reproduce “all the miseries that befell Germany after her [so-called] wars of independence [against Napoleon]”. It was necessary to wait for someone like Lenin to come along and say: the philistine petty-bourgeois cannot understand how one can desire the defeat of both belligerents! Beginning in 1870, the general theory of proletarian defeatism was already in effect.

With the next quotation we shall see the historical evaluation of Marxism concerning this phase of 1866 and 1870 and the role played by the feudal powers of the East and by the bourgeois dictatorships of the West (without forgetting that we have to discourage the use of the word “if” in the story for all those cretins who seek to be published): “If the battle of Sadowa had been lost instead of being won, French battalions would have overrun Germany as the allies of Prussia.”

A defensive war means a war in the historically progressive sense, and this was the case, as Lenin has maintained, between 1789 and 1871, but never after that (we shall never tire of throwing this in the faces of the just war advocates of 1939-1945). This means that if Moltke had departed one day before Bazaine, and if the war cry had been: “To Paris, To Paris!” Instead of “To Berlin, To Berlin!—the Marxist assessment would have been the same.

The Commune and the New Cycle
15
The frustrated revolution of 1848 in Germany did not break out again in 1866 or in 1871 due to the overwhelming victories of Prussian militarism. But the tremendous defeat of French militarism stimulated the uprising of the proletariat of Paris, not only against the fallen regime but against the entire republican bourgeois class that had capitulated to the reactionary Prussian forces, and also against the Prussian forces themselves. The fall of the revolutionary government of the Commune in no way diminished the historical importance of the new cycle which from that moment forward imposed on the European communists only one historical goal: the proletarian dictatorship.

The Second Address of the International dated September 9, 1870 appeared after the victory at Sedan and the surrender of the French army, the expulsion of Napoleon and the proclamation of the Republic. This Address is a firm exhortation against the proposals to annex Alsace and Lorraine, and against the claim that this annexation was necessary to create a military security corridor; it scornfully noted the lack of any similar Prussian concern for the Russian borders and foresaw “a war with the Slavonic and Roman races”. In this text it is also said that the German working class “have resolutely supported the war, which it was not in their power to prevent”, but was now calling for peace and for the recognition of the Republic proclaimed in Paris. This claim aroused some serious doubts; the Parisian proletariat, however, was advised not to revolt against this republic. The Third Address, however, the personal work of Marx, not only constitutes an expression of the politics of the proletariat, but is also a historical pillar of the revolutionary theory and program. Marx read it on May 30, 1871—as Engels recalls in his Postscript to the 1891 edition—only two days after the last combatants of the Commune fell in Belleville.

This classic source of revolutionary communism to which we must incessantly refer, dispenses with the kinds of concerns that six months before had led the General Council to advise the Paris proletariat not to plunge into such an impossible enterprise because the resulting catastrophe would favor more Prussian

invasions and annexations, causing the reemergence of another major problem of national independence in the very heart of the most advanced part of Europe. The International of the workers of the whole world united with all its forces with the first revolutionary government of the working class and took note of the lessons that the ferocious repression had transmitted to the future history of the proletarian revolution.

These lessons have been betrayed twice on a world scale, in 1914 and 1939, but the goal of our patient reconstructions and of our tireless repetitions is to show that, despite these betrayals, these lessons will be taken up again in a future historical period, just as they were set forth in that memorable text.

The alliance of Versailles and the Prussians to crush the red Commune, meaning that the former had assumed, under the pressure of the latter and the orders of Bismarck, the role of executioner of the revolution, leads to the historical conclusion that “the highest heroic effort of which old society is still capable is national war [which up until then we had to support—Bordiga’s note]; and this is now proved to be a mere governmental humbug, intended to defer the struggle of classes, and to be thrown aside as soon as that class struggle bursts out into civil war”.

Lenin did not invent the rule: transform the war between nations into a civil war; he found it already written. Lenin did not say that this slogan he proclaimed to the European proletarian parties in 1914 and 1915 should be modified in later situations, that the phase of alliances in favor of national wars would return, the phase of “peace … between the working men of France and the appropriators of their produce”, as the text quoted above puts it. Marx and Lenin revealed the historical law according to which, from 1871 until the destruction of capitalism, there are two alternatives in Europe: either the proletarians pursue defeatism in all wars, or, as Engels prophetically wrote in the 1891 Postscript, and as we can see this prediction in effect today, “… is there not every day hanging over our heads the Damocles’ sword of war, on the first day of which all the chartered covenants of princes will be scattered like chaff; (…) a race war which will subject the whole of Europe to devastation by 15 or 20 million armed men….” (Postscript by Engels to the 1891 edition of Marx’s *The Civil War in France*).
First: Marxism has always foreseen war between bourgeois states; second: it has always admitted that in particular historical phases it is not pacifism but war that accelerates general social development, as was the case with the wars that enabled the bourgeoisie to form national states; third: since 1871 Marxism has established that there is only one way that the revolutionary proletariat can put an end to war: with civil war and the destruction of capitalism.

The Imperialist Epoch and Irredentist Residues
16
The survival, in the epoch of wars of independence and national formation of a bourgeois revolutionary character, of a great number of cases in which lesser nationalities are subjected to states of another nationality in Europe itself, does not obviate the fact that the proletarian International must reject any justification for war between states for reasons of irredentism, unmasking the imperialist purposes of every bourgeois war, and calling upon the workers to sabotage such wars from both sides. The inability to put this into practice has determined the destruction of revolutionary energies under the opportunist waves of the two wars, and will also determine the same outcome in a future war if the masses do not abandon the opportunist leadership in time (social democratic or kominformist), thus allowing capitalism to survive its violent and bloody crises.

It was Lenin who showed, with reference to the war of 1914, that the war broke out due to the economic rivalry between the major capitalist states for the appropriation of shares of the productive resources of the world and especially those of the colonies in the underdeveloped continents. He never overlooked the

existence of serious national problems in various metropolitan states; the perfect example is the Austrian monarchy which ruled over various Slavic, Latin and Magyar regions, not to forget some Ottoman groups. Another example was Russia, whose feudal state straddled the border between Europe and Asia. This is why, when considering Russian national questions, one cannot even reach a conclusion without keeping in mind the purpose of this work and others that will follow, in which the dynamic of the class and national struggles on the non-European continents and between races of color will be addressed (the eastern question; the colonial question).

The socialists of the Second International based their betrayal on three sophisms. The first was to support the nation in case of defensive war; the second was to support a war against a “less developed” country; and the third was that the war of 1914 would resolve the problems of irredentism. The difficulty posed by the irredentist issues of the time was formidable: France, for example, wanted to recover Alsace and Lorraine, but had no intention of surrendering Corsica or Nice. England contributed its support, but did not declare the independence of Gibraltar, Malta and Cyprus. Three countries wanted to liberate Poland, each in order to exercise its exclusive rule over that country.

Furthermore, everyone knows that the best example of resistance to the seduction of irredentism was provided by the Italian party; an even more classical example was that of the Serbian party, which was active in a nation that was surrounded by fellow Serbians who were subjects of other national powers, attacked by a much more powerful Austria, but which mounted a furious campaign against the militarism of Belgrade and the patriotic fever. Concerning the importance of these national questions, we have set forth the basic theses in a series of “Threads of Time” published in 1950-1951, and here we shall restrict ourselves to providing a brief summary.

1. The radical Marxists correctly combat the social democratic thesis of simple linguistic “cultural” autonomy within the unified state in multi-national countries, advocating total autonomy for the minority nationalities, but not as a bourgeois result or one made possible by the bourgeoisie, but as the result of the overthrow of the central state power, on the part of the proletarians of its nationality.
2. Those formulas are bourgeois and counterrevolutionary which advocate the liberation and equality of all nationalities, since this is impossible under the capitalist regime. However, resistance mounted against the state colossi of capitalism by the oppressed nationalities and the small “semi-colonial” powers or small states under protectorates, are forces that contribute to the downfall of capitalism.
3. Within the confines of the cycle in which the proletarian International denies any support or contribution on the part of its own organized political forces for wars between states, refusing to accept that the involvement in such a war of an alliance of despotic feudal states, or states that are less democratically organized than the others, should be a reason to fail to comply with this historic international position, and everywhere adopts defeatism for its own country, which does not obviate the fact that in its historical analysis it can and must foresee the different effects that can be expected from the events of a war.

In other texts we have offered numerous examples: in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877 in which the Franco-British democracies supported the Russians, Marx openly sympathized with the Turks. In the Greco-Turkish war of independence of 1899, without going so far as to volunteer to fight like the anarchists and republicans, the left socialists supported Greece, just as they sympathized with the revolution of the Young Turks, and with the Greek, Serbian and Bulgarian liberation struggle against Ottoman rule in the Balkan wars of 1912. And the same thing could be said of the Boer War against the English, a war—like the Spanish-American War of 1898—that had extra-European impacts and was fought for imperialist purposes.

But these were only episodes that punctuated the great period of calm that lasted from 1871 to 1914. Next came the world wars: every proletarian party that has supported its state at war or its allies is a traitor, and everywhere the tactic of revolutionary defeatism must be applied. From this crystal-clear conclusion, however, one must not deduce that the victory of one or another side will not make any difference with respect to a more advantageous development of events from a revolutionary perspective.

Our position on this question is well-known. The victory of the Western democracies and of America in the first and second world wars has caused the chances for the communist revolution to recede into the distant future, while a different outcome would have made it more likely to take place sooner. The same thing must be said about the American capitalist monster in a third world war, which could very well take place within one or two decades.

The precondition for the triumph of the communist revolution is the victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie: more than just a precondition, it is the revolution itself. But in the domain of war between states, which, until it can be proven to be otherwise, has up until now mobilized greater physical energies than the social war, revolutionary preconditions can also be perceived: the two principal preconditions are catastrophes for Great Britain and the United States of America, the gargantuan engines of the terrible historical inertia of the capitalist system and mode of production.

A Formula for Trieste Offered to the "Contingentists"
18

The position of the communists on the current conflict over Trieste can be summarized in these basic points: since 1911 the position of the Italian proletariat against the demands for national unity has been clearly expressed; in the war for Trieste and Trentino in 1915 the socialists denied their support, and the groups that later formed the communist party in Livorno in 1921 advocated sabotage of the national war; after 1918 the proletariat of the region of Giulia of both races and languages united firmly around revolutionary socialism and the party of Livorno; the communist proletariat must show the same resolute disdain for the nationalist policies of the governments of Rome and Belgrade, and even more for the disingenuous and deceitful policies of the kominformists.

Due to a strange coincidence this work is being written while an unforeseen series of events has placed Trieste under the spotlight of international politics. What do the communists have to say about the Trieste Crisis?

The Communist Party of Italy formed in Livorno in 1921 clearly demanded the most resolute opposition to the war that liberated Trieste and the Giulian and Trentine territories, because that party was the heir of the groups that, rejecting the sacred union in the war and the slogan of "neither support nor sabotage", advocated Leninist defeatism, proclaiming in May 1915 the (indefinite) general strike as a last-ditch attempt to stop the mobilization, and spurring the old party into action during the whole course of the war and in the period after the defeat at Caporetto.

Therefore, we do not want Trieste. But the proletarian and revolutionary Trieste was ours, and the majority of its political sections, the trade unions, and the cooperatives, including people who spoke both Italian and Slovenian—it did not matter!—were members of the communist party, which featured the glorious*Lavoratore* that was published in the two languages with the same articles on theory, propaganda and political and organization agitation. And in the communist ranks, red Trieste was in the front line in the battle against fascism, which was victorious only thanks to the help of the tricolor carabineros.

All of this has nothing in common with the positions of today's so-called Italian communists, who yesterday advocated that Trieste should pass into the hands of Tito because it would thus become part of a socialist fatherland, and today proudly display a contemptible nationalism by calling Tito "the executioner" par excellence.

The rivalry between the state of Belgrade and that of Rome, in the context of the repugnant world diplomatic struggle, as is also the case with the rivalry between the Italian parties with respect to the question of how to resolve the problem of Trieste, proceeds in accordance with the most superannuated nationalist formulas, and those who are most prone to make a crude use of the ethno-linguistic and historical sophisms are not the authentic bourgeoisie, but the "Marxists", Tito and Togliatti.

We are not concerned, and not only because of our slight numerical force, with the usual question: what do you advocate in terms of practice, just what do you propose? But for those Marxists with a concrete and positivist bent to their politics, we shall treat them to a formula that they have never really thought about. The problem of dual nationality and dual languages is unfathomable, and is not resolved by writing speeches for Venetians and Slovenes in English or Serbo-Croatian.

In substance, the situation is that in the cities, organized in a bourgeois way, the Latins prevail, while the Slavs, on the other hand, live in isolated villages in the interior of the country and especially all along the coast. The merchants, industrialists, industrial workers and professionals are Italian; the rural landowners and peasants are Slavs. A social difference that is presented as a national difference, and which will disappear if the workers take over the industries and the peasants expropriate their landlords, but which cannot be eliminated by drawing lines on a map.

In the constitution of the USSR, gentlemen of the Botteghe Oscure [a reference to the headquarters of the Italian Communist Party—Note of the Spanish Translator], and in its imitation version in the People's Republic of Yugoslavia, Marxist gentlemen of Belgrade, the foundation of the alliance between workers and peasants was the following formula: one representative for every one hundred workers, one for every one thousand peasants.

Hold any plebiscite on any question you please (you took this formula from Mussolini, your common enemy) with the rule that the vote of the inhabitant of the city and small cities (those, for example, with more than ten thousand inhabitants) will equal ten, and that of the inhabitant of the small town and the countryside will equal one. Then you will be able to extend the democratic vote to the entire area situated between the borders of 1866 and those of 1918: then you can grab Gorizia, Pola, Fiume and Zara.

But on all sides they have gulped down so much disgusting bourgeois democracy that they bow down before the sacred dogma, which makes the wealthy class laugh shamelessly, to see the sacred dogma repeated everywhere that each person's vote has the same weight.

With an arithmetic like ours most people would be in favor of the thesis that says, to hell with both of them!

The European Revolution
19
Within the historical development of the social productive forces, Trieste is a point of convergence of economic factors that extend beyond the frontiers of the states in question, and a crucial point of the modern industrial and communications apparatus: in any event, any interruption that takes place has a

very negative impact on the operations of exchange, which is the infrastructure of that great movement for the formation of national units, which came to an end in the 19th century. In the middle of the 20th century, there is only an international future for Trieste, one that cannot be effectively found by way of political and commercial agreements between bourgeois forces, but only in the European communist revolution, in which the workers of Trieste and the surrounding region will be one of the leading assault forces.

At the high point of the first emergence of capitalism in Italy, one of whose first political states was the Most Serene Republic of Venice, it is indisputable that Venetian dependence on Trieste, an advanced port and emporium of the Adriatic in the middle of a feudal and semi-barbarous Europe, was historically very progressive.

When the opening up of the great maritime trade routes of the Atlantic caused the downfall of Mediterranean capitalism, and the world market was being created thanks to Spain, Portugal, Holland, France and England, by way of the Atlantic trade routes, in Trieste there was always the chance, due to geographical factors, that the new mode of production would penetrate the interior of Central and Eastern Europe, where the landed anti-industrial reactionaries seemed to be so well entrenched, and had erected age-old obstacles to the new human organization.

The policy of the far-flung Austrian Empire which connected the Adriatic port with the nascent industrial centers of Germany, Hungary and Bohemia, was nonetheless progressive compared to the barriers erected by the Russians and the Turks, and enabled capitalism to gradually spread.

For the return of full-scale industrialism to the Italian peninsula and for its establishment in the Balkans, a positive factor was the one that was being forged by its connection with the powerful German economy, in the latter's attempt to undermine Anglo-Saxon predominance in the Mediterranean basin.

Since the defeat of the Axis, Trieste has always remained a leading issue, and in order to more effectively arrange America's colonization of Europe and its other repugnant schemes, America has subjected the city and its territory to a state of emergency.

All communist revolutionaries salute the proletariat of Trieste because over the whole period spanning various phases they have been occupied and obscenely represented by the worst kinds of capitalism and the most ferocious militarist nationalisms, celebrating their orgies of cruelty, corruption and exploitation.

Because so many rapacious claws and so many representatives of a shameless and brazen colonialism have concentrated in such a small area, Trieste will not find a national solution from any side, regardless of the language that is utilized to invoke it.

The solution can only be international: but just as it will not come from summit meetings or conflicts between states, it will not come from their democratic fornications, from the sordid unity of European servitude, either.

We do not forecast a national flag over the Castle of San Giusto, but the coming of the European proletarian dictatorship, which will not fail to find among a proletariat that has endured such painful experiences, when the time comes, the most resolute combatants.

Amadeo Bordiga
1953

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The Spirit of Horsepower (1953)

The main aim of our considerations of various subjects — which makes it indispensable to continually repeat the facts remembered from basic “theorems”, even better if it’s with the same words and phrases — is the criticism of the frenzy around the “unforeseen” and deformed forms of very modern capitalism which supposedly compel a reconsideration of the bases of the "perspective" and thus of the marxist method itself.

This false position can easily be related to the refusal to recognise, or even with a total ignorance of, the essential outlines of our doctrine and its basic points.

The whole discussion now underway on revolutionary forms in Russia and China boils down to the judgement to be made of the historical phenomenon of the “appearance” of industrialism and mechanisation in huge areas of the world previously dominated by landed and precapitalist forms of production.

Constructing industrialism and mechanising things is supposedly the same as building socialism whenever central and “national” plans are made. This is the mistaken thesis.

Classically, marxism historically identifies mechanisation with capitalism. The difference between the employment of mechanical forces in a capitalist society and in a socialist one is not quantitative, it does not lie in the fact that technical and economic management passes from restricted circles to a complete circle. It is qualitative and consists in the total overthrow of the capitalist characteristics of the use of machines by human society, something much more thoroughgoing and which consists in a “relationship between men” in opposition to the cursed “factory system” and the social division of labour.

Three historical forms: industrialism in autonomous enterprises, industrialism in increasingly concentrated enterprises and then commonly managed enterprsies, socialism; all three were foreseen and described by Marx “from the very start”. Nothing has occurred which was unforeseen and which lies beyond the bounds of the analysis which outlined this once and for all. Damn those who talk about dogmas. There has yet to be a renegade who did not use this word. Mao Tse Tung compared it with “cow shit”. Well, bon apetit!

Yesterday
Man and the machine

John Stuart Mill, one of the prophets of capital, stated in his classic ‘Principles of Political Economy’ (London, 1821) that it remained to be seen if mechanical inventions had lightened the labour of any human being. Marx sets out from this quotation in his study of mechanisation. For the first time in the

field of the social sciences the discussion began with a radical shifting of the way the arguments were formulated. The question as to whether the machine was a blessing or a curse would at best remain a nice theme for literature. Marx concentrates on and immediately orientates the question to the capitalist use of machines. Such a use is in no way aimed at the reduction of the labour of the human species. “Like every other instrument for increasing the productivity of labour, machinery is intended to cheapen commodities and, by shortening the part of the working day in which the worker works for himself, to lengthen the other part, the part he gives to the capitalist for nothing.” This rigorous definition (at the beginning of Capital, Volume I, Chapter 15) as ever contains within it, and one can easily see this, the communist programme. Will we do without machines and so punish them for performing such swindles? The opposite is the case: in the first period we will use them as and when we can so as to raise production costs and to reduce the amount of time in which the worker works for the capitalist, and then later “to increase the productive capacity of labour”, but not in order to have lunatic quantities of products, but so as to use less labour.

Always testing the anti-metaphysical method, the footnote on this page is delightful on the subject of lightening the labour of which particular human being.

“Mill should have said, ‘of any human being not fed by other people’s labour’, for there is no doubt that machinery has greatly increased the number of distinguished idlers.”[1]

So if the thesis that “machines were indispensable for arriving at the communist revolution” is marxist, the commonplace of the marxist apology for modern mechanisation is the effect of a banal and impotent reading.

Marx stated that the starting points of “the industrial revolution” in the mode of production are labour power in manufacturing and instruments of labour in large factories. Labour power is the workers, which even in manufacturing take up tools and thus have instruments of labour. Let us patiently follow the text in the “analysis” of the characteristics of the new instrument of labourwhich we can call the machine. We come to understand that the capitalist social and political revolutions occurring before the eighteenth century, that is, when the instrument of labour was prevalently a hand tool and not a machine, determined social relations of labour power (of workers) and political relations which were necessarily and predictably different to those of the capitalist industrial revolutions (Russia, China) of the twentieth century in which the instrument of labour is mechanical on a gigantic scale. They nevertheless remain historically capitalist and bourgeois revolutions. An orgy of mechanisation is one thing, “the building of socialism” another. Even in these cases — let us jump ahead a little — the arrival of the machine-god inevitably brought the bourgeois system of “factory autocracy” and the worship of commodity production. This is historically going in the opposite direction to that to be taken by the socialist revolution which we await, as did Marx, with the same forms which we find described in our Bible — Capital. Blind rage of every bourgeois “free spirit”!

That progress made in instruments of labour is available to all above and beyond frontiers and a series of generations is not our precious discovery. Science belongs to all, but today only to all the capitalist powers. Only tomorrow will it belong to all the human species, of the anti-Mill kind.

A footnote:

“Science, generally speaking, costs the capitalist ‘nothing’, a fact that by no means prevents him from exploiting it. ‘Alien’ science is incorporated by capital just as ‘alien’ labour is. But ‘capitalist’ [in quotation marks in the original] appropriation and ‘personal’ appropriation, whether of science or of material wealth, are totally different things.”[2]

Little men, think it over for forty minutes. Marx proved the thesis with the fact that the individual capitalist, the expropriator and exploiter, is, in many cases, a complete and utter idiot when it comes down to technical questions. We would like to invite you no longer to be surprised by the fact that even if in Russia there is no longer any (?) personal appropriation of others’ labour (wealth), that does not mean that there is not the full capitalist appropriation of it, the Russian capitalist state having obviously been able to appropriate for nothing western science. It therefore had at its disposal all the mechanical and technical inventions and thus could leap over the long development leading from the artisan’s workshop through independent small-scale industry; but it did not simultaneously make the fanciful leap over the capitalist historical and social form of production. But had Marx imagined this leap to have been possible? Yes, given the condition that the united “anational” revolutionary forces had available comparable territories, one of fully developed industrialism (e.g. Germany), the other of as yet undeveloped industrialism (e.g. Russia). Lacking this particular relation, there must intervene a period of capitalism’s growth, presenting itself more as an advance in geographical space than in the succession of time, as a conquest more in quantity than in quality or in the chain of evolutive stages.

Work and Energy

Let us return to the little doctrine. In an organism like the Roman church that has reached two thousand years (by now we do not think we will get rid of it earlier), the infallible pope teaches nothing, the parish priest teaches everything. Laugh if you like, idiot, there is nothing to laugh about.

Marx started to define the machine with concepts from physics and went on to historical ones, which are useful in unravelling the huge enigma of the man-machine relationship.

The mechanical theory of the simple machine deals with those instruments or devices that modify into a more convenient form the energy applied to them by an agent, which may also be the hand of man: they do not produce new energy but merely return what is put into them. They are the lever, wedge, pulley etc. A man cannot shift a rock weighing a ton with his own strength, but he can if he takes a long lever to it. He cannot split it into smaller parts that can be lifted, but if he can use a wedge driven in with hammer blows he can.

Socially one can say that a simple machine is one on which one cannot base business. Classical political economy knows that labour is value. Labour (the quantity of labour) is the same thing as mechanical energy. The physicist says: force times distance (movement of the rock) gives us energy. The economist says: the number of workers multiplied by their labour time gives us value. So as long as we use only the muscle power of workers in production, the simple machines — to which can correctly be added both socially and mechanically the tools which the independent artisan handles — nothing changes. With the lever, that man moves the rock ten metres in eight hours: eight workers without a lever would have rolled it the same distance in an hour.

Mechanically one could say that the compound machine, meaning a greater or lesser complex of simple machines (wheels, levers, cogs etc.), does not provide new energy, while motor machines, which

transform the heat of fuel and other forms of energy into mechanical energy do so. Now it would be to make a present of value to permit the elimination of so much labour that has to be performed physically by men. But it would be so only with communist mechanisation: in capitalist mechanisation, the energy relation, which is physically true, is socially incorrect.

As long as mechanical energy is introduced so as to produce more commodities and not to employ less human time in labour, we have to say that the transition, whatever the ideological and juridical presentation, is a capitalist process.

So Marx defined the difference between the tool of the craftsman's social period and the machine of the capitalist period not on the basis of the use of muscle power substituted by other energy, but by naming as machines in a social sense not only the motor machines of the various contemporary industries and factories, but also the transmitters of energy (a series of simple machines that add no energy) and the working machines applied to the raw material to be transformed and which vulgar technology calls machine tools (lathe, press, punch etc.). Moreover, we have already reached the phase of mechanisation even when the new working machines are not yet set in motion by mechanical energy, but by human muscle power: crank and pedal driven machines.

If it were not so, Marx said, we should have to say that the machine driven by non-human energy existed long before the capitalist factory.

Man, in fact learnt very soon how to adopt other natural energy. A simple two-ox plough is no longer a tool, but a proper machine which allows a man to plough a greater area than that he can dig over with a spade.

But then, Marx said, Claussen's circular loom, with which a single worker weaves ninety-six picks a minute, though used by a modern, not a primitive, man, would be a tool as it is set in motion by hand, just as is Wyatt's spinning machine. They became machines only from the moment that the former was set in motion by a motor and the latter, as from 1735, by ... a donkey.

The animal was one of the first natural energy sources used by man to help in production, and from earliest times. But there were others too: the wind and running water.

One cannot therefore call these sporadic and scattered cases of the use of mechanical energy, instead of human muscle power, capitalist mechanisation, but instead the introduction of the machine tool which long preceded that of the mechanical motor (the steam engine).

"It is this last part of the machinery, the tool or working machine, with which the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century began. And to this day it constantly serves as the starting-point whenever a handicraft or a manufacture is turned into an industry carried on by machinery."[3]

Let us take a step back. With the trade, that is, with the independent, isolated artisan worker, we are in precapitalism, in the guild-feudal regime. With manufacture, we have already arrived at full capitalism. The conditions noted have in fact been realised: concentration of a mass of workers, capital in the hands of a master who can rent buildings, acquire materials and pay wages. Even before mechanisation, simple manufacture has changed to organised manufacture with the technical division of labour among various operations which, even with simple hand tools, are carried out by different craftsmen on the uncontestable order of the 'master'. This name from the time of slavery is reborn, ignobly substituting

the less hateful “Sir”. The Sir was a living and fighting knight, a human being, the master in the end becomes a monstrous automaton.

The factory autocrat

We read in Marx not an apology, but an implacable indictment of the capitalist factory system.
The instruments of labour, as long as they could be handled by a single craftsman’s hand, were also, oh modern idealist sins, of his mind and a bit of his heart.

Today the craftsman’s tool has been substituted by the machine tool. Marx said:

“As we have seen, the machine does not drive out the tool. Rather does the tool expand and multiply, changing from a dwarf implement of the human organism to the implement of a mechanism created by man. Capital now sets the worker to work, not with a manual tool, but with a machine which itself handles the tools”[4]

The huge growth in the power of human labour is accompanied by the degradation, not the uplifting, of the working man. The Jenny Mule was the name given to a spinning machine with innumerable spindles. With technological progress in 1863, thanks to a motor of barely one horse-power, two and a half workers were enough for 450 rotating spindles and produced 3666 pounds of spun cotton a week. With a hand spinning-wheel, the same amount of cotton would have required 27,000 hours instead of 150: productivity rose 180 fold! We cannot follow and develop these comparisons Marx made here, applying them, for example, to calculating how many navvies are replaced by digging and rolling machines imported here by the Americans after the war to construct roads.

Dr. Ure gives us two definitions of the factory. On the one hand he describes it as:

“‘combined co-operation of many orders of work people, adult and young, in tending with assiduous skill a system of productive machines continuously impelled by a central power’ (prime mover)”

and on the other hand as:

“‘a vast automaton composed of various mechanical and intellectual organs, acting in uninterrupted concert for the production of a common object, all of them being subordinate to a self-regulated moving force’.” [5]

Marx shows that:

“the second is characteristic of its use by capital and therefore of the modern factory system.” [6]

The first could, however, correspond to our programme: “the combined collective worker, or the social labour body, appears as the dominant subject, and the mechanical automaton as the object.”

But today instead

“the automaton itself is the subject, and the workers are merely conscious organs, co-ordinated with the unconscious organs of the automaton”

Have you heard, you liberal liberators of bodies, spirits and consciences, who accuse us of automatising life!?

“Ure therefore prefers to present the central machine from which the motion comes as not only an automaton but an autocrat. ‘In these spacious halls the benignant power of steam summons around him his myriads of willing menials’.”

Doesn't the centrality of the concept show for the hundredth time that it is not a question of describing capitalism, as even Stalin pretends, but of discovering the social characteristics that the revolution will have to do away with? Here are other passages.

“In handicrafts and manufacture, the worker makes use of a tool; in the factory the machine makes use of him. ... In manufacture the workers are parts of a living mechanism. In the factory we have a lifeless mechanism which is independent of the workers, who are incorporated into it as its living appendages.” [7]

A further comparison of Fourier’s of the factory with a mitigated gaol, which the chapter closes with, recalls that in the galley,[8] the rowers were incorporated into the ship, chained for life to their benches: they had to row or sink with it.

“Every kind of capitalist production[or even manufacture], in so far as it is not only a labour-process, but also a process of creating surplus-value, has this in common, that it is not the worker that employs the instruments of labour, but the instruments of labour that employ the worker [programme: the collective socialist-worker will himself dominate the instruments of his work!]. But it is only in the factory system that this inversion for the first time acquires technical and palpable reality. By means of its conversion into an automaton, the instrument of labour confronts the labourer, during the labour-process, in the shape of capital, of dead labour, that dominates, and pumps dry, living labour-power.” [9]

A cold description, is it not, you band of vulgar falsifiers?

The physical person of the individual master is thus not required, and bit by bit he disappears into the pores of share capital, of management boards, of state-run boards, of the political state, which has become (since a long time ago) entrepreneur and manufacturer, and into the very latest vile form of the state which pretends to be “the workers themselves” and thus is able to tie them to the feet of the sinister steel automatons.

Factory despotism: only the communist revolution will tear it up by the roots when there is no longer intoxicating involvement in “struggles for political freedom” and similar popular mirages, denounced in bourgeois industrialism from its very beginning, accompanied by real class revolutions, but made up with stinking democratic rouge. Not a syllable is to be touched of the sentence that we have had ready formulated for ninety years, and which unfortunately is still not ready to be carried out.

“... unaccompanied by either that division of responsibility otherwise so much approved of by the bourgeoisie, or the still more approved representative system. This code is merely the capitalist caricature of the social regulation of the labour process which becomes necessary in co-operation on a large scale and in the employment in common of instruments of labour, and especially of machinery. The overseer’s book of penalties replaces the slave-driver’s lash.” [10]

The latest liberal phantasms; autocracy and dictatorship, “in life” and not in the pallid legal lie, did not begin again with Mussolini, Hitler, Franco... not even with Stalin and his proconsuls, not even with

Truman, Eisenhower and the stupid slaves of United Europe: they are a technical fact linked to the beat of huge central generators turning on the banks of the Hudson, Thames, Moscow and the Pearl River.

Machine and revolution

But “the machine is innocent of the misery it brings with it”. Here a marvellous page shows the stupidity of the official economists who, being unable to explain the huge antagonisms springing from the use of machines, pretend to ignore them and close their eyes to the fact that:

“... machinery in itself shortens the hours of labour, but when employed by capital it lengthens them ... in itself it lightens labour, but when employed by capital it heightens its intensity ... in itself it is a victory of man over the forces of nature, but in the hands of capital it makes man a slave of those forces ... in itself it increases the wealth of the producers, but in the hands of capital it makes them into paupers ... Therefore whoever reveals the real situation with the capitalist employment of machinery does not want machinery to be employed at all, and is an enemy of social progress!”[11]

The machine, which in the hands of the working collectivity will be a source of wellbeing and rest, becomes a killer in the hands of capital. We do not condemn the machine for this.

Here Marx quotes a character from Charles Dickens’s famous novel Oliver Twist. It is the self-defence of the great rogue Bill Sykes:

“Gentlemen of the jury, no doubt the throat of this commercial traveller has been cut. But that is not my fault, it is the fault of the knife. Must we, for such a temporary inconvenience, abolish the use of the knife? Only consider! Where would agriculture and trade be without the knife? Is it not as salutary in surgery, as it is skilled in anatomy? And a willing assistant at the festive table? If you abolish the knife — you hurl us back into the depths of barbarism.” [12]

No. We will not fall back into total barbarism and such a risk does not worry us. We will merely take from your hands the handle of the knife-machine.

The machine will be precious tomorrow in a non-mercantile mode of production and its appearance has been equally precious in fact for the revolutionary antagonisms which it created between capital and the proletariat.

“There is also no doubt that those revolutionary ferments whose goal [the programme, you deaf ones] is the abolition of the old division of labour stand in diametrical contradiction with thecapitalist form of production, and the economic situation of the workers which corresponds to that form. However, the development of the contradictions of a given historical form of production is the only historical way in which it can be dissolved and then reconstructed on a new basis.” [13]

Still another invective against “the division of labour” which communism will bury. Dialectically it was wise at the time of the guilds: nec sutor ultra crepidam, cobbler stick to your last! But:

“‘Nec sutor ultra crepidam’, a phrase which was the absolute summit of handicraft wisdom, became sheer nonsense from the moment when the watchmaker Watt invented the steam-engine, the barber Arkwright the throstle” [14]

And it is also with a battle cry that we close this part of Marx’s work after the detailed examination of the social legislation on work and the shortening of the working day:

“is to increase the anarchy and the proneness to catastrophe of capitalist production as a whole, the intensity of labour [Stakhanov! Stakhanov!], and the competition of machinery with the worker. By the destruction of small-scale and domestic industries it destroys the last resorts of the ‘redundant population’, thereby removing what was previously a safety-valve for the whole social mechanism. By maturing the material conditions and the social combination of the process of production, it matures the contradictions and antagonisms of the capitalist form of that process, and thereby ripens both the elements for forming a new society and the forces tending towards the overthrow of the old one.” [15]

Today
From horsepower to the kilowatt

Marx fully established, on the basis of the technological elements of his time, that the introduction of mechanical motive power (better, energy) accelerates the concentration of productive activities into huge factories and that the factory labour legislation itself acted in this way:

“... thus artificially ripen the material elements necessary for the conversion of the manufacturing system into the factory system, yet at the same time, because they make it necessary to lay out a greater amount of capital, they hasten the decline of the small masters, and the concentration of capital.” [16]

We have cited many times the famous passage from the chapters on accumulation, which is illustrated, for example, by the technical modifications occurring in steel making:

“In any given branch of industry centralisation would reach its extreme limit if all the individual capitals invested there were fused into a single capital. In a given society this limit would be reached only when the entire social capital was united in the hands of either a single capitalist or a single capitalist company.” [17]

Engels transposed this perspective to the trusts, the monopolies and the state managers in a no less notorious manner.

If the commodity laws themselves, confluent in the production of surplus value, provided Marx with the basis of the demonstration, fully confirmed by history, of gigantic capitalist accumulation in colossal amounts, the new technical forms of producing motor power have an equally important influence.

As long as we are referring to the steam engine, the first case of large scale employment of mechanical power in production, we see that the best solution is autonomy for each factory to produce the amount of energy required. The power station changed everything, especially after the massive extraction of fossil fuel, made imposing in turn both by machines and by the capitalist form of mine management (once it was largely state owned). Before then the cost per horsepower clearly became decreasingly small as the boiler became increasingly large, and thus there is another reason for the small factory to be subjected to the large one. Nevertheless, no organisational link was imposed between factories as all could get coal on the “open market”.

All this changed enormously with the progress of electro-mechanisation. The advantage of making energy into a commodity became decisive with the creation of a transmitted electrical supply. Every factory now tends not to produce, but to buy its energy.

Ure's central motor could control the working machines along with the men made slaves to them, but within a small radius: that allowed by transmission by means of "simple mechanisms" — pulleys, belts, conical gears... No one had even thought it useful to distribute steam under pressure to other machines through long ducts, the huge heat loss making such a system uneconomical.

Let us offer an example: supposing natural methane gas had been found before the discovery of dynamic electricity and electrical current. This, too is a fossil fuel of organic origin, like the solid and liquid ones. But, unlike them (the liquid one can be piped as a commodity, but not as a fuel, for technical and economic reasons), it can be distributed through a mains system. From this fact would have emerged the need for a close organisational link between all the factories fed by a single distribution system.

In fact, the energy consumed by each individual factory can no longer be varied at the will of the local management as it could cause the single power station to run out of energy or to have to "throw it away". Instead, the capitalist with the factory based on autonomous motive power could cut out burners and boilers at his pleasure, or install others to increase production.

As the whole plan of employing workers, the slaves of the machine tools, depends on that of the energy provided, the entire social industrial mechanism falls into line with these new norms, it links up, centralises and subordinates itself to an infinity of rules.

Planning is not socialist!

Such an adaptation to, and the discipline of, general networks is not a change in the historical type of production: the factory is still the factory, the worker is still the wage-labourer, the compulsion of the factory automatons increases rather than diminishes. The general norms from which thousands and thousands of special laws emerged is not a social revolution. It is useless for the reader immersed in modern life to extend the comparison of motive power for factories and plants that produce manufactured goods to the thousand other communication, transport, and all types of service networks.

Even antiquity administered motors that were not autonomous. The domesticated animal was undoubtedly autonomous and the farm or small-holding was all the stronger for the number of horses or oxen it possessed. The windmill was autonomous, but, however, depended on nature's whim.

Not autonomous, at least not over a long tract of the same water course — river or "industrial canal" — was the water mill. And here laws of very old states provided a clear discipline so that no one could modify the lay out of weirs to consume more hydraulic energy than the grindstone, for example, up or down stream. A sentence or a commission abolishing privileges in Calabria in 1810 stated inter alia: "All can install hydraulic machinery as long as they do not cause any damage and loss to previously existing hydraulic machines."

Giacchino Murat's[18] regime was extremely liberal. Imagine a modern regime as liberal as this that says: anyone is free to install electrical machinery and to plug it into the first electrical cable that comes to hand!

In all periods, then, public authority has had to regulate and co-ordinate productive activities and energy sources, all the more so when their dependence on a single network, on the same material flow of

energy provision, became technically inevitable; and there is a full parallel between the flow from a certain head of water and that of electrons from a conductor at a given voltage.

And now then, forgetting for a moment the unfolding of particular historical episodes and the names of the mercenaries, let us ask ourselves what a social organisation in power which had to industrialise a still backward country would do. Naturally it would not await the repetition of a slow development from guilds lacking work co-operation to manufacture without machine tools to the factory with machine tools but without steam engines to large scale industry with its own boiler. It would pass directly to the building of electrical power stations, and, as far as possible, hydroelectric ones, using the modern methods of applied science to control water, creating heads of water later to be distributed in given amounts, clearly fixed in a plan of the project, to individual factories that were to produce manufactured goods for consumption.

The same mercantile motive as that of competition on the world market in the acquisition of what is indispensable for such plant thus operates for the supposed authority because every other way would be more costly and would imply greater funding and use of savings “on imports”.

The pretended differences between Russian capitalism and the one which developed, let us say, in England, France, Germany and America, thus do not consist in and do not mean a step towards a different social form which escapes from the despotic factory system and the social division of labour and the frantic work intensity, but instead consist in the most rapid and direct way of arriving at this very system.

History is there to tell us that on 22-29 December 1921 at the Eighth Congress of the Soviets, the foundations were laid for planned industrialisation, adopting the electrification programme of which, it is noted, Lenin was a chief proponent.

Thought and history

Despite the availability to man of new powerful means provided by the domination of electrical energy, the social law of transition from one type of production to another has not been broken. Autonomous or centrally planned, steam or electrified, the productive mechanism under construction in the USSR is capitalist.

Can the discoveries of pure and applied science emerging from the human brain change and form the course of history? We can ask ourselves if the form of atomic power, given that in a handful of material which is now inert there lie millions more horse power and kilowatts than in the entire course of a huge river, permits the return to local autonomous factories and to the “liberal” economy, with an analogous human ideology. That cannot happen and, besides, the means to unleash such an eruption of energy, breaking open the first nuclei, consists in energy from an electro-mechanical source at such a voltage, a thousand times higher than those of the industrial motor which enslaves human arms and brains, that no group of capitalists, but only the political state can put it in place.[19]

An immense path leads from the modest horse, first a beast of burden, then through horse power, which turned the spinning machine, to the millions of volts in the huge “cyclotron”. But Marx had already recalled in the section we’ve studied that Descartes and Bacon, for whom work animals were “machines” and who were ideological precursors of capitalism, maintained that “altered methods of

thought would result in an alteration in the shape of production, and practical subjugation of nature by man". Descartes in his 'Discours sur la methode' makes the prophecy that:

"in place of the speculative philosophy taught in the schools, one can find a practical philosophy by which, given that we know the powers and the effectiveness of fire water, air, the stars ... as well and as accurately as we know the various trades of our craftsmen, we shall be able to employ them in the same manner as the latter to all those uses to which they are adapted ..." thereby contributing "to the perfection of human life." [20]

From Marx onwards, we have placed such a realisation at the end of the difficult historical course, but we do not maintain that the creative forces of thought generate new productive forces, rather that the development and conflict of social processes are reflected in the conquests of thought.

It is therefore useless to use the will, dream or illusion or the hundred ways of deforming thought and opinion to change the name of the fact and of the inexorable process, and to pretend that merely by exploiting the "mechanical intelligence" of modern capitalism, as an obedient Cartesian pupil who goes further than his master, one can succeed in identifying a system of capitalist compression of man and labour with the perfection of life. For this — at the present moment in history — the work of the mind is inadequate, and instead one needs another social war, conducted by men against men, classes against classes.

Footnotes

[1] Capital Vol. I p. 492

[2] ibid. p. 508

[3] ibid. p. 494

[4] ibid. p. 509

[5] ibid. p. 544

[6] ibid. p. 545

[7] ibid. p. 548

[8] Galera means both galley and prison.

[9] ibid. p. 548

[10] ibid. p. 550

[11] ibid. p. 569

[12] ibid. p. 569 (quoting Dickens)

[13] ibid. p. 619

[14] ibid. p. 619

[15] ibid. p. 635

[16] ibid. p. 607

[17] ibid. p. 779

[18] Murat introduced Napoleonic legislation to Southern Italy.

[19] Publisher's note - This passage seems to confuse nuclear fission in a reactor - brought about by bringing together a large quantity of naturally fissile material (Uranium-235 or Plutonium) in a small space so as to create a "chain reaction" - with the shattering of atomic nuclei which can be carried out by accelerating particles in a cyclotron using very high voltages, but the comments about the huge investment required to establish it are correct.

[20] ibid. p. 513

The Guignol in History (1953)

The Guignol in History – Amadeo Bordiga
Following the Thread of Time

In a quotation from Engels1 that we recently cited with regard to the Marxist assessment of the Russian revolution we emphasized the sentence: "The age of chosen peoples is gone for ever". It is hardly likely that someone will come along and want to draw their sword to defend the contrary thesis, after the infamous process that led to German Nazism; and after the fate suffered by the Jews who paid a very high price in the expurgation of that incredible racist fury: crushed first by Hitler's Aryan hatred, then by the deals of British imperialism, today by the inexorable Soviet apparatus, and tomorrow most likely by the cosmopolitan, tolerant and self-righteous policy of the United States, which is now sinking its teeth into the slave trade.

It will be much more difficult, however, to make people see that the time of the chosen individuals, of the "men of destiny"—as Shaw called Napoleon, above all in order to make fun of him dressed in pyjamas—of the great men, of the military strategists and leaders of history, of the Supreme Guides of humanity, has also passed.

Currently, however, on all sides and universally in all belief systems, Catholic or Masonic, fascist or democratic, liberal or socialistoid, it appears that—to a much greater extent than in the past—no one does anything but exalt and bow down in servile admiration before the name of this or that personality, consistently attributing to him the whole merit of the "cause" he represents.

Everyone agrees in attributing to this personality determinant influences over past events and those to come, and in granting him of course the personal qualities of the leaders who have already taken up their abodes in the empyrean: they even dispute *ad nauseum* concerning whether they should do so by acclamation or democratic vote, or maybe it should be imposed by the party, or even by a *coup de main* on the part of the individual in question, but they all agree that everything depends on the success of this procedure, in the allied camp as well as that of the enemy.

If this generalized opinion was correct, and we were to lack the power to negate and undermine it, we would have to confess that the Marxist doctrine would have plunged into the lowest condition of bankruptcy. But to the contrary, and as usual, we have never ceased to champion the following two positions: that of classical Marxism, which has already put the great men of history out to pasture; and that of the weavers of the web of what is to be [the Moirai or Fates of Greek mythology], which in light of

the re-evaluation of the achievements of great men that we are now undertaking, confirms the Marxist theory by other paths.

YESTERDAY

Questions and Answers

In this connection, the responses given by Frederick Engels to questions about this topic are of interest. In his letter dated January 25, 1894, the question of great men is raised in the second part of the second question. Both questions are important. They are as follows:

1. To what degree do economic conditions have a causal influence? (Note that the word is causal, not casual).
2. What role does the factor of race or the factor of the individual play in the materialist conception of Marx and Engels?

I am also interested in the question to which he responded in a letter dated September 21, 1890: How did Marx, and Engels himself, understand the fundamental principle of historical materialism?; that is, according to them, do the production and reproduction of real life constitute in and of themselves the determinant moments, or do they only comprise the foundation for the other conditions?

The connection between these two points—the function of the great individuals in history, and the precise link between economic conditions and human activity—is explained clearly by Engels in his responses, which he modestly claims had only been more or less sketched out in private and not composed with "the precision" that he sought when he was writing for the public. Actually, Engels reaffirms the general depiction of the Marxist conception of history that was set forth in *Anti-Dühring* (Part I, Chapters 9-11; Part II, Chapters 2-4) and above all in the crystalline essay on Feuerbach, published in 1888, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*. And to give a luminous example of a specific application of the method, he refers to Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, which contains a brilliant description of an individual who could be taken as the prototype of the "guignol", a term that we shall now proceed to explain.

The Continuity of Life

At the cost of a digression, which is also the anticipation of a Thread, whose master key has for some time been on the stairway of the quarry, we would like to express our congratulations to the unknown student who asked the question in the first letter. It is often the case that those who have not understood anything, are the ones who wave their hands in class and say they have assimilated and digested everything, with the intention of being able to vomit it all up and repeat sentences from memory. The most sincere and interested students, however, are always convinced that they need to acquire a better understanding, even when they have already approached mastery of the subject. The young and, by chance, somewhat irreverent, interrogator of Engels adopted, instead of the normal expression, "economic conditions", the exact and equivalent expression, "production and reproduction of physical life". As students of the next higher class, we have replaced *real* with *physical*. The adjective *real* does not have the same meaning in the Germanic languages as it does in the Latin languages.

We once again insist, following the masters of Marxism, that production and reproduction are the same, quoting Engels when he defines reproduction, or the sensual and life-generating sphere of life, as the "production of the producers".

It would be useless to erect an economic science, or even a metaphysical one, on the basis of immutable laws, and even more so if it were to be a dialectical science—that is, it would be of no use to once again compose the theory of a succession of phases and cycles—if we were to examine a group, or a society of

producers, devoted of course to work and economic labor aimed at satisfying their needs by preserving their existence and their productive force to the limits of their lifespans, whose members would have undergone an operation (maybe supervised by a racist head surgeon!) that rendered them incapable of reproducing and having biological successors.

Such a condition would radically transform—the followers of all economic schools will admit this—all the relations of production and distribution of this hypothetical community.

This is relevant because it reminds us just how important, in the consolidation of the structure of economic relations, is the sector of production that prepares food (and other things) that contributes to the *preservation* of the physical life of the worker, as well as the biological *reproduction* that prepares—with a major investment of consumption and productive efforts—the future replacements of the workers themselves.

As we shall see, with Engels and Marx and against Feuerbach, man is neither all *love* nor all *war*. Be that as it may, the integral perspective of the double economic base of society applies to this aspect, too: materialism has already been victorious on the field of production, and no one denies the predominance of the criterion of the material sum of the results; and on this basis it is a simple matter to found the theory of the activity of struggles, passing from molecular disputes of the alleged "*homo oeconomicus*", which has in its heart not a ventricle but an accountant, to the class confrontation in which is summed up, with the economy, all the other forms of human activity. But it is in the field of genetics and that of sensuality, where the most ardent parish priests seem to be celebrating mass in the absence of transcendent and mystical motives, and where the attraction between the male and female has to be translated—even if only for the purpose of raising it above the filth of modern civilization—in terms of economic causality, and where it is necessary to found the most robust pillars of the revolutionary doctrine of socialism.

That the individual, great or small in terms of banal common sense, tends to seek economic advantage and conceives of himself in erotic terms is a problem posed in a miserable and meaningless way. We shifted the dynamic of the process to the activity of the species, and we situated the effort to preserve the lives and abilities of the active elements of society, in the same procedure of their multiplication and continuity; both cycles are much more extensive than those in which the idiotic fear of death and the stupid belief in the eternity of the individual develop. Individual death and individual eternity are the products and decisive features of societies that are infested with ruling and exploiting classes, parasites on labor and on love.

The curse of living by the sweat of one's brow and in suffering, an ideology that defines societies with class rule, that is, societies that are based on monopolies over leisure and pleasure, will be abolished by socialism.

Nature and Thought

The correct approach to the problem that we have posed, that is, the subordination of the problem of historical personalities to the general problem of the materialist conception, appears immediately. Imagine for a moment that the future development of a society, or even that of humanity, were to decisively depend on the presence, of the appearance, or of the particular action of just one man. It would no longer be possible to argue or to prove that the essential origin of all social life resides in the characteristics of determined conditions and economic situations that are *analogous* for the great masses of the "rest" of the individuals, whether they are normal or "little" people.

If it was necessary for this long and difficult road, which we shall never agree to reduce to a simple automatism, of the parallel development of labor and consumption up until the final transformation of the social revolutions, with the assumption of power by another class, with the rupture of the forms that

determined that parallelism of productive relations, *to pass through the head*(critique, consciousness, will, action) of one man, and this in the sense that it is a *necessary* element, of such a nature that in his absence this transformation would not take place, then it could not be denied that at a certain moment all of history would be found “in his thought” and would depend on an action on the part of this individual. This would amount to an insuperable contradiction, since, once we have made this concession, it would be necessary to submit to the viewpoint that is opposed to ours, that is, to the viewpoint that claims that there is no *causality* in history, or laws, but that everything takes place by unpredictable “chance”, everything is *aleatory*, and thus can indeed be studied, but only *after*, never *before* the event. And if this were true, precisely, our viewpoint would necessarily be annihilated, because, how can it be denied that the birth of this colossus was a chance event, how is it possible to avoid reducing the entire field of *reproduction* to a false step … on the part of a spermatozoid?
We have long fought a bitter struggle against the most rational and modern concept of the “great man”, which is so typical of the enlightened bourgeoisie, who wanted historical facts to preventively pass not through one, but through *all brains*: preferring general education and *consciousness* to the revolutionary struggle. But this incomplete and marginal conception is even more insufficient than the one that concentrates all consciousness in the individual skull, since we do not see how it could be sustained, except by being joined in the embrace, so many times invoked by tradition, between a divine being and a human being.
We have already shattered into pieces the theory, even more stupid, of the universal popular consciousness, which is based on the *one-half plus one* of brains in order to pilot history, because from the Marxist point of view it is pitiful and sad; shall we then allow the theory of the single brain to survive? And why not in that case the theory of the single reproducer, the human seed, which is evidently less foolish?
We shall once again return to the main question: what comes first, nature or thought? Is the history of the human species an aspect of real nature or of an act of “parthenogenesis” on the part of thought?

The brief text by Engels on Feuerbach, or rather the text directed against an apologetic piece by Starcke (which Engels as usual defines as a general sketch, or even as an illustration of the materialist conception of history), compounded of one part of synthesis of the history of philosophy, and one part of the history of the class struggle, is magnificent for its scope and its brevity.

Cards on the Table!
A brief exposition would be sufficient (today the longer sessions take days); a couple of half-days, with the appropriate commentary. We shall limit ourselves here to providing a report verifying the credentials of the delegate.

Historically, Engels reminds us, it was from the idealist Hegel, whose philosophy could have served as a basis for the German conservative right and reactionary currents, that the materialist Feuerbach traced his heritage, under the influence of the powerful standards of materialism and the French Revolution. And it was from Feuerbach, to some extent, that the later and very different conceptions of Marx and Engels were derived, after a brief period of admiration until 1840 with the publication of *The Essence of Christianity* and afterwards by a no less radical critique of the critique Feuerbach directed at Hegel. This critique was condensed in Marx’s famous theses of 1845, which had remained unknown for more than forty years, which concluded with the eleventh thesis: “up until now the philosophers have merely criticized the world; the point is to change it.”
Hegel had situated human activity on the first plane, but he was unable to provide a revolutionary development for this premise on the historical field due to his absolute idealism. The future society along with its design and model were already contained *ab aeterno* in the *absolute idea*. Once this discovery

had been made and it had been elaborated in the mind of a philosopher, with its own rule of pure thought, and these results were transmitted in the system of law and the institution of the state, the integral realization of the Idea had already been executed. What is there in all of this that is unacceptable to us? Two points, which are the two dialectical aspects of this notion. We reject the need for an endpoint, for a definitive and unsurpassable *barrier*. We reject the possibility that all the properties and laws of thought should have been given in advance, before the cycle of nature and the species have even begun.
Let us quote Engels: “Just as knowledge is unable to reach a complete conclusion in a perfect, ideal condition of humanity, so is history unable to do so; a perfect society, a perfect ‘state’, are things which can only exist in imagination. On the contrary, all successive historical systems are only transitory stages in the endless course of development of human society from the lower to the higher.”

Hegel had gone beyond all the preceding philosophers by proposing the dynamic of the contradictions that compose the long road to the present. Just like his predecessors, however, and just like all possible philosophers, he encapsulates and congeals this lively beehive of contradictions in his “system”. “But if all contradictions are once and for all disposed of, we shall have arrived at so-called absolute truth — world history will be at an end. And yet it has to continue, although there is nothing left for it to do — hence, a new, insoluble contradiction.”

Here Engels makes short work of the old objection, resuscitated by Croce shortly before his death (see the refutation in the fourth issue of the second series of *Prometeo*), that avers that Marxist materialism will also bring an end to history, because it claims that the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie will be the last of the class struggles. In his inveterate anthropomorphism every idealist confuses the end of the struggles between economic classes with the end of all struggles and of all development in the world, in nature and in history; and he cannot see, within the limits, that are for him the light and for us are clouds, of an individual skull, that communism will in turn be an intense and unpredictable struggle for life on the part of the species, which no one has yet brought to a conclusion, since the sterile and pathological solitude of the Ego does not deserve the name of life, just as the treasure of the miser is not wealth, not even personal wealth.

Spirit and Existence

Feuerbach arrives and eliminates the antithesis. Nature is no longer the manifestation of the Idea (reader: stretch the thread, which has not broken, and let us proceed towards the thesis that history is not the manifestation of the Guignol!); it is not true that thought lies at the origin, and nature is a derivative of thought. Materialism, among the enthusiasm of the youth, including the young Marx, is *restored to its throne*. “Nature exists independently of all philosophy. It is the foundation upon which we human beings, ourselves products of nature, have grown up. Nothing exists outside nature and man, and the higher beings our religious fantasies have created are only the fantastic reflection of our own essence.” And Engels, up until this point, also applauds, even though he is now quite old; he only pauses to ridicule the opposition that, for practical activity, Feuerbach erects to replace the categorical imperative of Kant: *love*. This is not about sex, but about solidarity, the “innate” fraternity that unites men with each other. It was upon this basis that the bourgeois and Prussian “true socialism” of the epoch was founded, which was powerless to see the demands of revolutionary activity, of the struggle between classes, and of the rejection of bourgeois forms.
This is the point where Engels rewrites the epilogue of the philosophical construction that preserves the materialist basis, freeing it of the metaphysical ball and chain and dialectical impotence, which immobilized it in another way, in the same “glacial historicity” of idealism, however much it was coated in a glaze of practical will and activity.

Engels elucidated this problem by relating it to the formation of schemas of thought since the times of the primitive peoples. Here we may have to take another look in order to get a better angle on the question, although it would be especially useful to our movement to integrate and amplify (a job that the future will no doubt assume responsibility for) the conjectures in which Engels confronts his deductions with the contributions of the positive sciences.

Engels writes: “Thus the question of the relation of thinking to being, the relation of the spirit to nature … could for the first time be put forward in its whole acuteness, could achieve its full significance, only after humanity in Europe had awakened from the long hibernation of the Christian Middle Ages. The question of the position of thinking in relation to being, a question which, by the way, had played a great part also in the scholasticism of the Middle Ages, the question: which is primary, spirit or nature — that question, in relation to the church, was sharpened into this: Did God create the world or has the world been in existence eternally?

“The answers which the philosophers gave to this question split them into two great camps. Those who asserted the primacy of spirit to nature and, therefore, in the last instance, assumed world creation in some form or other — and among the philosophers, Hegel, for example, this creation often becomes still more intricate and impossible than in Christianity — comprised the camp of idealism. The others, who regarded nature as primary, belong to the various schools of materialism.”

Once this dividing line between the two groups of philosophers has been clarified, the problem of the relation between *existence and thought* remains to be solved. Are they mutually alien or are they complementary? Can human thought fully know and describe the essence of nature? There are philosophers who have contrasted and separated the two elements: object and subject. Among these philosophers is Kant, with his incomprehensible “thing in itself”. Hegel overcame the obstacle, but in an idealist way, that is, he absorbed the thing and nature into the Idea, which allowed him to examine and understand its concept. This is what Feuerbach denounced and fought against: “… the Hegelian premundane existence of the ‘absolute idea’, the ‘pre-existence of the logical categories’ before the world existed, is nothing more than the fantastic survival of the belief in the existence of an extra-mundane creator….” This is already enough for a work of critical demolition.
Engels, in a clear declaration, accuses German culture of not having been capable of going beyond this critical attitude, as well as of its inability to understand the life of human society as a movement and never-ending process, for which Hegel had only been able to provide the foundations. This anti-historical conception on the part of German philosophy condemned the Middle Ages as a kind of useless and obscure digression (today’s Marxists must arrive at a similar evaluation of the irrational attitude shown by the anti-fascist and anti-nazi struggle and critique). German philosophy was incapable of properly situating the Middle Ages with its causes and effects, just as it was incapable of discovering the great progress attained in that period and its enormous contribution to the future.

“All the advances of natural science which had been made in the meantime served them only as new proofs against the existence of a creator of the world…. They, likewise, could conceive of a man without religion only as a monster, and used to say to us: ‘*Donc, l’atheisme c’est votre religion!*’ [‘Well, then atheism is your religion!’].”

The Play and the Actors

Engels then proceeds to the organic presentation of the historical materialist doctrine, perhaps the best that has ever been written. Here the step is taken that Feuerbach had not dared to take: replacing “the cult of abstract man” with “the science of real men and of their historical development”.

This leads us to a consideration of Hegel, who established (rather than discovered) the dialectic, which for him was “the self-development of the concept”. In Marx the dialectic was converted into “the conscious reflex of the dialectical motion of the real world”. As in the famous phrase, the dialectic was put back on its feet, so that it no longer stood on its head.

Marxism begins by examining social science and historical science with the same method that applies to the natural sciences. But no one is unaware of the particular characteristics of this “domain” of nature, which is that of the life of the human species. We return to the “responses” of Engels, reproducing only a few fundamental quotations: “In nature there are unconscious agents … in the history of society, to the contrary, the actors are obviously in possession of consciousness, men who act with reflection or passion in order to achieve certain ends…. But this intention, although important for historical investigation, especially with regard to particular eras or events, has no effect on the fact that the course of history *is determined by general internal laws*…. Very seldom do people obtain what they want … all the confrontations between innumerable individual wills and actions led to a state of affairs *that is absolutely analogous to the one that rules in unconscious nature*. The aims of actions are desired, but the results that are obtained *are not the ones that were wanted*, or if they seem to correspond to the desired end, they ultimately have *consequences that are very different* from the desired ones…. Men *make their history*, regardless of the result, while each individual man pursues his own ends … the result of these multiple wills acting in different directions, and their effect on the external world, is precisely history…. Therefore, if you want to investigate the motor forces that (consciously or unconsciously, and all-too-often unconsciously) lie behind these motives in the name of which *men act in history*, and which constitute the authentic supreme original forces of history, you must not focus so much on the motives of isolated men, however *relevant* they may be, as on the motives that impel great masses, whole peoples, and, within each people,*entire classes*; and not just momentarily, in rapid explosions, as in the brief flare-up of a bonfire built with straw, but in *continued actions that translate into great historical changes*.” [The passages quoted in this paragraph were translated from the Spanish translation—American translator’s note.]
The philosophical part is followed by the historical part up to the great modern proletarian movement. Once this point is reached *philosophy comes to an end*, in the domain of nature as well as that of history. “It is no longer a question anywhere of inventing interconnections from out of our brains, but of discovering them in the facts.”

Clear Oracles

Note the questions and pay attention to the responses, which will not be obscure or ambiguous like those of the ancient Oracles, but transparent and in accordance with our Marxist positions.

Engels answers the question that we previously referred to dating from 1890:

“… the *ultimately* determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life.”
“The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure — political forms of the class struggle and its results, to wit: constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc., juridical forms, and even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the participants, political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas — also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their *form*. There is an interaction of all these elements in which, amid all the endless host of accidents (that is, of things and events whose inner interconnection is so remote or so impossible of proof that we can regard it as non-existent, as negligible), the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary.”

Now to the first question from the letter of 1894 about the causal influence of economic conditions: “What we understand by the economic conditions, which we regard as the determining basis of the history of society, are the methods by which human beings in a given society produce their means of subsistence and exchange the products among themselves (in so far as division of labour exists). Thus the *entire technique* of production and transport is here included…. this technique also determines the method of exchange and, further, the division of products, and with it, after the dissolution of tribal society, the division into classes also and hence the relations of lordship and servitude and with them the state, politics, law, etc.”
If, as the above letter states, technique depends to a very great extent on science, we are even more justified in saying that science depends on the conditions and exigencies of technique…. All hydrostatics (Torricelli, etc.) was generated by *Italy’s need during the 16th and 17th centuries to regulate the flow of the surplus water from the mountains* (see the various articles in our newspaper and journal about the precocious development of capitalist agriculture in Italy, and on the decline of the modern technologies for hydraulic containment demonstrated by the Polesine floods).
As for the first point raised in question number 2, about the role played by race, we shall only quote this brilliant sentence (to spin into our Thread): “race is itself an economic factor.” Didn’t you hear what he said about production and reproduction? Race is a material chain of reproductive acts.

And finally, as for the second point in question number 2, which concerns the guignol, we shall allow the magnificent Frederick to speak for himself: “Men make their history themselves, but not as yet with a collective will or according to a collective plan or even in a definitely defined, given society. Their efforts clash, and for that very reason all such societies are governed by *necessity*, which is supplemented by and appears under the forms of *accident*. The necessity which here asserts itself amidst all accident is again ultimately economic necessity. This is where the so-called great men come in for treatment. That such and such a man and precisely that man arises at that particular time in that given country is of course pure accident. But cut him out and there will be a demand for a substitute, and this substitute will be found, good or bad, but in the long run he will be found. That Napoleon, just that particular Corsican, should have been the military dictator whom the French Republic, exhausted by its own war, had rendered necessary, was an accident; but that, if a Napoleon had been lacking, another would have filled the place, is proved by the fact that the man has always been found as soon as he became necessary: Caesar, Augustus, Cromwell, etc.”
“What about Marx?”, Engels hears someone shout from the audience. For it applies to him, too. “While Marx discovered the materialist conception of history, Thierry, Mignet, Guizot, and all the English historians up to 1850 are the proof that it was being striven for, and the discovery of the same conception by Morgan proves that the time was ripe for it and that indeed it *had* [Engels’ emphasis] to be discovered.”
Engels, however, in a note on Feuerbach, states that his own talent was attributable to Marx, who was a genius. It would be unfortunate if, after our whole demonstration, it was not understood that there are major differences between one man and another, not just from the muscular point of view, but also with regard to the potential of the cerebral machine.

The fact is, however, that, after having liquidated the extreme case of the Shavian “man of destiny”, we must not allow ourselves to nourish any illusions about the disappearance of the “cretins of destiny”, those poor self-proclaimed candidates who want to occupy the vacuum prepared for them by history, who are so anxious about seizing their opportunity and wait in ambush on glory.

TODAY
Recent Correspondence

We would like to conclude our treatment of this theme with a letter we sent to a female working class comrade who, after a much too modest apology for her imperfect powers of expression, was capable of posing the question in a most evocative manner. We include part of our response.

“You write: ‘You speak truly when you affirm that a Marxist must remain faithful to principles and not to men … if we say that men do not count and we have to set them aside, to what extent are we supposed to do so? For if men are in part the cause that determines the revolt, we cannot completely forget about them.’ Far from being an inaccurate approach to the question, this is a very useful way of doing so.

“The social reality and actions that concern us as Marxists are the work of men, they have men as actors. An indisputable truth, and without the human element our construction could not function. But this element was traditionally considered in a very different way than it is treated by Marxism.

“Your simple exposition could be expressed in three ways; and then the problem can be contemplated in all its profundity, which has the merit of having brought you closer to its solution. Social reality is the work *of* men. Events are events carried out *by* men. Acts are the work *of the man* named Titus, *of the man* named Sempronius, *of the man* named Gaius.
“Not only are we Marxists distinguished from the ‘rest’ by the fact (since man is one part animal, and the other part is a being who *thinks*) that *they* say that man thinks first, and then as a consequence of this thought arranges his relations with material and even animal life, while *we* as Marxists say that physical, animal, nutritional relations, etc., lie at the basis of everything.
“The question is not precisely posed at the level of individual relations, but only in the reality of the complex social relations and phenomena engendered by these relations.

“Thus, the three formulations of the way that men intervene (forgive me for the pompous expression) in history are as follows:

“The traditional religious or authoritarian systems assert that when a Great Man, or someone who is Enlightened by the divinity, thinks and speaks, everyone else must heed his words and obey.

“The more modern bourgeois idealists assert that their ideal part, even though it is common to all civilized men, determines certain trends, according to which men are led to act. Here, too, certain *individual* men (thinkers, agitators, military commanders) will still have to provide the instigating force for all development.
“Finally, the Marxists assert that the common action of men, or that aspect of common action that is not accidental and individual that exists in human action, is born from material needs. Consciousness and thought come later and determine the ideology of each era.

“And then what? The same as for everyone else, it is human actions that are transformed into historical and social factors. Who makes a revolution? Men, of course.

“But according to the first formulation, the Enlightened Man, priest or king, was essential.

“For the second formulation, consciousness and the Ideal were essential, for the conquest of minds.

“For us, it is the totality of economic facts and the community of interests.

“Men are not mere puppets being jerked around by strings … by necessity, but protagonists who create and speak for themselves. Within the community of the proletarian class there are various degrees and

strata, and complex dispositions for action, and different capacities to perceive or to expound the common theory.

“But what is new about our theory is that for us a handful of particular men are not indispensable, as they were for past revolutions, not even in the form of symbols, or as strong personalities or even as names.”

The Inertia of Tradition

The fact is that, since it is precisely the traditions that are the last to disappear, men are often swayed by the hypnotic attraction of their passion for the Leader. And why not use this element, which, although we know it cannot affect the course of the class struggle in the slightest, might enhance recruitment and hasten somewhat the onset of the great confrontation?

It seems to me that the fruit of the harsh lessons of so many decades is this: it is not possible to renounce agitation among men, nor is it possible to win by means of them, and it is precisely we, the Italian communist left, who have always maintained that the collectivity of men who struggle cannot be composed of all men or even the majority of them, but that this collectivity must be a *not-too-numerous* party and the vanguard circles associated with its organization. The famous names that galvanize the masses, however, have caused us to lose a thousand men for every ten we gained. We therefore put an end to this tendency and to the best of our abilities we have abolished, not men of course, but the Man with that particular Name and with that certain Curriculum Vitae….

I already know the response that will quickly come to mind for the most disingenuous comrades: LENIN. Although it is true that after 1917 we *won over* many militants to the revolutionary struggle because they were convinced that Lenin knew what to do and made the revolution: they came, they fought and then provided our program with *more depth*. And thus proletarians and whole masses of people were mobilized who might otherwise have remained inactive. I admit it. But, what happened then? Using the same name, a wave of recruitment took place that led to the total opportunist corruption of the proletarians. We have regressed so far that today the vanguard of the class is much more backward than it was prior to 1917, when very few people had ever heard the name of Lenin.

Having said that, I maintain that the theses and directives established by Lenin comprise the best summary of the collective proletarian doctrine, of the authentic class politics; but I also hold that his name, as a name, falls on the negative side of the balance sheet. It has obviously been subject to exaggeration. Lenin himself was sick and tired of the constant praise to which he was subjected. Only worthless little nobodies think they are indispensable in history. Lenin laughed like a little child at such exaggerations. He was followed, adored and understood.

Have I succeeded in providing you, by way of these brief phrases, with an idea of the problem? A time will come when a powerful class movement will wield correct theory and engage in effective action without exploiting any feelings of identification with any names. I think that day will come. Anyone who does not is nothing but a victim of their disillusionment with the new Marxist view of history, or even worse, a stooge planted among the oppressed by the enemy.

As you see I have not added the historical effect of the enthusiasm for Lenin to the positive side of the balance sheet, nor have I added the disastrous effect of thousands of renegade leaders in the negative column of the balance sheet, but only the negative effects of the name, Lenin. Nor have I yielded to the insidious lamentation: *If only Lenin had not died!* Stalin, too, was a Marxist, with all the right credentials and a man of action of the first water. The error of the Trotskyists lies in having sought the key to this immense distortion of revolutionary forces in the wisdom or the attitudes of men.

Contemporary Figures

Why did we call the theory of great men in history the theory of the guignol?

The guignol is a puppet that attracts attention, while simultaneously revealing its absolute vacuity. Elongated, staggering, leaning one way and another as its oversized and utterly stupid-looking head wobbles on its shoulders, walking unsteadily. In Naples they call it *batte-il-occhio* [shut-eye], with reference to its constant blinking and winking like a scatterbrained dolt or a vulgar, insensitive, loudmouth philistine; in Bologna, foregoing local jargon, they shout at it: *Tell us you're a braggart!*
Contemporary political history in this year 1953 (in which everything reflects the general situation, not accidentally, in which a semi-putrescent form, capitalism, is not in danger of dying) has treated us to entire constellations of guignols. The foul miasma that is native to such epochs disseminates among the stupefied and hallucinating masses the absolute conviction that these guignols, and only they, are responsible for everything, and that everything depends on these guignols of destiny, and furthermore and above all that the changing of the guards in the *guignolesque* board of directors is the *factor* (woe to us, Frederick!) that determines history.
Among the chiefs of state, in view of the complete absence of a new word that would define all of them or even provide a form of address that would be common to all of them, there is an infallible trio: Franco, Tito, Perón. These champions, these winners of the historical beauty pageant, have brought to the *nec plus ultra* the supreme art of abolishing from their personalities every sign of individuality, except for the dynastic noses and the eagle eyes!
As for Hitler and Mussolini, we have an encore, since the former makes us think of the formidable General Staff composed of non-guignols that surrounded him, and who were therefore elevated to the rank of criminals, who not only made history, but violated it at their pleasure! The latter gives us pain because of the ineffable stratum of sub-guignols who advised him, and who, after the changing of the guard in 1944-1945, gave way to a gang of associated guignols, who today provide us with such delights.

But it is a most beautiful trio that is displayed not in space, but in time, providing the proof that all succession, whether by inheritance or by election, produces the same historical effect that is obtained by multiplying zero by zero, yielding the result of Delano (Roosevelt), Harry (Truman) and Ike (Eisenhower). The American forces that occupy the world will justify the definition of this period as that of the *fall of the guignols*.

Pallid Diadochi

A no less expressive constellation of the times we are living in has been provided to us by the national leaders of recent and current history, who were often violently overthrown, in the countries allied with Russia. We do not know where we would find more guignols, in the lower Balkans or on Marianne's lap. When Alexander the Great died, the Macedonian empire that spanned two continents was fragmented into lesser states that were divided up among the different generals (Diadochi); these states, in a relatively brief period of time, disappeared without leaving a trace. Anyone who can remember their names will get a high grade in history class.

When history needs him it always finds the right man. It might be that it finds it in a head that is largely bereft of sense. But when it calls for guignols it might even occur that the position could be occupied by a man of merit. And here we are not calling anybody an idiot.

The fact is, in Italy for example, that the career openings for great personalities include posts that had once been occupied by historical colossi. It was actually the parody of a tragedy that unfolded in its solemn development on the occasion of the sixtieth birthday of Togliatti, with a ceremony that was fully oriented towards the past, which after fully informing us concerning his *curriculum vitae* and his works, concluded with this summary definition: *a great patriot*.

A century has passed since such praise had any meaning, and hardly provides us with any hope for a greatness that is not just stupidity. History has already found its heroes, without searching too hard: Mazzini, Garibaldi, Cavour, and so many others who will not fall off their pedestals. To tell the truth, we have very little left of a fatherland, but we have plenty of patriots. The bus of revolutionary glory is already full. This is by no means intended to deny the qualities of the subject in question (Togliatti): his writings exhumed from the year 1919 (when he committed the mistake of not paying close enough attention to them) do him honor. He never ceased to be a Marxist, because he never was a Marxist. He supported the same things yesterday that he does today: the mission of the fatherland. Very great, and, if you like, patriotic; like a *very great* horse and buggy in these times of the electric train and the jet airplane.
If, after having discussed Lenin, we have made no references at all to Stalin, who died recently, it is not because our *scalpel*, after a punitive expedition, was retired to adorn the mausoleum, although such a wide array of possibilities is presented for such work. Stalin is still the outgrowth of an anonymous iron environment of the party that was constructed under the *non-accidental*historical impulses of a collective, anonymous and profound movement. It is the reactions of the historical foundations, and not the chance cases of a vulgar careerism, that determine the reversal by means of which, in a Thermidorian outburst, the revolutionary group had to immolate itself, and while a name can be a symbol, even when a person has no effect at all on history, the name of Stalin remains as a symbol of that extraordinary process: the most powerful proletarian force reduced to slavery for the revolutionary construction of modern capitalism, on the ruins of a retarded and lifeless world.
The bourgeois revolution has to have a symbol and a name, even though it, too, was carried out in the final instance by anonymous forces and material relations. It is the last revolution that was unable to be anonymous, and that is why we call it romantic.

Our revolution will arise when no one bows and scrapes anymore before anyone, which is a sign of particular vileness and ignominy. And as an instrument of the power of its own class a party will exist, unified in all its doctrinal, organizational and combative features, and for its members the name or merits of this or that individual will be of little importance, and it will be able to negate the individual consciousness, will, initiative, merit or fault, because it will embrace in its unity all of these things within well-defined limits.

Morphine and Cocaine
Lenin took the definition from Marx, which many have accused of being trite, according to which religion is the opiate of the people. The cult of the divine being is therefore the morphine of the revolution, with which the active faculties of man are put to sleep, and it is not by chance that in the recent period of mourning (for Stalin) prayers are being said for the deceased in all the churches of the USSR.

The cult of the Leader, the cult of personality, not a divine but a human personality, is an even worse social narcotic that we shall define as the cocaine of the proletariat. The hope for a hero who will inspire men to fight and lead them into battle is like an injection of amphetamine, for which the pharmacologists have found the perfect term: heroin. After a brief period of pathological high-energy intoxication, chronic prostration and collapse follow. There are no injections for a revolution that hesitates, in a society that has been in a torpid state of pregnancy for eighteen months, and is still overdue.

We reject the vulgar recourse to the exceptional man, and instead put our wager on the other formula, that of communism, that is, a society that has abolished the guignols.

Amadeo Bordiga
1953

Translated in December 2013 from the Spanish translation of Agustín Guillamón.

Lessons of the Counter-Revolutions (1953)

1
Neither the appearance of forms of the dictatorship of capital nor the dissolution of the international communist movement and the complete degeneration of the Russian revolution are “surprises of history”, whose explanation would require the modification of the classical theoretical postulates of Marxism.

2
Those who directly attack Marxism as a theory of history are preferable to its “revisers” and “enrichers”, who are all the more harmful insofar as they avail themselves not of a collaborationist, but of an extremist phraseology. According to the latter, critical emendations and additions are necessary in order to correct what they call the failures and shortcomings of Marxism. We are now in a period of evident social and political counterrevolution; but at the same time, it is a period of full confirmation and victory of our critique.

3
The analysis of the counterrevolution in Russia and its reduction to formulas will not be a crucial problem for the strategy of the proletarian movement in the new revolutionary upsurge which we expect, since it was not the first counterrevolution that ever took place; Marxism has experienced and studied a whole series of counterrevolutions. On the other hand, opportunism and the betrayal of the revolutionary strategy have followed a different course from that of the involution of the Russian economic forms.

4
Not only the study of the bourgeois counterrevolutions of the past, but also that of the feudal counterrevolutions directed against the insurrectionary bourgeoisie, lead to the determination of different historical types: total defeat, military and social at the same time (the peasant war in Germany of 1525); total military victory, but an involution and degeneration of the social foundations of the victors (destruction of Italian capitalism despite the victory of the associated Communes over the feudal Empire at Legnano).

5
In order to classify the type of counterrevolution presented by the Russian case, in which, on the surface, its invasion by the capitalist powers failed and resulted in their military defeat, one must examine the economic fabric of Russia and its evolution that “tends” towards capitalism in a dual sense, politically and economically, without totally attaining this goal and without surpassing (since it was only in the cities that this was achieved) the stage that has been correctly called “state industrialism”.

6
In order to carry out this examination, it is necessary to reestablish some basic Marxist concepts: a) the definition of feudalism as the economy of multiple subdivided parcels and non-mercantile exchange; b) the definition of capitalism as the economy of mass production and integral mercantile exchange; c) the

definition of socialism as the economy of mass production and non-mercantile distribution; a rationed but no longer monetary form of distribution in the lower stage, and unlimited distribution in the higher stage.

7

The class struggle in the capitalist stage is not the struggle for the simple reduction of the total quantity of surplus value, but for the social conquest and control over the entire product which has been violently expropriated from the individual workers. The working class fights to conquer all of what today forms the wealth and the value of the productive apparatus and of the masses of commodities: constant capital, that is, the legacy of the labor of past generations that was usurped by the bourgeoisie; variable capital, that is, the labor of current generations, exploited for the most part by the bourgeoisie; surplus value, which must be reserved for the future generations in order to preserve and expand the productive apparatus, which is today monopolized by the bourgeoisie. These three factors are continually being degraded by capitalist anarchy.

8

State capitalism is not a new form of economy nor is it a transitional form between capitalism and socialism: it is pure capitalism, and appeared along with all the other forms of monopoly in the period of the victory of the bourgeoisie over the feudal powers. On the other hand, the capital-state relation lies at the basis of the bourgeois economy in all of its stages.

9

The Marxist view of history would collapse if, instead of recognizing a single type of capitalist relations of production that spans the entire period between revolutions in the mode of production, it were to admit different successive types in this period. And this applies to all the other preceding modes of production, too.

10

Like the German revolution of 1848, the Russian revolution had to integrate two revolutions: the anti-feudal and the anti-bourgeois revolutions. In its political and armed struggle, the German revolution failed to attain either objective, but socially the anti-feudal revolution was successful, that is, that of the transition to capitalist forms. The Russian revolution was victorious politically and militarily in both its anti-feudal and anti-bourgeois revolutions and for this reason went much further. But on the economic and social planes it remained at the same level as the German revolution, limiting itself to encouraging the capitalist industrialization of the territory that it controlled.

11

In the wake of the great political victory, only a few sectors of socialist economy arose and, after the era of Lenin with the NEP, they had to be renounced in the absence of the international revolution. With Stalinism, the international revolution was repudiated, and the transition to large-scale industrialization was intensified, both in Russia proper as well as in Asia. Proletarian elements on the one side, and feudal on the other, tended to gravitate towards capitalism.

12

All of this arises from an analysis of the Soviet economy conducted on the basis of the criteria established above. The perspective of a third world war is not a central problem for the new revolutionary movement, either. In view of the convergence of the two anti-fascist crusades (against which the revolutionary proletarian nuclei stood fast as irreconcilable enemies), the west in the democratic sense and the east in the false proletarian sense, the situation during the war was counterrevolutionary. And it will be equally

counterrevolutionary, for a certain period, before a new war, should Russia and the Atlantic powers reach an agreement on economic and territorial issues. And should a new war break out, the methods of colonial subjugation of the defeated country will assure a counterrevolutionary equilibrium in the post-war period insofar as the more advanced and historically more consolidated imperialism will emerge victorious. Just as the worst possible outcome of the first world war was the victory of England and that of the second world war that of the Anglo-American alliance, an American victory will be the worst possible outcome in the third world war.

Detailed Report

1

In the report presented in Rome at the meeting of the Party held on April 1, 1951, which is now entitled "Theory and Action in Marxist Doctrine" (see, in particular, the section entitled, "The Reversal of Praxis in Marxist Theory", and Graphs I and II of the Appendix in the pamphlet, *Party and Class*, Ed. Programme Communiste, Paris, 1974), the Marxist concepts were reestablished against multiple intellectualizing constructions that claimed that an ascendant phase of capitalism must follow a declining phase.
The perspective expounded by Marx is not that of an ascent followed by a decline of capitalism, but that of transient peaks alternating dialectically with violent oscillations and periodic ruptures of the mass of productive forces that capitalism itself controls, of its unlimited accumulation and concentration and, at the same time, of the antagonistic relation constituted by one of the dominated forces, the proletarian class. In other words, the productive potential continues to expand until equilibrium is shattered and an explosive revolutionary phase opens up during the course of which, during a very brief period of sudden collapse, the old forms of production are destroyed and the forces of production are decimated in order to establish a new basis and a return to an even more powerful ascending phase.

It was shown that, in the opposed view postulating a shallow sine wave in which a phase of gradual ascent is followed by a phase of gradual descent, at the bottom of which the fatal death crisis of capitalism and the almost automatic transition to the power of the proletarian class take place, two errors are contained: gradualism and fatalism. And since the correct interpretation of historical development postulates, as a decisive factor of the phase of violent rupture of the capitalist dynamic, the intervention of revolutionary action, the process was illustrated by means of which, on the one hand, the basic physiological impulses of individuals, the workers and, therefore, of the class, are bound to economic interests, to action and only afterwards to consciousness, leading and flowing towards the party; on the other hand, only the party can "invest praxis with meaning" and only in the party, within certain limits, is it possible for consciousness to proceed to action.

In this way, the objective and subjective factors of the revolutionary explosion that is maturing within the new and tempestuous rise of the capitalist economy are properly situated on the theoretical plane, after the declining phase of the drastically unfavorable conditions of the second imperialist war and the parallel victory of the "Stalinist" counterrevolution.

2

After the Rome Meeting, in order to respond to the issue of the splits in Stalinism in Italy and France, the need was felt to recapitulate, in an "Appeal for the International Reorganization of the Marxist Revolutionary Movement"[1], the essential positions upon which an international regroupment of the groups constituted on the basis of revolutionary Marxism may be conceived, positions that are in distinct contrast with those of the schismatic groups which, in more than one instance, are a direct or indirect emanation of the bastion of imperialism: the United States of America.

3

Two critical observations were made concerning the proposal for this manifesto, which by its very nature cannot be of a personal order:

1. The first affirmation of paragraph 5 of the “summary” that precedes the present detailed report was considered to be insufficient, in which it is declared that in Russia “the social economy is tending towards capitalism”;
2. It was not accepted that American imperialism should be defined as the fundamental force of the counterrevolution, or at least the affirmation that its unlikely defeat should be considered to be objectively preferable in the next war.

4

As we said at the Naples Meeting of April 1, 1951, in response to these criticisms, we cannot restrict ourselves to the narrow limits in which they are proposed: it is necessary to address these criticisms within the broader framework of the problem of the examination of the current counterrevolutionary process. This leads us to once again properly pose some fundamental positions of Marxism applied to particularly significant periods of counterrevolution, which relate not only to the proletarian class, but also to the bourgeois class and the phase of the latter’s original constitution as a ruling class.

5

Above all, we must react energetically to the fact that the critiques that are made of Stalinism do not result in a crystallization of firmly consolidated energies around the fundamental theses of Marxism, but in a deplorable confusion concerning the principles that must nonetheless be considered as definitively established.

A detestable example of this is the charlatanry concerning a third force or a third class—the “bureaucracy”, the “technocrats”—to which we must respond that Marxism must be accepted or rejected as a whole: it does not need our amendments or repairs, which comprise the worst of the deformations of the revolutionary theory.

6

The greatest caution is necessary when addressing the Russian problem. While it is true that the work that has been carried out on the basis of the development of the class struggle allows the fundamental formulations of Marxism to confront the new forms of the class struggle, it is also true that in order to achieve this result—which some might consider to be too modest or insignificant—it is necessary to oppose the mania which has seized too many groups and militants and which consists in wanting to find the key to problems uprooted from their general context and in believing that it has been found in a phrase or, worse yet, in a prescription. We shall repeat once more that this is not just applicable, in this case, to the Russian problem, but to a much broader and general field of inquiries: that of the counterrevolution.

7

The facts have shown that rather than the University where we presumed to find ourselves in order to address the major problems concerning what is taking place in Russia, we must return to high school, or even to elementary school, in order to reestablish the concepts of capitalism and even of feudalism, for otherwise it is not possible to correctly understand the former except in relation to the latter.

8

It is false, and therefore incorrect, to think that the problem of “what has occurred and what is occurring in Russia” can be encompassed by the alternative: capitalism or socialism, or in that other alternative that proposes the “remedy” of the third force or the third “class”. It is true that the criticism directed at the expression, “tends towards capitalism” requires that this expression be made more precise with regard to where this tendency is heading; but it must not lead us to become mired in the Russian problem, but to the contrary to situate this problem in the general context of the examination of the counterrevolution.

Marxism is not the doctrine for the understanding of revolutions, but of counterrevolutions: everyone knows how to orient themselves at the moment of victory, but few are those who know what to do when defeat arrives, becomes complicated and persists.

9

What proves that the Russian problem cannot be reduced to its own boundaries is the fact that although Stalin is situated to the left of Lenin in the economic domain and in the domains of the measures to be adopted in Russia, he is situated to the right of Lenin in the domains of domestic and especially international politics. Lenin himself had considered permitting the entry of foreign capital in Russia by way of concessions, but never proposed an alliance with the capitalist states, which is what Stalin did in 1939 with Germany, and in 1941 with England and later with the United States. The two courses, the economic and the political, do not coincide.

Types of Counterrevolutions

10

A first type of counterrevolutionary victory is the one in which military and political defeat, far from determining the extinction, instead accompanies the victorious progress of the revolutionary class in the social and economic domains. England, which was already a capitalist country, entered into an alliance with the feudal powers and defeated Napoleon, but by way of the Restoration of 1815 assisted in the consolidation of the bourgeois class in France. The defeats of the bourgeois revolutions of 1848 evoke the further development rather than the cessation of the advance of the capitalist class.

11

A second type is the one in which the military and social defeat of the bourgeoisie coincide. The peasant war of 1525 in Germany, analyzed by Engels, shows the betrayal by the bourgeoisie of the cities who abandoned the peasants to reprisals and repression, which resulted in a political and social victory for feudalism, which would retain power for another three centuries, thus reinforcing the social form of glebe serfdom.

12

A third type is the one in which, although not as a result of the force of arms or a political defeat, the bourgeois class is dealt a setback on the economic and social planes. In some ways, the fall of the medieval Communes can be related to the fall of the Russian revolution. Marx saw the Communes, in Italy and in Flanders, as the first affirmation of the bourgeois class. In central and northern Italy, the Communes were highly developed and also responded so well to the possibilities offered to this primitive bourgeoisie that neither the petty local lords nor the armies of France and Germany could defeat them militarily. Their fall was determined by the discovery, at the end of the 15th century, of new trade routes and by the contemporary shift of the center of economic life.

13

These three different types of historical counterrevolutionary development show, on the one hand, the impossibility of connecting in a purely formal manner the economic and the political processes; and, on the other hand, the great complexity of this essential problem of counterrevolutions. We have to explain not the alleged Russian enigma, but why, after the second imperialist war, we have not witnessed a proletarian revolutionary wave, but rather the further development of the counterrevolution. We must examine the behavior of the bourgeoisie, the policies of Stalinism, and above all we must base our examination on the fact that capitalism, having learned from the example of the period following the first world war (when the revolutionary explosion took place in the countries that were militarily defeated), occupied and maintained their occupations of the defeated countries at the conclusion of the second world war. This is the examination that must be undertaken; the vacillations about the questions of principle linked to the trade union problem prove to us that we must pay close attention to it.

14

As far as the proletarian class is concerned, we have first of all the defeat of Babeuf in 1796; later, that of Paris and Lyon in 1831, which was followed by the founding of the Communist League (1836-1847); the defeat of 1848 which was followed by the founding of the First International (1864); the strangling of the Paris Commune (1871), which was followed by the constitution of the Second International (1889); the collapse of the Second International in 1914, which was followed by the victory of 1917; and, finally, the victory of the counterrevolution in 1928.

15

After these historical references it is necessary to proceed to the restoration of some of the fundamental positions of the Marxist doctrine. It is necessary not to pose as essential the problem of analysis of situations or of perspectives, as if the proletariat has been deprived of these for a century. The Rome Meeting of April 1, 1951 established on this solid and illustrious foundation the reality of the historical process that determines the revolutionary clash and the fundamental concepts of the development of the social struggle. Although we admit that this struggle assumes new aspects in the phase of capitalist totalitarianism, in which the bourgeois state founds trade unions, we do not deduce from this the invalidity, but the confirmation of the principles of Marxism even on this terrain, and our focus on current problems is based on the current, temporary victory of the counterrevolution. The Rome Meeting also called attention to the distinctive character of our current which, although anti-parliamentarian, was far from being anti-trade union and advocated the most extensive and systematic labor in the trade unions. Finally, the meeting concluded that a pre-revolutionary phase is inconceivable without a struggle by the proletarian class for its economic interests, without organizations that include broad sectors of workers, without a class party that includes a minority of the proletariat but influences the whole proletariat and is based on economic determinations and on the trade union organizations.

16

This text responds to the demand for a more complete explanation of the concepts of Marxism which, once again, and as a result of the difficulty of assimilating them that has been exhibited even among the ranks of our organization, are summoned onto the scene by ideological confusion and the threat of the appearance of deviations. The core of the question is whether, although three phases exist in the capitalist epoch (the revolutionary, the peaceful and the totalitarian), there is nonetheless a single criterion of interpretation and a single type of capitalism by means of which the latter is victorious, develops and will finally collapse. We must not forget that reformism emerged precisely on the basis of the affirmation and with the claim of proving that nothing is fixed, that everything undergoes transformation in a molecular way, that the capitalism of 1895 was no longer the capitalism of 1789. Marxism responded, and still responds, that moments of crisis effectively exist, but that they do not lead

to the emergence of diverse types of capitalism. History is the history of the types of forms of production; and, in each such form, with the growth of the forces of production, the resistance of the forms of production also grows, and so too does the thickness of the cauldron containing these forms. Capitalism is constant and not flexible; it neither adapts nor lags behind; but, finally, it wrecks and destroys itself.

17

There are phases but not types of capitalism, although the real mechanism of society is not characterized by a pure type in time (that is, one that is extended immediately throughout the entire world) and in space (that is, one that automatically eliminates all the pre-existing and defeated classes within each country), but is characterized instead by a mixed fabric of diverse forms of production. Engels even said that in certain historical circumstances it would even be difficult to identify the class that really wields state power. In England, for example, a highly developed capitalist country, not only do numerous forms of artisanal production coexist, but there are even pre-feudal forms of production in Scotland. The same is true of the United States, where the industrial East coexists with the preponderantly agricultural West.

18

In order to explain the three phases of the capitalist epoch (the revolutionary phase, the phase of its consolidation and the phase of its defensive battle against the threat of the proletarian revolution), it is not necessary to present the fashionable models that are utilized by the bourgeoisie to dispel the prospect of revolutionary overthrow into a distant past. The same definition of capitalism explains Cromwell in 1652, 1789, 1848 and Stalin himself. Therefore, it is necessary to establish first of all the distinctive and essential characteristics of the capitalist-bourgeois type of relations of production, in order to then see the different forms in which the social structure of the various countries of the world are manifested and the diverse relations of influence and of struggle with the modes of production that preceded it and will follow it. Above all, the diverse essential historical relations are the ones that enable us to speak of different phases: the bourgeois revolutionary phase, in which the struggle is waged against feudal forms and in which the political alliance with the new working class, the Fourth Estate, is total; the intermediate phase, in which capitalism appears to accept the just legal demands of the workers; and the counterrevolutionary phase, in which all the forces of capitalism are mobilized to prevent the proletariat from politically and socially destroying it.

In order to understand what happens when a proletarian attempt to conquer power is defeated, it is not enough to trace the play of forces and the actions of the political, police or military organizations; it is necessary to depict the historical types of the social economy that are present in the framework of the country in question, and to ask oneself which ones are advancing and which ones are not.

Thus, before attempting to decipher the counterrevolution in Russia, it is necessary to reaffirm the fundamental characteristics of the capitalist type of production, returning to the foundations of the fundamental Marxist texts. But this is not enough: we will have to highlight the character of the classical pre-capitalism of the feudal regime. It is to this task that we shall devote the concepts elaborated in the course of this exposition (sections 19 to 38).

From Feudalism to Capitalism

19

More than once, in the texts of the Left, we have distinguished three successive phases of the capitalist epoch: the revolutionary phase, the peaceful phase, and the “totalitarian” phase.

20

This concept must be clarified and rendered concordant with the essential thesis of Marxism: capitalism is always one, from its birth to its death.

21
The antagonism between the evolutionist theory and our revolutionary theory consists in the following: for the former, every historical type of society is gradually modified until it is imperceptibly transformed into another different type of society; for the latter, any particular type of relation of production arises from a revolutionary explosion provoked by a high degree of tension in the productive forces, and this type subsists until the ensuing explosion where it is destroyed by the new forces of production which it has created.

22
Thus, once the antagonism between the feudal, pre-capitalist system of relations of production and the bourgeois system has become clearly evident, the same characteristics define the entire historical period that unfolds until the point is reached where the antagonism between the bourgeois relations of production and socialist society is also clearly evident: there are no sub-species of the bourgeois or capitalist social type.

23
In order to correctly understand this statement one must not forget that if the bourgeois revolution now tends to be contemporaneous throughout the entire world, and if the proletarian revolution tends to be contemporaneous in a much more distinctive manner, there are nonetheless very different situations in different parts of the inhabited world.

24
Obviously, in the examination of these situations it is necessary to keep in mind:

1. The coexistence in the same country of different fundamental types of productive technologies (glebe serfdom, small-scale freeholders' agriculture, free artisans, collective industry and services);
2. The coexistence of different social classes (which always number more than the two protagonist classes of the ongoing historical transition);
3. The political relation of forces with respect to the class that is most heavily armed, which is more autonomous and which subjugates the others.

25
When one examines the historical course of the capitalist epoch in individual countries, groups of countries or continents, one undoubtedly recognizes the more or less complicated succession not only of different relations of force (even before the extension and contraction of the corresponding sectors of the diverse productive types), but also a series of advances and retreats on both the social as well as political terrains of the same class in the struggle to impose its own type of relations of production.

26
In the successive historical periods of the bourgeoisie rule, such as, for example, in France, England, Europe, etc., there is therefore a series of differences with regard to the spread of industrialism, with regard to the resistance and the liquidation of the old feudal class, with regard to the formation of the great territorial nation-states, and with regard to the resistance mobilized against the threat posed by the appearance of the revolutionary proletariat.

27
It is therefore a fundamental problem for the theory, the organization and the strategy of the proletarian revolutionary party to completely understand all these aspects, all these circumstances and their innumerable combinations in different places and successive eras.

28
However, in accordance with its view of history and of the determinism of collective action, the proletarian party proposes the same terms, throughout its whole cycle, for the definition of the characteristics of capitalist society, its condemnation and its abolition.

29
Among the social and political distinctions of the successive phases, it is also important to take into account the ideological arsenal of the bourgeois class, which it has made use of since the beginning of its revolutionary struggle and whose employment reflects the successive changes that derive from the fact that the bourgeoisie became an autonomous, ruling and ultimately a counterrevolutionary class.

30
The definition of the characteristics of capitalism is complete and definitive since the times of the "Manifesto of the Communist Party" and since the writings that already precisely contained the economic doctrine elaborated in*Capital*. Without neglecting the evaluation of all the contemporary and future differences of historical development, the Marxist economic analysis examines the laws of capitalist production as they arose from the hypotheses of the bourgeois enemy itself: full equality of every citizen on the field of rights; full and equal opportunity for all to participate in exchange on the market. With this analysis, Marx shows once and for all and irrevocably that the predominance of this system by no means signifies the advent of a phase of equilibrium in which humanity would settle down in comfort, but that it constitutes the rise to power of a specific ruling class against which revolutionary conflicts and crises would arise. The capitalist form of production has never been and never will be capable of evincing unforeseen characteristics different from those of the initial Marxist definition. If such a type of capitalist production were to be experimentally verified, then Marxism as a science of history would have to be rejected in its entirety.2

31
Some pre-capitalist economies have exhibited concentrations of masses of productive forces: men, draft animals, tools, provisions, vast tracts of land. In general, these masses of productive forces were privately owned and were limited to men (slaves) and land (ancient Rome), but never embraced all tools, even primitive ones. Quite frequently, masses of productive forces were subject to state or military powers: nobles, military chiefs, kings, republics, and sometimes theocracies.

32
The immediately pre-capitalist type of production is the feudal type. In the light of our reminder that no type is present only in a certain time or place, we shall define the feudal type as that of the extensive division of ownership and control of all the productive forces and of the absence of their mass concentration. In agriculture, apart from virgin lands, hunting preserves and similar estate lands, one finds the small farm granted to the serf family. Each serf disposes of the products of his little plot of land, but owes a part of these products or a part of his labor time to the feudal lord, to whom he is subject by a veritable division of labor: the serf cannot leave his farm; the lord, in turn, defends the territory and its inhabitants against marauding enemies. It is a personal form of dependence. There are also peasants who farm their little plots of land and who have complete disposal over their entire product, and artisans who are the owners of their workshops. The worker on these small parcels, who comprises the basic

human productive force, controls the elements of the other productive forces—land, raw materials, tools—and likewise controls his portion of the products that he consumes or exchanges on his own behalf.

33
Up until this point, although money can already constitute capital, under the two forms of commercial and bank capital, it can be affirmed from the Marxist point of view that money is not one of the productive forces, but only an intermediary of exchange. In the pure feudal type it is prohibited to buy and sell land or masses of instruments of labor, just as it is prohibited to employ wage workers.

34
We recall these well-known facts in order to be able to define the characteristics of capitalism: with money one can buy land in any form; with money, individuals can buy masses of instruments and machines as they are invented and, in the same way, masses of raw materials or semi-finished products. Finally, masses of labor power or of labor time can be bought with money. In order for this to be possible, it is necessary for the workers to be free and therefore for the feudal lords to be dispossessed of their privileges; for the small-scale peasant farmers to be dispossessed of their lands and chattels; and for the artisans to be dispossessed of their workshops, of the instruments of labor and raw materials. In these conditions, money becomes a productive force because it can assume not just the form of commercial or bank capital, but that of real estate or industrial capital, depending on whether it is invested in land, buildings, tools, machinery, etc.

35
In the feudal type, the possession of productive forces is only possible on a small scale, since the feudal privilege is a personal right and not a real right over the physical man (as in the case of slavery) or over things and land (as in Roman law). The definition of capitalism as a system of private property in the means of production and land is therefore perfectly acceptable; more precisely, capitalism is the system of unlimited property in opposition to divided, small-scale property.

36
The essential historical fact, however, consists in the battle over the mass of products. Once the workers were expropriated of their little plots of land, the products, henceforth concentrated in the form of masses of commodities, are at the disposal of the bourgeois class that possesses the monopoly of the land and of capital (appropriation of both the means of production as well as the products by the bourgeoisie).

37
Bourgeois economic theory maintains that, once the barriers of the feudal estate systems erected on the basis of birthright or investiture were destroyed, and once everyone could aspire in principle to be owners of land or of capital, a full equilibrium in the potential distribution of wealth among all those who collaborated in production would be established. The Physiocrats, who defended feudalism (although in its modern form), maintained that the land was the source of wealth. The Mercantilists maintained that the source of wealth was the exchange of commodities. The Economists of the bourgeoisie maintained that labor was the source of wealth, and that commodities neither increase nor decrease in value in exchange, while in production, industrial or agricultural, all intervention of labor that transforms commodities adds value to them; furthermore, they claimed that a perfect exchange between equivalent values and between free and equal contracting parties takes place when the wage laborer receives money for his work.

38

The refutation of this theory is found in the Marxist theory of surplus value. This shows that when he exchanged his product on the market, the small-scale worker-owner of the feudal past extracted from this exchange all the value that he had added to his product through his labor, while, to the contrary, in the capitalist regime the wage laborer extracts from his labor only part of the value that his labor had added to the product. It also shows that this phenomenon is inevitable on the scale of society as a whole since the former worker-owner of the feudal era was violently dispossessed of his tools and, essentially, of his right to dispose of part of his products. To this initial expropriation was added an indefinite and always violent series of expropriations from the moment when the law prohibited the wage worker from seizing a part of his products, however small it might be.

From Capitalism to Socialism

39

The first form in which the bourgeois economy was affirmed during the epoch of feudal power was state capitalism. And this is also the form it currently assumes when the threat of proletarian revolution arises.

As we have pointed out on other occasions, contrary to the current version that seeks to convince us that the capitalists are being subjugated by the state, it is capitalism that increasingly subjects the state to its class interests. The bourgeoisie possesses in the state the organ of power by means of which it imposes its solutions by force. This state nourishes with its many breasts the various capitalist enterprises while it sucks the labor and the blood of the poor, which is a trait that is common to both the United States and Russia, while the much lower standard of living of the workers in the latter country informs us that it is there where this process has reached the highest degree of tension. But this is also manifested in the United States, where the central figure is represented by the businessman who connects the bourgeois class with its state. The exponents of the current phase of capitalism are not the rentiers, but the businessmen, those vampires who, as was recently observed by the former president of the United States, the old Hoover, threaten to lead the regime to disaster as a result of their insatiable greed. The civil servant is nothing but a simple intermediary and not an active factor, even in the current phase of capitalism.

40

We must establish our definition of capitalism in the correct terms. In order to do so most effectively, we have set forth its precise relation with the feudal system. We must also employ this comparative method for the definition of the socialist economy that must be elaborated in relation to capitalism and to the form of state capitalism.

41

Engels observes that in the pure feudal regime money does not possess an economic function. This must not be interpreted literally: the money that existed then and before that time was not a force of production; it was transformed into a force of production in the capitalist regime.

42

All regimes are part of the world order, but not because at the present time in all countries all the economic sectors conform organically to the type of society that historically prevails; many stubborn stains persist (preceding forms of production), but a single capitalist connective fabric unites them today by way of commodity exchange, and this fabric reveals the type of social organization that dominates the inhabited world. It is therefore a matter of differences of phases in space and time, but never of different types of capitalism.

43

As we said in sections 19-38 above, the nature of feudalism is distinguished by property divided into many parcels, which also corresponds to a divided economic management and a divided disposition of the products.

The nature of capitalism, on the other hand, is distinguished by the concentration of property in the means of production, the masses of products, and economic management. The capitalist state assures the bourgeois class of its disposition and monopoly over the products; this is what is essential and what determines the social and historical dispute over the control of the mass of products.

44

With a purely polemical purpose, Marx appropriated the theory of the bourgeois economists according to which in capitalism the capitalists and the wage workers intervene on a free, level playing field on the market, and demonstrates with his economic analysis of capital that this free development does not lead to social equilibrium, but to the growing concentration of the means of production and of the masses of products in the hands of the capitalist class and, moreover, to the increasing pauperization of the workers. From the very beginning, however, the dispute is of a social order and its dynamic is also an opposition between economic categories (constant and variable capital). The two planes, the economic and the social, do not coincide. The proletariat does not know the specific amount of variable capital that it demands, but struggles to obtain a sufficient quantity of products and therefore a higher wage for less effort. The unitary class struggle is a struggle for the entire product. The vulgar economist defines as capital the value of the assets of the factory, that is, the value of the buildings and machinery and of the money set aside to buy raw materials and pay wages, a formula that accords quite well with that of the ownership of “the means of production”. The Marxist economist defines capital as the total value of the mass of the product of any given cycle of labor: one day, one year, or that of a generation (the “total income” of the accountants). According to the doctrine of surplus value, this value of the product is classified under three headings: constant capital, that is, the value of the raw materials that are transformed by labor and the amortization (depletion) of the machinery; variable capital, or the value of the wages paid; surplus value, that is, the margin that is added to the first two in such a way that the sum of the three is the value of the product on the market that goes to the entrepreneur. As Marx says, thus destroying the Lassallean illusions of the German socialists, the proletarian struggle is not the struggle for the “the total product of labor” of the individual worker. Nor is it just a matter of conquering only the field of surplus value. Furthermore, in a collectivist economy not all the surplus value will go to consumption: a thousand useful social services are necessary along with new investment for the need for expansion of production in the future. After all, only part of the surplus value currently goes to the personal consumption of the bourgeoisie; most goes to new investments, but the disaster of capitalist anarchy fully affects more than just the mass of surplus value and consists in the masses of products that are destroyed together with all the constant and variable capital and surplus value.

The real proletarian struggle is for the conquest of the entire product. Constant capital is the fruit of the labor of past generations: it must be seized from the bourgeois class and put in the hands of the victorious proletariat, that is, put to work for the realization of the classless society. Variable capital is the labor of the active social elements, that is, today the labor of the working class and tomorrow that of society. Surplus value arises from the current expenditure of the energy of labor and from the technical-organizational resources that are also the “legacy” of the past and which must also be placed at the disposal of society. First the working class in power, and then the classless society, will use all the masses of previously and currently produced products for general purposes. It is therefore a matter of the

antagonism between the classes and their armed and political formations, and not between numbers that represent the distribution of wealth between the classes.

45

Now that we have recalled the precise terms of the transition from pre-capitalism to capitalism, we must specify the distinctive characteristics of the transition from capitalist economy to post-capitalism. For at least a century now, post-capitalism has not been an unknown factor for us, but something that has been precisely defined. In accordance with the general rule, we can see in operation around us our examples of post-capitalist economy, just as large-scale manufacturing existed several centuries before the bourgeois revolution.

Here we may quote what we have already written in a previous text:

“As has already been pointed out, there are even true communist types under capitalist power; for example, firefighting services. When something is on fire, no one pays to put it out, and if nothing is burning the firefighters are still paid. We point this out in order to combat the thesis—whoever its author may have been—according to which the successive stages are: private capitalism, state capitalism as the first form of lower socialism, and higher socialism or communism.

“State capitalism is not a semi-socialism, but just plain capitalism, and furthermore, according to the Marxist theory of concentration, it is the result of capitalism and the condemnation of the liberal theory of a permanent regime of production in which the admirable play of competition would always place a new portion of capital within the reach of all.

“The ownership of the instruments of production is not enough to distinguish between capitalism and socialism (see “Property and Capital”[3]), but it is necessary to consider the economic phenomenon as a whole, that is, who has the disposal over the product, and who consumes it.
“Pre-capitalism: the economy of individually owned products. The product belongs to the independent worker, each of whom consumes what he has produced. This does not rule out the existence of castes, orders or privileged powers that may extract surplus products and therefore surplus labor to the detriment of the multitudes of small-scale worker-owners (sometimes grouped together in large masses by means of violence, but without the modern division of labor applied to the productive process).

“Capitalism: associated labor (social labor in Marx); division of labor; the product is at the disposal of the capitalist and not of the worker, who receives money and buys everything he needs to maintain his labor power on the market. The entire mass of products passes through the monetary form on the way from production to consumption.

“Lower socialism: the worker receives from the unitary economic and social organization a fixed quantity of products that he needs to live and cannot have any more. Money disappears; it is replaced by consumer coupons that cannot be accumulated or exchanged for any but their designated purposes. A rationing card? Yes, in lower socialism there will be rationing cards for everyone, without the employment of money and without the existence of a market.

“Higher socialism or communism: in all sectors there will be a tendency to abolish rationing and everyone will take what he needs. Will someone go to a hundred movies in a row? He can do that even today. Will he make a phone call to the fire department after setting fire to his house? Some people do that today, but then there will be no insurance payoff in communist society. In any event, then as now, the mental

health services will be provided in accordance with pure communist economy: it is free and access is unlimited.

“Let us recapitulate:

• Pre-capitalism: moneyless economy or economy complemented by the use of money; small-scale, divided production.
• Capitalism: economy distinguished by universal employment of money; social production.
• Lower socialism: moneyless economy with rationing card; social production.
• Higher socialism or communism: economy without money or rationing card; social production.

“State capitalism, which only a cretin would call state socialism, is totally contained under the heading of capitalism.”

The Revolutionary Capitalist Nature of the Russian Economy

46

We have recapitulated all these basic notions in order to explain the development of the current counterrevolutionary process of which the events taking place in Russian society are a constitutive part. The latter cannot be examined unless they are integrated with the process as a whole, since if they were to be analyzed separately this would lead the unwary to alter Marxist doctrine, to admit new analyses and new perspectives for the intervention of a third class, of a third factor, thus falling into the trap of the Stalinist deception that attributes permanent functions to the state—no longer considering it as the instrument of a class, but as something that is engendered by a class—and abandoning the notion of its progressive elimination.

47

Our working method leads us to continually insist on points that we are already familiar with and to extend our investigation to ever wider and diverse sectors that fall within the parameters fixed by these points, but never proceeding to innovations or inventions.

48

Competition and monopoly are not antagonistic concepts, but complementary, even in the market and exchange; the former leads to the latter. The bourgeois class asserts its power by means of monopoly: monopoly over the means of production and over the products.

49

In order to react against the social condition that is imposed on them by capitalism and which is favored by their dispersion, the workers are led to institute the monopoly of their labor power by means of the trade union. As a result, capitalism must reveal its nature, trusts must be founded and not only police but also economic functions must be attributed to its state. The cooperatives that collect dues from the wage workers for purposes of social assistance preceded the trade unions, but did not yet demand wage increases from the capitalists. Nothing could be more conservative than this; nonetheless, the socialist party penetrated these traditional mutual aid associations and even charitable organizations to its advantage.

50

The formulation according to which the Russian economy “is tending towards capitalism”, contained in the proposed manifesto, must be clarified. What has taken place in Russia? The regression of the first

embryonic post-capitalist characteristics of the economy; the reversal of domestic and international policies. The latter phenomenon is not an unavoidable result of the former.

51

In 1921, when Russia was isolated within its own borders due to the absence of revolutionary victory in the other countries, the level of the productive forces had declined to a low level, below the minimum. The delivery of products from the countryside to the city and *vice versa*, which had at first been assured by way of war communism, could no longer function because the proletarian state had been deprived of both the products from the city as well as those from the countryside. The legalization of free trade, which had been practiced up until that time on the black market or by “speculators”, was absolutely necessary.

52

Lenin and the Bolshevik Party implemented the NEP in an economic context characterized by the existence of nomadic, patriarchal, feudal, and bourgeois forms of production as well as small nuclei of socialist economy. But one must not understand the word “socialist” in a narrow and inflexible economic sense, but in the dual economic and social sense as follows: 1) on the one hand, mechanisms of despotic intervention were introduced with regard to property rights (requisitions, etc.) and the egalitarian distribution of products (rationing, etc.), mechanisms that always characterize any “besieged citadel”—as Trotsky called it—but which can only be implemented with inflexible rigor and without exceptions by the class of the dispossessed and its party at the head of the dictatorship; and, on the other hand, a network of “free social services” was established, some of which (housing, transportation) are evidently compatible with the capitalist mode of production, but have never been nor will they ever be adopted by a bourgeois regime; 2) thanks to the nationalization of large-scale industry, to the monopoly on foreign trade and to the establishment and management of large-scale agricultural enterprises based on associated labor, the dictatorial power of the proletariat controlled and directed the economy according to the demands and interests of the struggle against the internal enemy in the civil war and of the extension of the worldwide communist revolution.

As for the question of whether or not the NEP was capitalism, Lenin categorically responded: YES. Nor could it be otherwise since capitalism exists from the very moment that wages are paid in money and this money is used to buy food. This does not alter the nature of the state, which is still proletarian, and could still be proletarian since its nature does not depend on the economic structure, but on its class position and on the force of the development of the revolutionary struggle of the international proletariat.

53

Lenin, who on the economic field even proposed to allow foreign private capital to operate in Russia, with concessions of whole territories, advocated the strengthening of state power in order to confront the social reactions caused by the measures associated with the NEP and to gain time to receive help from the western workers revolutions.

54

The problem was posed in these terms. Trotskyism proclaimed the intervention of a third factor, that of the bureaucracy. For us the current situation in Russia exhibits nothing new since capitalism is not characterized by the existence of private owners, but by the impossibility (due to state power) of the appropriation of products by the working class and by the payment of wages in money form. The economic process that has led us to the current situation (in which the individual is at the service of the state; the state is the employer; the public debt increases incessantly; ownership of private homes is allowed; houses are provided to professionals) is not the result of the social maneuver of the NEP, but of the reversal that has taken place on the political field and in the international position of the Russian state.

The NEP left the state in the hands of the working class, which had taken control of it by virtue of the October Revolution and the Bolshevik dictatorship: the first renunciations in the economic field by no means necessarily imply revolutionary tactical and strategic errors, nor later did they necessarily imply the reversal of the position of the state.

55

Socialism cannot be built only in Russia despite the fact that the proletarian October revolution followed in the wake of the bourgeois revolution of February 1917. In Germany, in 1848, a double revolution was also attempted, one that was both bourgeois and proletarian, but in vain: the bourgeois revolution was victorious on the economic and social fields, but only after the allied bourgeoisie and proletarians had been defeated on the political field. In Russia, after the double political and social victory of 1917, the social defeat of the proletariat took place that could be dated to 1928, but the social victory of capitalism has endured to this day.

56

We do not possess the documentary material for a detailed examination of the Russian economy,[4] but we do have sufficient information to undertake a reliable evaluation. In conformance with the information provided by our work, “Property and Capital”, we see the essential factor of the current worldwide capitalist phase in the enterprise (the construction business offers a good example) that operates without headquarters or any stable installations of its own, with a minimal capital but with a maximum profit, which may be realized because it has submitted to the state, which distributes capital and assumes responsibility for losses.

The civil servant is not a central figure, but a simple mediator. Facing the corps of state functionaries is the body of functionaries of the enterprises swarming with experts of all kinds, who are responsible for making sure that the state submits to the interests of the enterprises. An analogous mechanism functions in the USSR under other forms and different names. When one thinks that the enterprises of Moscow have been able to give the gift of the Metro to the city, we become aware of the extremely high profits earned by these enterprises in the other spheres.

57

This capitalism in Russia exhibits absolutely nothing new. As for state management, the latter is linked with a thousand historical examples, from the example cited above concerning the Communes of Italy, where, on the other hand, the first form of state investment in industrial production was implemented (individuals were unable to marshal the necessary capital for the construction of the fleets: the Communes provided it).[5] In this manner, states and kings always armed the first fleets and founded imperial companies, on the basis of which capitalism developed at a frenzied pace. Finally, we have the example of the recent British nationalizations.

58

To say that the Russian economy “is tending” towards capitalism has a double meaning. The first post-capitalist forms that followed the October revolution regressed and were reabsorbed. An economy that, for reasons stated above, we may call in the figurative sense “proletarian”, gradually regressed and then was violently deprived of the persons that, on the political plane, allowed it to be defined that way, by means of the destruction, including the physical destruction, of the revolutionary leadership of the Bolshevik Party, until it gave way to fully and purely commodity forms. In this resides the totally negative aspect of the course of Russian history since 1928.

Meanwhile, however, the entire vast field of the pre-capitalist, Asiatic, feudal Russian economy is showing a powerful tendency toward capitalism. This tendency is positive and is in turn a premise of the world

socialist revolution. Lenin and Trotsky themselves saw this necessity and were the pioneers of electrification, the only way to bring production up to the level of production in the West in order to fight imperialism more effectively. Stalin threw the international revolutionary plan overboard, but delivered a very significant impulse to the industrialization of the cities and the countryside. More precisely, the latter was an irresistible factor in the Russian social situation after the fall of the rotten Czarist and Boyar structure. Lenin discerned the possibility that his party would be the standard-bearer of the proletarian political revolution in the world and, in the meantime, also of the capitalist social revolution in Russia: only on the condition that these two victories are achieved can Russia be capable of becoming economically socialist. Stalin said that his party realized economic socialism in Russia alone; actually, however, his state and his party limited themselves to being the bearers of the capitalist social revolution in Russia and Asia. However, above and beyond individual men, these historic forces work for the world socialist revolution.

An analogous evaluation may be made with regard to the Chinese revolution. Here, too, workers and peasants fought for a bourgeois revolution through various phases and could not proceed beyond this kind of revolution. The alliance of the four classes: workers, peasants, intellectuals and industrialists, reproduces the alliance of 1789 in France and of 1848 in Germany, an alliance that is completely in accordance with Marxism in its doctrine and its tactics. The destruction of the centuries-old Asian feudal structure is, however, an accelerative factor of the world proletarian revolution, on the condition, of course, that the latter is successful in the European and American metropoles.

It is a customary cliché of vulgar Marxism, insufficient and scientifically false, to ask who is the beneficiary and the personal consumer of capitalist exploitation, thus forgetting innumerable quotations from Marx about the impersonal soul of Capital and about the depersonalization of the capitalist (for whom the accumulation of surplus value counts more than his individual life and the lives of his own children). It would be equally insufficient and scientifically false to consider “crypto-entrepreneurs” and “crypto-businessmen” as the beneficiaries of the fruits of Russian capitalism (as we said before, it is not the fruit that counts but the whole plant). For us, the beneficiaries are not—as they were not in any social formation—the functionaries of the state bureaucracy (in Russia the simple mechanic in a factory is a bureaucrat, as he is today in England: everyone is “nationalized”), but a differentiated layer that cannot be individualized only within the narrow domain of the Russian case.

On the basis of this premise, we must state that despite any iron curtain, this apparatus or, more precisely, this network of channeling of the wealth communicates with the network of world capital. The foreign trade of the state is an immense scale that is never exactly balanced, but which continuously robs the Soviet working class. There is also the enormous dead end of the financial maneuvers that have a repercussion on the legal and illegal financial centers of Asia and Africa. And there are the American loans for the war against the Axis that are still being paid off (the Americans finally reached the conclusion that the loan of millions of Russian proletarian corpses to defeat Germany was a business deal that more than offset the cost of production of a corresponding number of atomic bombs).

The coexistence and emulation today, the evident alliance of yesterday, with the commitment to dismantle the communist parties of the West and the unhesitating participation in the blocs of anti-fascist liberation constitute, on the one hand, the confirmation of the political disruption that went as far as counterrevolution and, on the other hand, they are aspects of the economic bargaining and bonuses paid to world capital with the sweat and the life itself of the Russian worker. That is why the decline of the party, of its power and of the state is not still underway, but is a historical *fait accompli* (Trotsky’s widow

has perfectly confirmed this). Today the historical function is paralleled on the economic and political planes: the establishment of capitalism throughout Russia.

59

The defeat of Spartacus at the foot of Vesuvius meant both the political and social defeat of the slaves, and the social regime based on slavery remained in power. Diocletian's victories over and repeated waves of repression carried out against the Christians, however, who were true political and class conspirators, did not result in the consolidation of the regime of the slave-owners: under the sign of the triumph of a new religion the fall of that social regime took place, followed by the advent of medieval feudalism.

60

When we ask ourselves why Engels, after the defeat of 1848, devoted his time to writing *The Peasant Wars in Germany* and to the study of the defeat of 1525, we answer that it is necessary to understand the counterrevolution in order to prepare the revolution of tomorrow. We must do the same thing today, not isolating one sector or one problem, but framing everything in the context of the whole.

Likewise, in the past century, by constructing its definitive victory, the bourgeoisie could celebrate the many defeats that it incurred in the past. This same thing is true for the proletariat, which—as Marx says in *The Class Struggles in France*—is not "prepared" for its triumph in the world by victory, but by a series of defeats. Thanks to its class party, it will be victorious by once again appearing as it was in the beginning of its struggle and in the lapidary programmatic formulas contained in the *Communist Manifesto*, formulas that still have not yet become obsolete, because they are unsurpassable.

One can only profess and defend the Marxist doctrine—which defines history as a succession of class struggles, each one of which is constituted by a mass of men who are in a parallel position in relation to the forces and the systems of production—to the extent that one can prove that every social class has an invariant mission and program during the entire course of its history, from its first affirmations and battles. Thus, the proclamations that Christ delivered to the mobs of the slaves are connected with the fall of the Roman Empire and of classical society; thus, the first demands for civic liberty and freedom for the peasants were linked to the storming of the Bastille and to the bourgeois revolution throughout the world, and the same flag has always flown since then. With all the more reason, the modern proletariat, the first to liberate itself from religious or idealist formulations of its own aspirations, constitutes a true historical force in the Marxist sense and will not fail to be victorious since it has already been proven and demonstrated that the new organization of the productive forces had hardly just arisen, when it had already fixed its sights on its historic goal and the difficult and steep road that leads to it. Consequently, we must struggle tirelessly against the manias of the neo-Marxists and the "new analyses".

61

The fact that we have been defeated, and that we therefore find ourselves in a counterrevolutionary period, explains why there are so few of us and also why confusion has arisen in our ranks. This does not, however, lead us to falsify the theory of revolutionary Marxism by means of the admission of the arrival of a third protagonist, of a new class on the stage of history. We do not need to discover new types or new stages, nor do we have to invent new powers for the state capitalism that, as we have already pointed out, displays nothing original and was even the first form by means of which the capitalist class first affirmed itself in the epoch of the Communes, in the 1100s.

62

To complete our exposition, and to reaffirm the opportune warning of the Left about the degeneration of proletarian politics, we append a schematic presentation that represents the relations that connect the working class, its economic associations, the class political party and the central organs of the party. The

explanations that we append show that the two proposals that converge in the formula of the mass party, the labor party of the English type and the Stalinist party, have the same root since they replace economic determinations with the will of individuals, and definitely lead to the same result: to impose the decisions of the party leadership on the latter.

63

One other point gives rise to doubts and vacillations: what is our perspective? As always, we only have one: the international proletarian Revolution, when the conditions for it are ripe, conditions that today are almost all equally unfavorable (see the report of the Rome Meeting of April 1, 1951 in the pamphlet “Party and Class”, cited above). As for the current outlook, three hypotheses seem to be possible: 1) the peaceful absorption of Russia by the U.S.; 2) the victory of the USSR; or 3) the victory of the U.S. in case war breaks out between the two powers.

64

Already, in the first imperialist war, the victory of the stronger capitalist sector (that of England, which had not been defeated for almost two hundred years and had never been invaded) necessarily determined the least favorable conditions for the eruption of the revolutionary attack of the international proletariat. Had England been defeated, the outcome would have certainly been more favorable. The same thing must be said of the second imperialist war which concluded with the victory of the London-New York axis, with an overwhelming predominance of the second term of the binomial axis over the first. And what of the third imperialist war? We shall not hesitate to assert that the victory of the United States would represent the most sinister outcome possible. It is true that we are lacking the class forces to intervene in these formidable events, and it is also true that we must preserve our autonomy with respect to both equally counterrevolutionary powers, and fight both “crusades” to the end. It is also true, however, that we cannot stand aside from the only evaluation that is compatible with the Marxist doctrine; that is, the fall of the heart of capitalism leads to the fall of the whole system, while the fall of the weaker sector could preserve the life of the worldwide bourgeois system, in view of the modern method of military annihilation and destruction of the state of the defeated country, and of its reduction to a passive colony. And it is precisely in accordance with this political line that capitalism can be prevented from absorbing the reactions that are emerging in opposition to the policies of Stalinism within the proletariat, and that these energies will find a place in the new institution that will be based on the principles of revolutionary Marxism, which will once again return to be an active force in history.

Schematic Presentation of Marxist Centralism

The central organs of the party

The class political party

Economic associations

Social class

1. The individuals who compose the class are driven to act in discordant directions. Some of them, if they were to be asked or if they were free to decide, would do so in the sense of the interests of the enemy ruling class.
2. Those who are organized in trade unions tend to act in a way that is opposed to the interests of the employer, but in an immediate sense and without any capacity for converging in a single united action and for a single goal.

3. The militants of the political party, formed in work within the class and its associations, are prepared to act in the sense of the single revolutionary goal.
4. The directive organs of the party, which emanate from the base, perform the role of a revolutionary leadership, in the continuity of the theory, of the organization and of its tactical methods.

The position of the Left consists in the simultaneous struggle against the following deviations:

a) The rank and file of the party is qualified to decide on the action of the center if it is democratically consulted (workerism, laborism, social democratism);

b) The supreme center (political committee or party leader) is qualified to decide the action of the party and the masses (Stalinism, the practice of the Comintern) with the right to discover “new forms” and “new courses”.

Both deviations lead to the same result: the rank and file is no longer the proletarian class, but the people or the nation, which are always oriented in the direction of the interests of the ruling bourgeois class, as Marx, Engels and Lenin have correctly affirmed.

Appeal for the International Reorganization of the Marxist Revolutionary Movement
Synopsis
Premise: An extended, serious contemporary crisis of the proletarian movement. First symptoms of a reaction against Stalinism.

Invitation: International reorganization of the genuine, autonomous and homogeneous revolutionary forces.

Points of orientation:

1. Rejection of all confusion with anti-terrorist and anti-dictatorial positions.
2. Break with both the traditions of social patriotism of 1914-1918 as well as with those of the Stalinist alliances with the capitalist states in the war of 1939-1945, and with the policy of the parallel movements and blocs of the Resistance.
3. Condemnation of pacifism as perspective and as method of agitation, and of all world federalism between bourgeois states.
4. Condemnation of the double strategy that seeks to reconcile revolutionary and class-based goals with campaigns and demands of united, democratic and popular fronts.
5. Declaration that in Russia the social economy tends towards capitalism and that state power no longer has anything proletarian about it, and the condemnation of support for the Russian state in case of war.
6. Shifting of the class forces in all countries to the terrain of autonomy against all states, with the ultimate goal of shattering capitalist power in the most industrialized countries of the West, which stands in the way of the revolution.

The Anti-Capitalist Revolution in the West (1953)

The Anti-capitalist Revolution in the West – Amadeo Bordiga

1

Now that we are able to assess the worldwide phase following the second imperialist war, and now that it is clear that the consolidation, after two victorious wars, of the major capitalist imperialist power centers will not be characterized by their coexistence (since they cannot coexist) with the consolidation of a workers state that is building socialism in the east, but that we are instead witnessing a relation between mature forms of capitalism and young and recent forms of capitalism, which will unfold in the framework of a single worldwide commodity economy, and that armed conflicts over markets will ensue, since there are many possible points of fracture, our attention must be directed to the transition from full capitalism to socialist society in the West. Here we are dealing with a revolution that is not double, and not "impure".

2

Just as we have reduced Stalin's "official" data concerning the Russian social economy to the classical elements that define capitalism, thus refuting the two theories according to which these same data are supposed to correspond to either the socialist form or to a "new" form previously unknown to Marxism (the second thesis is more catastrophic than the first), so too do the data from the western economy, and, in the first place, the data from the U.S., even though they are taken from the "official" sources of the infectious propaganda of the "free world", totally coincide with the Marxist description of capitalism, from which we may deduce, without any other recourse and in opposition to the apologetics of equilibrium and progress, the course of the internal crises of production, wars for markets, the revolutionary overthrow, the proletarian conquest of power with the destruction of the capitalist state, the proletarian dictatorship and the elimination of all bourgeois forms of production.

3

Once the capitalist mode of production had been established, it was only capable of sustaining itself by the continuous growth, not of the provision of resources and means of production for a better life for man, with fewer risks and torments and less effort, but of the mass of commodities produced and sold. Because the population grew at a slower rate than the mass of products, the latter had to be transformed into more items of consumption (regardless of their nature), and new means of production, thus leading the system to an impasse. This is the essential nature of the capitalist mode of production, inseparable from the increasing productive power of the material mechanisms provided by science and technology. All its other features relating to the statistical composition of the classes and the mechanisms—which are undoubtedly influential—of its administrative, juridical, political, organization and ideological superstructures, are merely secondary and accessory, and do not modify the terms of its fundamental antithesis with the communist mode of production, contained *in toto* and immutably, since the "Manifesto" of 1848, in the revolutionary proletarian doctrine.

4

In the whole world economy the characteristics of the rise and development of capitalism, crystallized in Marx's monolithic evaluation, have been repeatedly verified, and what is more, they have been further reinforced, in conformity with the laws that were deduced above all from the cycles of English capitalism: successive and merciless expropriations of all the possessors of reserves of commodities and means of production (artisans, peasants, small- and medium-sized merchants, manufacturers and depositors); the accumulation of capital in the form of an increasingly larger mass, in the relative and absolute sense, of instruments of production that are augmented and renewed endlessly (and also irrationally), and the concentration of these social forces in a constantly diminishing number of "hands" (and not of "heads", which was a pre-capitalist concept), thus creating gigantic complexes of factories and productive facilities such as had never been seen before; an uncontrollable extension, after the formation of the national

markets, of the world market, and the dissolution of the closed islands of labor-consumption that still survived in the world.

5

This series of affirmations of a process that has proceeded at a faster rate than was even expected by our theoreticians is presented most conspicuously by the U.S. economy, by its production data and by its constantly expanding domestic economic development. The question is whether the continuous development without convulsions of such a social form is possible; or whether we should expect harsh shocks, profound crises and upheavals that will strike at the foundations of the system. The events of the two great world wars and of the gigantic crisis of the entire economic apparatus that took place between them, together with the instability, in every sense of the word, of this agitated post-war world, are sufficient to provide an answer to this question, so that the description of this society as prosperous, as heading towards a leveling of the standard of living and individual wealth, as composed of a middle class without extremes of rich or poor, and furthermore as lacking open trade union struggles and parties with an anti-constitutional program, will be shattered into pieces. Currently, even the most banal analysis of the American economic structure allows us to relegate among the ghosts of the past the old administrative, federative, non-bureaucratic and non-militaristic state, which used to be contrasted to the belligerent European powers that had been engaged in struggles for hegemony for centuries: in this respect, the data from the U.S. are far in excess of all the absolute and relative indices of today's world and of human history.

6

The description of such an economy, even though based for the moment on deductions concerning only domestic relations, which are eulogized as stable amidst the confessed instabilities of international affairs (since the U.S. has renounced, on the other hand, its old theory of not getting involved in foreign entanglements outside North America), leads directly to the confirmation of all the Marxist laws and to the historical condemnation of the capitalist mode of production, which no one can stop in its race towards catastrophe and revolution.

The massive American network of bases and installations, which possesses world supremacy, and hyper-industrialization extended every sphere of activity, shows a society that is head and shoulders above all the others with respect to the rule of "dead labor" (Marx), or capital crystallized in the form of machinery, buildings and masses of raw and semi-finished materials, over "living labor", that is, the incessant activity of living men in production. The constantly lauded freedom on the juridical plane cannot dissimulate the weight and the pressure of this corpse that rules over the bodies of the living.

7

The rising standard of living of the worker, with respect to the mass of his consumption reduced to a single measure of value, merely serves to confirm the Marxist laws of the increasing productivity of labor. Certain crucial dates—1848, 1914, 1929, 1932, 1952—stand out in the statistics, but they only illustrate the already foreseen development of the cycle. If the statistics boast of an increase of wages in ten years of 280%, while the increase of the cost of living was 180%, this is to say that the worker with a wage of 380 can buy 280, that is, that the increase is reduced to 35%. At the same time, it is admitted that productivity has increased by 250%! Thus, the worker gives three and a half times more but only receives one and a third times as much: exploitation and surplus value have increased enormously.

It is absolutely clear that the law of increasing pauperization does not mean a decline of the nominal or real wage, but the increase of the extortion of surplus value and the increase in the number of those who are expropriated of all their reserves.

8

The increase of the productivity of labor, which over the course of the whole cycle of capitalism in the U.S. has grown by hundreds of percent, means that in the same duration of labor hundreds of times more products are produced than in the past. Previously, the capitalist anticipated that one unit of labor power would work up one unit of raw materials; today, the proportion is one unit of labor power to ten or twenty units of raw materials. If his profit margin is still the same with respect to the value of the product sold, his profit would be ten or twenty times higher. For this to be the case, however, it would be necessary for this quantity of products, now ten or twenty times greater, to find buyers. And then the capitalist would content himself with a lesser “rate of profit” and increase the worker’s pay, even if we assume that the real value doubled every time that productivity is increased tenfold; at the same time, the sales price is reduced because the commodity contains two rather than ten units of labor power, and finds customers in his own labor force. This is the law of the falling rate of profit with the increase of the productivity of labor and of the organic composition of capital (that is, the relation between constant capital and total capital). All the discussions about the impossibility of the continuation of this system derive from and are based upon the verification of the law of the falling rate of profit (which Stalin disregards as a result of imprudence or capitalist inclinations).[1]

Against these positions (and all the more insofar as they become more obvious and oppressive) stand the opposed positions of the communists: Living labor must dominate dead labor! Increasing productivity must be oriented, not towards a demented parallel increase in the production of what is useless—when not of what is harmful—but towards the improvement of the conditions of living labor, that is, to the drastic reduction of the working day.

9

The U.S. (which Engels already defined in 1850 as the country that doubled its population every twenty years), although now it might be the country in which productivity triples every ten years and therefore multiplies by a factor of six in twenty years (or, with the law of geometrical progression that Stalin dreamed of applying in Russia, it would be nine times more), is therefore not the country where “European” socialism is inapplicable, but the one that has left us far behind in the advance towards the crisis of overproduction and towards the explosion point of capitalism.

In the economic sense, the availability to the proletarian of consumer credit for luxury articles turns him into a total “pauper” without any reserves: his balance sheet has not only come to be that of someone who possesses zero, but that of someone who has mortgaged a mass of future labor in order even to reach zero: it is a veritable partial slavery. Socially, all these consumer transactions correspond to networks of influence and often to degenerative corruption for the benefit of the ruling class and to trends with regard to customs and ideologies that are advantageous to the ruling class. The monstrous apparatus of advertising constrains the proletariat to buy with his disposable income products of consumption of dubious quality which are frequently harmful. Personal freedom in prosperous America adds to the despotism of the factory of capital the despotism and the dictatorship over standardized consumption goods based on canned food for the exploited class, for which absurd needs are fabricated in order not to give it free time and in order not to staunch the flood of commodities.

The system of distributing minimal percentages of the factory’s profits proportionally to the annual wage does not have any different effect. Once one examines certain statistical data, one obtains in the best

case a wage increase of 5%, or a little more, which is more than compensated for by the zeal for hard work thereby induced in the ingenuous and duped “stockholder”.

10

The theory of recurring and ever more serious crises has as its basis the theory of the increase of productivity and of the falling rate of profit. This theory would be refuted only if these characteristic trends of the course of capitalist development were to cease to be displayed. But it is entirely otherwise in the U.S., and this is demonstrated even by comparison with the industrialists here in Italy who seek, for example, to increase the current 80 tons of steel produced annually per worker to the U.S. level of 200 tons of steel per worker per year. Who does not want to have 4% of 200 instead of 5% of 80?

The intrinsic economic crisis, that is, that of the “abstract” (as in Marx) America that must eat all that it produces, is inscribed in formulas and sketched out in inexorable trend lines. A graph that depicts the average price of bread, tells us that today the worker buys a pound of bread with 6 minutes of his pay, while in 1914 he had to purchase it with 17 minutes of his pay. The working class population has certainly grown at a faster rate than the total population. How will the American citizens eat triple the quantity of bread compared to what they ate in 1914, and maybe ten times as much as in 1848? So that all that bread does not spoil they will have to follow the old advice of “let them eat cake”! At a certain point, on the one hand, a pound of bread will no longer be sold, and, on the other hand, the worker will be fired and will not even be able to buy a pound of bread. Briefly, this is why another, even blacker, Black Friday will come.

11

One solution lies in stuffing bread down the throats of the peoples who have until recently eaten millet, rice or plantains (maybe the Mau-Mau are right?). And to accomplish this, anyone who tries to prevent such shipments will be bombed, and later the same fate will await anyone who tries to sell rice and plantains at a cheaper price than that of the imported wheat. This is imperialism. If the Marxist theory of crises and catastrophe fits like a ring on a finger, this is no less true of imperialism and war, and the data that lie at the basis of Lenin’s *Imperialism*, which were compiled in 1915, are today supplied by the American statistics with even greater effect.

Likewise, the statistics contrasting the standard of living in the U.S. with that of the other countries that compose its court: first of all, with its allies; then with its enemies, if one pound of flour costs 4 out of the 6 minutes the worker needs to work to buy bread in America, it costs 27 minutes in Russia, according to U.S. statistics. Even if the Russian figure were to be lower, it is nonetheless true that in the eastern zone the laws of increasing productivity, of the composition of capital and of the falling rate of profit still have a long way to go, sowing much confusion as a result among those who have a contrary view of the comparative prospects for revolution in these two countries.

Once the first launch platform has been built, regardless of where—maybe on the moon—and the first V2 is fired, it will certainly have to strike at the very heart of the American system in order to deal the powerful blow that will result in a cessation of locally increasing consumption and production, demonstrating that it is quite true that “man does not live on bread alone”, but it is also true that if this man makes a day’s worth of bread in six minutes, when he works more than two hours a day he is not a man but a fool.

12

It is a major historical problem that is posed on a world scale: the determination of why there is no communist party in the U.S. that has an integral revolutionary program, despite the fact that its program

would be so “up to date” and also that the maturity of the conditions in the U.S. is so advanced that it actually means rotting on its feet.

The third opportunist wave that has shattered the Marxist movement of the post-war periods after the first and second worldwide conflicts has three aspects: reduction to capitalism of the form of production that was developing in Russia; abandonment of communist demands by the Russian political state; policy of military alliances of the latter and of political alliances of its parallel parties in the West for demands of a bourgeois and democratic nature.

The sudden transition from apology for the American capitalist regime, as the friend and savior of the world proletariat, to its denunciation as the enemy of the working class, as if it had only become such an enemy in 1946, can only sabotage in advance the revolutionary preparation of the proletariat in the U.S. and interpose historical obstacles to the development of a real class party in that country.

It is not possible to overcome this situation except with regard to all its aspects: the demonstration that there is no construction of socialism in Russia; that if the Russian state will fight it will not be for socialism, but for imperial rivalries; the demonstration, above all, that in the west, democratic, popular and progressive goals do not serve the interests of the working class, but serve to maintain a rotten capitalism on its feet.

13

Over the course of this long labor of reconstruction (which must proceed at the same pace as the advance of the crisis of the western and U.S. form of production, which possesses all the determinant objective conditions for this crisis to take place within no more than a few decades, regardless of the diversions of internal politics and world politics), we must not succumb to the illusion that new expedients or alignments that are proclaimed by some alleged students of history are worth more than the historical confirmations already provided by events for the correctly understood and followed original Marxist construction. The ideological conditions, the conditions of consciousness, and of will, are not a separate problem nor are they regulated by different influences than the conditions of reality, of interests and of forces.

The communist party advocates a future in which there will be a shorter working day directed towards useful goals in the service of life, and works in favor of this outcome for the future, basing itself for this purpose on all real developments. This conquest, which seems to be wretchedly expressed in hours and reduced to a material accounting, represents a gigantic victory, the greatest one possible, with respect to the necessity that enslaves us and is dragging all of us along in its wake. Even then, once capitalism and classes have been abolished, the human species will still be subject to necessity imposed by natural forces, and the absolute philosophical proposition of freedom will still be a fantasy.

Anyone who, precisely in the maelstrom of today’s world, instead of finding the focal point of the current, of this impersonal notion of the future conditions, in a labor that has lasted entire generations, and wants to instead locate new exciting recipes in the domain of his poor head and dictate new formulas, must be considered to be more harmful than the most accursed conformists and servants of the system of capital, and than the priests of its eternity.

Weird and Wonderful Tales of Modern Social Decadence (1956)

Andrea Doria

The safety of sea travellers seemed, with good reason, to have been assured for the future, both historically and scientifically, by the first application of mechanical motors to ships, and all the more so with the construction of metal hulls. After a century and a half of technical “improvement”, the safety of the passenger is now relatively greater when compared with the old wooden sailing boats which were prey to both wind and sea. Naturally the “achievement”, the most idiotic one, is speed, even if special clippers in about 1850 won the “blue ribands” from steam ships, while there was — then too — not insignificant playing the cotton exchange between Boston and London. The faster the thief, the more a thief; but a quicker fool is no less a fool.

Nevertheless the period of the greyhounds of the sea lies behind us — it corresponded to the period after the First World War. Even before this war huge tonnages had been reached. The Titanic, which went down by the bows in 1912[1], was over 50,000 tons although it’s true that the speed during its maiden voyage, during which it struck an iceberg, did not exceed 18 knots. After a half-century there have been only two cases of liners on the North Atlantic (be they French, English, German or Italian) much over 50,000 tons. Since the last war the largest launched was the United States (53,000 tons). The two exceptions are the English “Queen Mary” (81,000 tons) and “Queen Elizabeth” (84,000 tons), keels laid before the war and still in use[2]. The brand new American ship took the blue riband from the English one which in turn had won it from the French “Normandie” in 1938, the latter being destroyed in the war. Sailing speeds in the last period have risen above 30 knots. The Andrea Doria, the largest post-war Italian ship along with its sister ship Colombo (the pre-war Rex was 51,000 tons) was only 29,000 tons but with a good top speed.

Thus the race to have the biggest ship, which was the prelude to the great disaster, has ceased, but so too that for the fastest speed which so enthralled Italy during the fascist period. The reason is that the person in a hurry can take a plane which, with its small crew, does not kill off more than fifty a go. The sea crossing (with sun and fine weather on the southern route preferred after the Titanic disaster) is more a pleasure trip or cruise — the hugely powerful engines required to thrust these massive giants at enormous cost (one knot is gained and a few hours are knocked off the crossing, wasting thousands of extra horse-power and increasing fuel consumption in proportion) at a rate of knots, are no longer requested by passengers and do not suit the company. Thus the logic of the situation now shows that it is best to build middle size middling speed ships for the passengers who are not at the summit of (economic and political) business dealings and so are not forced to fly. The newspapers told us that the unfortunate passengers saved from the Andrea Doria did not want to return by air: once bitten, twice shy, by the great civilisation of technology....

Besides, if visibility is bad, it is still a good idea to go slowly, even if there is radar aboard.

This is not the central question, that instead is the extreme fragility of the Doria’s hull as was shown by the collision with the not so heavy or fast Stockholm, whatever one may say about the ice breaking prow which could mechanically make a deep hole, but less lacerating and much shorter. Evidently the Doria broke, probably because it was too weak throughout its structure, its ribs and backbone. Only by supposing that a long longitudinal section of the hull came away can we explain why so many air-tight

flotation compartments (closed for the fog) collapsed along with so many vital parts — machines, oil tanks and so forth.

It is not only with ships that the mania of modern technology is oriented towards economising on the structure, using light metal sections with the pretext of ever more modern materials with miraculous strength, guaranteed more by insolent advertising and sleight of hand than the checks run by the bureaucratised laboratories and standards institutions. Just as with the construction of land vehicles, the ship produced by developed modern technology is not as solid as that of 50 years ago. The wonderful ship thus broke up and sank in record time, contrary to the experts' predictions. With a rough sea and less passing ships, it could have become a massacre.

There is another reason apart from the builders' false economies. It is known that for nationalistic and demagogic reasons the Italian state (who does not know that after Holy Russia, the largest dose of "socialist" industry is to be found in Vatican Italy, even though Palmiro[3] is not altogether happy?) was both the buyer and the producer of the ship (both the Compagnia Navigazione Italia and the Ansaldo shipbuilders belong to the state). It is well known that steel costs more in Italy and labour too (the worker eats less here, but national assistance grabs the lot). Ordering the ship from a Dutch or German yard would have cost a quarter less, but Palmiro would have had fewer votes. The Italian engineers had an interest in, and orders to be, stingy with the steel.

They were not stingy enough though with the decorative and luxurious architecture. One of the symptoms of the worldwide decline of technology is that architecture kills engineering. All civilisations go through this stage, from Nineveh to Versailles.

Old sea dogs moaning on the Genova quayside told reporters this. Too many saloons, swimming pools, playing areas, too many decks above the waterline — ah, the inimitable line, the slender outline of Italian ships — too much weight and space put into the superstructure, that is the half skyscraper which stands above the waves, full of windows flooding out light where the luxury class has a good time. This all at the expense of the quickwork, the part in contact with the water, whose size and strength provide stability, flotation, course correction after wandering, resistance to attacks by the sea, collisions with mountains of ice, and those with ships from countries where steel costs less and, perhaps, where technology hasn't sold out so much to wheeler-dealing politics... yet.

All this, grumble the old sailors, is at the expense of safety. More or less vulgar luxury or the safety of the human lives on board, this is the anti-thesis. But could such an antithesis hold back Civilisation and Progress!?

However, when steerage class is unsafe and the crew are too, then even first class, with the most expensive tickets, is unsafe as well. The rhetoric goes on about modern discoveries, high technology, the extolled unsinkability, the resistance to collision with ice, rocks, Stockholms.

It was the same story with the rehabilitation of the great cities, from which, as Marx and Engels stated from the time of the gutter of Paris, Haussmann, the poor had and will have everything to lose and nothing to gain. The upper bourgeoisie was told by clever technicians and speculators that epidemics do not know class divisions, even in a rich man's house one can die of cholera. So get on with it, Demolition Joe! So now when the ship goes down, so too do the first class passengers, half clad like the poor devils, hardly togged up in their dinner jackets. Safety is therefore vital to all: one cannot simply say "stuff it!"

like in a mine where only the scapegoats of labour and a handful of engineers go, but without the benefits of decoration — after all it's dark down there.

The ruling class, for its part incapable of struggling against the devil of business activity, superproduction and superconstruction for its own skin, thus demonstrates the end of its control over society, and it is foolish to expect that, in the name of a progress with its trail indicated by bloodstains, it can produce safer ships than those of the past.

And in fact the eddies around the sad hull of the Andrea Doria had scarcely stilled when the nationalised economy, the perfect hothouse of modern private business dealing and parasitism, announced that it would be ready to produce another one, changing only, for reasons of superstition, the name! They boast that since the cost will rise to about one third more than that of the old ship, they will economise on design, calculations and trials! The decorators will, most certainly, do as good a business as before, and the machine to thieve money from the man in the street has already been set in motion. Just as after the Second World War, during the reconstruction, strengthened by all the resources of modern advanced technology, "the business deal of the century" came about, thus too the shipbuilding and shipping "crisis" is resolved (for which a new law was being prepared) with the order for a new ship. After the ramming by the Stockholm, and perhaps a few more litres of alcohol consumed by its representatives, the wise and well-meaning vote of our Democratic Parliament was verified.

No one will think, no one will legislate, no one will vote for tearing up the old calculations and for redesigning the hull and its structure, the only part of the ship that is quickwork, forking out five million more for steel and five million less for pandering artifices. This will not be the case while "socialist" and enterprise production, even if by the state, is the slave of mercantile and competitive considerations, between the "flags", that is, between the bands of business criminals, which is the same thing. And whoever were to do so would be "deprecating" the unsunk Colombo.

Marcinelle

While the series on the agrarian question and the theory of ground rent according to Marx was being published in these columns[4], there was the disaster at Ribolla which caused 42 victims against the now certain 250 at Charleroi. Exactly the same economic theory of absolute and differential rent can be applied to the extraction of minerals from the subsoil and to the development of hydroelectric power as to agricultural land. One "works" a mine just as one works a farm. We called the paragraph of the exposition "Ribolla, or differential death".

In the capitalist world's economy, all consumers of the produce of nature pay a higher price for it than for the product of labour. For the latter, they pay for the labour and for a margin of surplus-labour that competition, as long as it lasts, tends to reduce. And bourgeois society offers this product to its members at a lower price than that existing in previous societies which were little involved in manufacturing.

The produce of land, in the same way, is paid for by the consumer according to the labour and the surplus-labour, established on the basis of the "worst land". But, in this case, one also pays a third part: rent, that is the award for the monopoly over land, to the landowner, the third force in the "model" bourgeois society. The least fertile land dictates the market price to all consumers of foodstuffs. It thus

follows that the monopoly landowner of richer land adds on to the absolute rent (the minimum) the differential rent, rent due to lower labour costs, so that the market pays the same price.

As population and consumption grow, society has to put new land under the plough and to use all available areas, be they fertile or sterile. The limits of physical extent determine the monopoly and the two forms of ground rent.

Hard as this theory may seem to some, it is the crux of marxism and only those who have not digested it believe that the theory of imperialism was simply tacked on to marxism, a study made solely of competitive capitalism. The theory of ground rent contains all that is in the theory of modern imperialism, monopoly capitalism, the creator of "rents". Even in largely manufacturing fields, one can thus say, like Lenin, that the capitalism of profit plus rents is parasitic.

Clearly the theory shows that nothing changes if this rent, whether it is based on traditional or very new sources, is handed over to the state, that is, the capitalist society organised as a power machine. This occurs so as to maintain its commodity, monetary and business basis. Before Marx, Ricardo proposed this, then Marx criticised it from the very beginning in a thorough and overall manner.

The lignite seams of Ribolla are among the least productive, while those of anthracite in Belgium are the most productive, and where there is no differential rent capitalism can never invest in more expensive installations to increase production and safeguard miners' lives, unlike in the best mines in France, the Netherlands, England, Germany and America.

With today's economy nor is it permitted to close those mines, which remain in the condition of the white horse that never sees the light of day and which communicates with a strange language of darkness with the two miners condemned with him by "bourgeois society" which Zola described in "Germinal". Can Progress be held back by a lack of coal?

Now there is a super-national Coal Community[5], like the iron and steel one, among the states which have nationalised the underground wealth in parallel with Italy. So, according to the fascist school, we have reached the outer bounds of ultramonopoly to fix on a scale of differential rent, low at Ribolla and Marcinelle, an absolute rent base. But this will certainly remain insufficient to buy new plant.

When the burnt out electrical wiring in the pits caused fire to break out, not only did the machinery and the bodies of the men burn, but also the coal of the precious, albeit poor, geological deposit. It burnt because the tunnels the men dug bring in oxygen from the air, which is why old tunnels are sealed off with concrete walls. Thus there was the technical alternative: send down oxygen for those who were dying and their foolhardy rescuers, or close it because every ton of oxygen consumes about half a ton of coal. The miners shouted at the specialised technicians brought from Germany: you haven't come to save our workmates, but the mine! The solution, if the maddened shouts of the survivors had not been raised too high would have been simple: close all the entrances!

Without oxygen everything falls silent: the oxidisation of coal and the analogous process in man, which we call life.

Besides, and it's not the revolutionary press which says so!, according to a very old tradition which is certainly even older that the capitalist social system, until the miner emerges, living or dead, from the terrible mouth of the mine, the system continues to pay his full wages, even triple time. The miner has

to stay down only eight hours, so if he does not come up then, it is supposed that he is working another shift. When the corpse is pulled out and identified, the shift ends and the family will only receive a pension, less than the sum for single-time shift working. It is therefore important that the company (private, state or community) brings out the bodies all the same. It seems that this is the reason why the women shouted that the closed coffins on which were placed a few recognisable objects for identification did not allow them to see if they contained the remains of men or of the deposits.

Get all the survivors out, then close the entrance forever! Commodity society will never be able to say this, so it fogs the issue with enquiries, funeral masses, the bonds of fraternity in which one can discern only the fraternity of the chain gang, crocodile tears and promises of legislation and administration to attract others "without reserves" to ask to take their places in the funereal lift cages — hats off to technology! It is difficult to change the type of cultivation after a long period, and the theory of rent prohibits leaving the last, the most dangerous, mine closed. It is this theory which dictates to a slave and usurer society the maximum rhythm in the mad worldwide dance of the coal business, it being precisely the geological limits to its future horizon which, as they narrow, thrust it into the monopoly economy, into the massacre of the producer, into thieving from the consumer.

The detective story of Marcinelle touched the world's soul. For how many more eight hour shifts would the "missing" in the heart of the earth, like those yesterday at the bottom of the Atlantic, consume wealth from the civil bourgeois economy, which from every pulpit shouts its glorious thrust towards a greater well-being? When will one at last be able to take them off the wage ledger and, having prayed to God one last time, forget them?

The Suez Canal

Blood did not flow, and it was clear from the very first that it would not flow for the third act of the bourgeois trilogy of the August Bank Holiday, which shaded with dark deeds the rosiest of bourgeois festivities, the holiday, the vacation, the emptiness in the emptiness of this world of builders from operettas, of those who sweat over stealing from their neighbour.

We could never credit it that there is a single marxist who for one second saw in Nasser a new historical protagonist, and the world in consternation and turned upside down by a simple gesture, by a bold discovery of the latest little caesar, or pharaoh, as the case may be? What a man! He cracked the whip over France, England and America with the skill of a genius: the nationalisation of the canal! All this done by changing the guard from King Farouk, who could only ship million dollar odalisques, to a simple colonel who could get into the knickers of Marianne and Albion.

The problem of Suez too can be understood if we take the colonel as, leaving off now with pseudo-sexual remarks, the arsehole he is, by applying the theory of rent.

Suez was a still honourable, even glorious, operation of the young bourgeoisie, alongside those considered as epochal by the Communist Manifesto. Perhaps it was one of the last. When the encore was attempted at Panama, it swiftly collapsed into the filth of hyperscandal, and Old Europe laid down Lesseps's arms and those of his technicians after the first attempt.

Lesseps could have been a follower of Saint-Simon and the idea of the Suez Canal was accepted a century ago as a socialist one. He cheered the utopianists, but undoubtedly, as in the marxist conception, the enterprise of capitalism aimed at linking the world and its far-flung corners are to be

considered as premises for its socialist transformation. The idea of a canal goes back to Napoleon I who had technical studies made, backed, according to some, by the philosopher and great mathematician Liebnitz. It is no chance event that Napoleon attempted his destruction of English maritime and imperial domination right there in Egypt. But even older civilisations had thought of the work: Senwosret, pharaoh of Egypt, even got round to performing it, and if Herodotus is correct, 120,000 workers died in the attempt made by another pharaoh. The Caliphs abandoned the idea, put off by the fear that they would open the way to the Byzantine fleet. After the discovery of the sea route to India in the fifteenth century, it was the Venetians' turn, those precursors of modern capitalism, but the Turks were opposed.

The work lasted from 1859 to 1868, employing mainly French and Ottoman capital, facing English hostility. The graveyards of the white and Arab workers were notorious — the English denounced the enlisting of thousands of impoverished fellahs as slavery and the case was decided by Napoleon III. The French engineers of the time, who were fighters and not just businessmen, freed of the army of navvies, then employed huge machines and undertook the task. The concession offered by the Egyptian government should have been for 99 years from the day the canal was opened. During this period, it should have received fifteen percent of the company's profits. It is not the place to repeat here the story of the business manoeuvres and international stock-jobbing by which the Viceroys of Egypt, subjects of the Sultan in Constantinople, were defrauded of their rights to a portion of the shares which passed by various means to British capital and government and, in fact, to the Royal Family.

Nevertheless it was a concession and the property of the whole works, several times enlarged and improved, should be passed to the Cairo government in 1968, without any payment.

One should be extremely wary of dealing with "right" in this struggle between buccaneers and sharks of the largest tonnage.

What is important are the economic concepts. The initial capital was 200 million French Gold Francs. This would now be worth 60 billion French Francs, or 100 billion Lira.

The present value of the shares, leaving aside their thirty per cent fall after Nasser's decree, which nevertheless assured their prominence on the stock market, (one should then say on the day of the decree) the capital of the Compagnie Universelle du Canal Maritime de Suez is quoted at £70 million, or 90 billion French Francs. The valuations are not at the exchange rate: in US Dollars they are 200 million, for the former, and 250 million for the latter, and in Italian Lira 120 billion and 150 billion respectively, all in round figures.

Last year's company takings were 35 billion French Francs with a profit of a good 16 billion: 45 per cent! In Lira about 55 and 25. But Nasser valued them at 100 million Dollars! 60 billion Lira net.

Such great fruitfulness cannot all be the profit of industrial capital, apart from its already declared amortisation, which seems to be covered by huge reserves formed by the company heads. It is not a productive concern. The ships of passage pay a toll of 300 to 600 Lira per ton dead-weight, but they do not take away anything saleable on the open market — payment for a service, not for goods. Obviously the maintenance, caretaking, management and administrative costs of the canal represent a very small part of the takings. The rest is rent. It is absolute in that it is derived from a monopoly which could close Suez or Port Said. It is, moreover, differential in that it represents the navigation costs via the worse route, the endless rounding of the Cape of Good Hope.

Who collects this rent? The “landlord” of the land through which the canal was cut, without the permission of whom one would not have been able to open the first excavations in 1859. This question of property becomes a question of sovereignty for Nasser. For us, this terminology is without meaning. For us marxists, rent goes to whoever makes a monopoly work. This is not even anti-juridical — in classical Roman law theory “the basis of ownership is occupation”. The same that, since the world began, is the source of political sovereignty.

By this standard, the English are silly and equally foolish is Nasser. The former kept garrison troops in the canal zone to defend it until a few years back. In fact, during the two world wars, German ships and those of her allies were not allowed to pass. London was about to close the door during the Italian-Ethiopian War and Mussolini had his finest moment — he blackmailed the English by demonstrating his willingness to attack the Mediterranean fleet. But one cannot be led to believe that those who play the fool can also make history — the candidate for the lunatic asylum, Nasser, stands many cubits shorter.

Could the English dream of withdrawing the garrison and keeping the rent? Could the French dream of as much?

Greater silliness lies on the Egyptian side who thought that sovereignty was their ace of spades, taking this in its metaphysical sense in which the sovereignty of a tiny country weighs the same as that of a giant.

Nasser had wagered on Russia, one of the giants. It is for this that we consider him a fool. The newspapers published on the eve of the London Conference that the Russians at their Twentieth Congress, in front of Shepilov, marvellous to behold in his coat and tails, had abandoned another of Stalin’s mistaken theories, that of the international political predominance of large states over smaller ones[6], and declared for the liberation of the latter from the function of subject, satellite or vassal states. Oh poor little states! This is not a theory created by Stalin, which Stalin can have the passing whim of abandoning, or that his will-readers can put out of the way! Nor can the little Cairo Colonel put a new theory in its place: the holy sovereignty of the statelets, even the pocket handkerchief ones. For (this is the biggest laugh) America is bound to accept a similar theory, and even puts forward itself, or Russia, as champion of the opposing principal: that of the big fish which eats the little one.

The fact and the historical law is that the big states carve up the world at their pleasure, with general war or with (God forbid it) peaceful coexistence between them (the big fish) and that the small states are like soft plasticine for world relief maps in their hands. They have dominated history for millennia, for two centuries of European history above all, and in a striking manner in the last two great wars, only the seating of some of the big fish changes: Japan and Germany, and new ones are put there, like China.

Nasser did not go to the conference. So be it. But London must have frightened him just because Russia sat there. Russia defends the same principal as the others: who gives a damn about sovereignty over the two banks of these world routes which are nodes in the international trade network? Since there ceased to be a single imperial dominator, as when Albion made its way (for us it is life as well as a way, the undeformed Mussolini replied) along the Mediterranean and all the Mediterraneans, the dominators have been the three or four big guns in turn, for whom Nasser counts less than a corporal. They, or whoever wins the next (twenty years off) third world war, will give Suez to him, without counting a red cent if little Egypt had fought with the winners or the losers.

Hitler, an expression of rather more serious forces, was urged by them to make a huge thrust as far as Crete. The aim and place were Suez — he came to understand (or someone did for him) that the goal was more Suez than Dunkirk, from which they held back. Big does not eat big. Happy little Nasser. Do not leave the rank of foodstuffs.

To You, Old Mole!

These twenty years will pass and shall we little animal-men, we tricked and intoxicated consumers, we makers of increasingly unpleasant and useless efforts, let them pass seated in front of the radio or the screen to hear humbug and tittle-tattle from technicians, experts, specialists, managers, diplomats, politicians, scoundrels and adventurers, without having learnt anything, or forgetting more and more what the working class already well knew at the time the century of Suez began?

Good, very good, then that the isthmuses have been crossed with huge cuts (Suez remains the longest, if not the most complex, at 160 kilometres — twice Panama) and that the network of international links circles and circles again the mercantile world of convenient capitalism, like that of the retarius which immobilised the barbarian gladiator for the coup de grace. A missing proletariat now tears up the Internationals, but capital is condemned to rebuild them across oceans and continents. Well, very well, then that the great powers are very few and leave in blind impotence the small and numerous, wrapping them in the other inextricable, unslackening net of falsity, lies, fraud and philistine and bigoted obscurantism, under the false glitter which has become unsupportable for its stench, of technology, science, philanthropy and the drive towards well-being. Good, then that the centres of this school of superstition and corruption are ever decreasing in number and more easily seen from every corner of the world.

While they propagate their false beliefs of all their countries and religions; rereading to us with false puritanism and obscene blasphemy their bibles of Christ, Mammon and Demos, we too can repeat our classical verses and demonstrate that we have known since before the canal was cut that the result would have been a dizzying concentration of wealth and power, imperial totalitarianism, monopolistic oppression, the Party state, the holy alliance of the capitalist monsters, all the more reinforced by the world wars. Good, the dictatorship of Capital, of Militarism, of Business, of Fascism, is blessed endlessly by priests of every denomination. Let us open our bible:

“But the revolution is thorough. It is still journeying through purgatory. It does its work methodically. (...) it had completed one half of its preparatory work; it is now completing the other half. First it perfected the parliamentary power, in order to be able to overthrow it. Now it has attained this, it perfects the executive power, reduces it to its purest expression, isolates it, sets it up against itself as the sole target, in order to concentrate all its forces of destruction against it. And when it has done this second half of its preliminary work, Europe will leap from its seat and exultantly exclaim: Well burrowed, old mole.”[7]

With the historical radar of Marx’s theories, on whose screen observers who have not swallowed the alcohol of the intoxicating bourgeois ideology cannot read lies, in the fog of the depths off Nantacket, in the dark of the walled tomb of the living in Marcinelle, in the bitterness of the slime of the stagnant ponds of the Arabian Desert, while the forces of the Revolution seem to be hiding and Great Capital carouses in the bright sunlight, we have again found, at his inexhaustible work, the Old Mole who undermines the curse of the infamous social forms, who prepares for the not near, but most certain, destructive explosion.

Footnotes

[1] Erroneously given as 1906 in the text.

[2] Both have since been retired. The former is now a University, the latter was destroyed by fire.

[3] i.e. Togliatti

[4] Cf. il programma comunista nos. 21-3, 1953 and 1-12, 1954. The series is republished as “Mai la merce sfamera' l'uomo” (Milan, 1979). In this volume see pp. 259-61 as regards Ribolla.

[5] i.e. The European Coal and Steel Community.

[6] Reference to the Russian Foreign Minister at the conference to settle the Suez affair, The Twentieth Party Congress was in February 1956. The Suez affair was finally settled in Rome in 1958 with payment of compensation.

[7] “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon” in Marx Engels Collected Works Vol. XI, Moscow, 1979, p. 185.

The Revolutionary Program of Communist Society Eliminates All Forms of Ownership of Land, the Instruments of Production and the Products of Labor (1957)

Engels and the Agrarian Programs of the Socialist Parties
In September 1894, at its Nantes Congress, the French Workers Party (the party of Guesde and Lafargue) adopted an agrarian action program. In October, in Frankfurt am Main, the German Social Democratic Party of Engels was engaged in addressing the same issue; near the end of his long life, Engels remained in contact with the movement of the Second International, founded in 1889, after the death of Marx. He expressed his vehement objections to the French resolution, while he was more satisfied with the German Congress, where a right wing tendency similar to the one that prevailed at Nantes was rejected.

Engels dedicated an article to this topic that is of the utmost importance, published in the journal *Die Neue Zeit* in November 1894. A somewhat unfaithful translation of this article was published in the November 1955 issue of the Stalinist journal, *Cahiers du Communisme*. The editors of this journal say in their preface to the text that a packet of correspondence of great interest between Engels and Lafargue was discovered in the house of a descendant of Marx (Lafargue was his son-in-law). In these letters, Engels did not try to hide his disapproval, and his formulations are truly important; only the Stalinists would have the gall to write a preface to a historical document that so blatantly exposes them.
You—he says with true bitterness, despite the seriousness of his tone, the old Engels addressing Lafargue—you, the intransigent revolutionaries of yesterday, have taken a little more to opportunism than the Germans. In a later letter, Engels stresses that he wrote his critical article in a friendly spirit, but did not hesitate to repeat that, “you have allowed yourself to be dragged too far down the slippery slope of

opportunism." These quotations are also useful in order to show just how far back the terminology of our discussion goes, to which we have always granted the greatest importance. Even before the death of Engels, the left wing Marxists (who, at the Congress of Rouen in 1882, had split from the "Possibilists", who advocated participation in the ministries of bourgeois governments) defined themselves as intransigent revolutionaries, and the same term was adopted, in the first decade of this century, by the left fraction of the Italian Socialist Party, which was opposed to the reformism of Turati and the possibilism of Bissolati, and from which the Communist Party was born after a subsequent process of realignments and splits.

The word, opportunism, which many young people think was first coined by Lenin in the indomitable battle he waged during the First World War, had already been employed by Engels and Marx in their writings. On other occasions we have noted that, semantically, it is not the most felicitous expression, since it is susceptible to being interpreted as a moral judgment, rather than a social-deterministic one. Nonetheless, the word has the historical right of precedence, and in our view expresses what is despicable and depraved as opposed to what is healthy in Marxism.

In that letter written in order to "deal considerately" with Lafargue, whose revolutionary credentials were beyond reproach, Engels provided a definition of right wing opportunism that was as sharp as a razor. In the sentence in which he says, "you have gone too far down the slippery slope of opportunism", he also writes the following words:

"In Nantes, you are on the road to sacrificing the future of the Party for one day's success."

This definition is still relevant: opportunism is the method that sacrifices the future of the Party for one day's success. Those who have practiced it, then and now, are disgraceful!

Now is the time to get to the crux of the problem and take a look at Engels' text. He concluded that, for the French, there was still time to stop and he hoped that his article would help them to do so. But where are the French (and the Italians) of 1958?

Socialists and the Peasantry in the late 1800s

Before we proceed to a study of Engels we shall sketch a picture of the general situation of the agricultural population of Europe during his time. The bourgeois parties had always judged that the socialist movement would have to develop only in the milieu of the urban industrial workers, and were surprised when the peasant question found a place on the agendas of all the socialist parties of the time. The response of Engels is relevant to every stage, such as, for example, when we demonstrate that right in the middle of the twentieth century the social questions of the countries of color and the industrially undeveloped countries cannot be constrained within the rigid dualism, capitalists-proletarians, but, always and everywhere, Marxism must have doctrinal and practical answers for the whole multi-class, rather than two-class, panorama of society.

Engels is in a position to allow only two exceptions to the fundamental presence of one large class of peasants who are not wage workers or entrepreneurs: Great Britain and Prussia east of the Elbe. Only in those two regions had the owners of large landed estates and big industrial agriculture totally liquidated the small farmer who worked for himself. We shall observe that even in these two exceptional cases, there are three classes (as always in Marx, even when he addresses the question of a model bourgeois society): urban or rural wage labor, industrial or agrarian capitalist, and bourgeois, rather than feudal, landowner.

In all other countries, for Engels and for every Marxist, “the peasant is a very essential factor of the population, production and political power”. Therefore no one can say that the peasants, as far as I am concerned, do not exist, as an excuse, or that the movements of the colonial peoples, as far as I am concerned, do not exist.[2]
That the theory of the function of these social classes, however, and the way the Marxist party should approach them, should be a copy of the corresponding positions of the petty-bourgeois democracy, is the other outrage against which Engels unsheathed one of his “corrections”. We must however say that this second position is just another way of formulating the same outrage.

Since only a mental defective could doubt the statistical weight of the peasants in terms of demography and the economy, Engels rapidly touched on the sore spot: what is its impact as a factor in the political struggle?

The conclusion is obvious: most of the time, the peasants have only demonstrated their apathy, based on their isolated lives in rural areas. But this apathy is not itself without effects:

“This apathy on the part of the great mass of the population is the strongest pillar not only of the parliamentary corruption in Paris and Rome but also Russian despotism.” Not we, but Engels, mentioned Rome, and he did so no less than 64 years ago.

Engels showed that since the birth of the workers movement in the cities, the bourgeoisie had never ceased to galvanize the peasant landowners against the workers movement, depicting the socialists as those who would abolish property, and the same thing was done by the landowners who rented out their lands, who pretended to have a common interest to defend alongside the small peasant landowner.

Must the industrial proletariat accept as inevitable the fact that, in the conquest of political power, the whole peasant class will be an active ally of the bourgeoisie that also must be defeated? Engels introduced the Marxist perspective on this question, rapidly admitting that such a perspective must be condemned, and is just as useless for the cause of the revolution as well as that of the proletariat that will thus never be able to conquer before the disappearance of all the intermediate classes.

In France, history has taught us—as is incomparably presented in the classical texts of Karl Marx—that the peasants, with their weight in society, have always tipped the scales of confrontations in favor of the side that was opposed to the interests of the working class, in the First and Second Empires and against the Paris revolutions of 1831, 1848-1849 and 1871.

How, then, can this relation of forces be shifted in favor of the workers? How should we address the small peasant landowners and what should we promise them? Now we are at the heart of the agrarian problem. But the goal of Engels is to discredit as anti-Marxist and counterrevolutionary any defense of the preservation of small-scale property. What would the venerable and great Frederick have said if someone had proposed, as they are doing today in Italy and France,[3] that the agrarian program must advocate the extension, over the entire rural population, of the ownership of all the land that is under cultivation?

The French Programs

Already in 1892, at the Marseilles Congress, the French Workers Party had drafted an agrarian program (this was the year when the anarchists split from the socialist party in Italy and the Italian Socialist Party was founded in Genoa).

This first program is not subject to the same degree of condemnation on the part of Engels as the Nantes program, because the latter program, as we shall see below, had misappropriated theoretical principles for the purpose of obtaining the support of the party for the immediate interests of the small peasant landowners. In Marseilles the party limited itself to suggesting practical goals for agitation among the peasants (at the time it defended the famous distinction between the maximum and the minimum program, which later led to the whole historical crisis of the socialist parties). Engels highlighted the fact that the demands made on behalf of the small peasant landowners—those which, at the time, were more attentive to the demands of the sharecroppers than to the working landowners—were so modest that other parties had already proposed them and that many bourgeois governments had already implemented them. Wholesale purchasing cooperatives formed by rural municipalities for the acquisition of machinery, favored by the state so that central garages and depots could be established, prohibition of the seizure of the harvest by the landowner for non-payment of debts, revision of land assessments, and so on….

The list of demands made on behalf of the agrarian wage workers is given even less consideration by Engels; some are obvious, because they are the same as for the industrial workers, like a minimum wage; others are tolerable, such as the establishment, on municipal land (municipal property), of agricultural production cooperatives.

This program, however, led the party to such significant electoral success in the elections of 1893 that, on the eve of the next Congress, some elements in the party sought to continue to push ahead on the road of championing the interests of the peasants. There was nonetheless a feeling that this was dangerous ground, so they wanted to pave the way by drafting a theoretical preamble that would show that there was no contradiction between the maximum socialist program and the protection of the small peasant landowner, and even the protection of his property rights! It is at this point that Engels, after having summarized the program's contents, directed the full force of his critique. They wanted, he said, "to prove that it is in keeping with the principles of socialism to protect small-peasant property from destruction by the capitalist mode of production, although one is perfectly aware that this destruction is inevitable".

The preamble's first premise says that, considered in terms of the general program of the party, the producers will not be free until they possess the means of production. The second premise says that, if in the industrial domain one can foresee the restitution of the means of production to the producers in a collective or social form, in the agricultural domain, at least in France, the means of production, the land, is in most cases individually possessed by the worker.

The third premise says that whereas peasant property "is irretrievably doomed", "socialism" must not, however, "hasten its doom, as its task does not consist in separating property from labor", but, to the contrary, "in uniting both of these factors of all production by placing them in the same hands".

The fourth premise says that, considering the fact that just as the industrial premises must be seized from the private capitalists in order to hand them over to the workers, so also, and in just the same way, the large landed estates must be given to the agricultural proletarians and therefore it is always the duty of "socialism" "to maintain the peasants themselves tilling their patches of land in possession of the same as against the [tax collector], the usurer, and the encroachments of the newly-arisen big landowners".

The fifth premise was the one that Engels found most scandalous: while the first four created a tremendous doctrinal confusion, the fifth one directly annihilates the concept of the class struggle: "it is expedient to extend this protection also to the producers who as tenants or sharecroppers (*metayers*)

cultivate the land owned by others and who, if they exploit day laborers, are to a certain extent compelled to do so because of the exploitation to which they themselves are subjected".

The Unfortunate Conclusion

From the above premises arose the practical program that is intended "to bring together all the elements of rural production, all occupations which by virtue of various rights and titles utilise the national soil, to wage an identical struggle against the common foe: the feudality of landownership".

Here, as Engels demonstrated, although with the obvious intention not to treat old self-professed Marxists like idiots, all historical differentiations are thrown overboard, confusing, in the France of 1894, the feudal landowners, annihilated a century before by the Great Revolution, not with the large capitalist landlords, the industrialists of agriculture, towards whom today's national-communist traitors directly issue invitations to join a broad-based bloc, because they improve the soil (!), but with the bourgeois agrarian landowners, who do not engage in administration or management of the agricultural estate, but who live off the rent paid by the petty tenant farmers or large landlords. This third class of capitalist society has nothing to do with the old feudal nobility; the former bought its territorial goods with money, and can sell them, since "the bourgeois revolution transformed the land into an article of commerce"; the latter (that is, the feudal class) had an inalienable right not only over the land, but also over the workers who populated it. Engels would remind these sluggish disciples that a bloc did arise, "for a certain time and for definite purposes", against this feudal class, but it is clear that in this historical bloc—whose heyday in France was in the remote past and in Russia was still underway—it was these same "bourgeois landlords" who took part.

Such a noxious error still beclouds the European proletarian horizon due to the triumphant opportunism of Stalinism. The doctrinal weapons to counteract its ruinous effects do not have to be sought in the data supplied by the period that has elapsed since 1894, but in the very same arsenal that Engels utilized in his text on the peasant question.

This agrarian policy, totally subordinated to coalition politics, kills the class struggle, and insofar as it is implemented by the same party that embraces the factory workers it kills it exclusively for the benefit of the industrial capitalists, and guarantees the survival of the bourgeois form of society until these elephantine parties are destroyed.

Continuing in the doctrinal vein, before we consider the political side of the question, it is necessary to make another equally pessimistic observation, one that would be pointless to omit, consisting in the fact that today, unlike the situation in 1894, opportunism is not at the stage of posing a threat; it has already sucked all the energy from the working class. Many—almost all—of the groups that challenge the big Stalinist or post-Stalinist parties, and which have split from them, have demonstrated that they have ideas concerning the "*contenu du socialisme*" that are just as un-Marxist as those presented in the Nantes Program (since our narrative relates to France, we shall refer to the group, "Socialisme ou Barbarie"). We would have said anti-Marxist if we were not in the presence of the sober discourse of Frederick Engels, who, evidently, knew from experience, and from the effects of many sharp reprimands from Papa Marx, that the French do not like to be *choqué* (wounded), and that they do not even like to be *froissé* (offended). In the first instance they assume the visage of a D'Artagnan, in the second that of a Talleyrand, as was the case later with Frossard (a world champion of un-Marxism) at the Second Congress of the Communist International. And this person dared to call himself a Marxist in front of Lenin!

A Series of False Formulas

False formulations are extremely useful for the purpose of clarifying the real "content" of the modern revolutionary program. The old social ideologies assumed a mystical form, but were nonetheless still condensations of the human experience of the species, of the same nature as the most highly developed

notions attained in the era of capitalism and in the struggle to overthrow it. We could say that the old mysticism assumed the form of a series of affirmative theses. Modern mysticism, the norm of action of the destructive forces of contemporary society, is instead organized in a series of negative theses. The degree of consciousness of the future, which cannot be attained by the individual but only by the revolutionary party, is forged in a more expressive way—at least until a society without classes has become a reality—in a series of norms of this kind: don't say this—don't do that.

We hope to present in a modest and accessible form an edifying result that is the product of some rather arduous labors. With this goal in mind, we shall proceed to examine, following in the footsteps of Engels, the master of this method, the mistaken formulas of the Nantes premises.

Engels began by saying, concerning the first premise, that it is not correct to deduce the formula, "that freedom of the producers presupposes the possession of the means of production", from our general program.

This same French program immediately adds that this possession is only possible in the form of individual possession—which has never been generalized and which industrial development is making increasingly more impossible—or in the form of possession in common, the preconditions for which have been created by the stabilization of capitalist society. The only goal of socialism, in that case, said Engels, is "the common possession of the means of production".

Engels considered it to be of great importance to emphasize the fact that no conquest or preservation of individual possession of the means of production on the part of the producers can possibly be a goal of the socialist program. And he adds:

"Not only in industry, where the ground has already been prepared, but in general, hence also in agriculture."

This is a fundamental thesis for the entire classical corpus of Marxism. The proletarian party—unless it has openly declared that it is revisionist—cannot advocate or defend for even one second, a form of unity between the worker and his means of labor that is achieved on an individual scale, in subdivided personal allotments. The text under examination here repeats this again and again.

Engels also refutes the concept expressed in the erroneous formula concerning the "freedom" of the producer. This freedom is by no means assured by these hybrid forms, bound up with contemporary society, in which the producer possesses the land as well as a share of his instruments of production. In today's economy, these factors are quite precarious and are not guaranteed for the small peasant proprietor. The bourgeois revolution has undoubtedly conferred upon him the benefit of freeing him from his feudal bonds, and from the personal servitude of giving a feudal lord part of his labor time or a share of his products. But this freedom in no way guarantees, with the advent of an era when everyone gets his little plot of land, that he will not be separated from the latter in a hundred ways, which Engels enumerates together with the concrete part of the program, but which are inseparable from the essence of capitalist society: taxation, mortgage debt, destruction of rural domestic industry, foreclosures and seizures to the point of total expropriation. No legislative measure (reform) will be capable of preventing the peasant from spontaneously selling everything he owns, including his land, rather than letting himself die of hunger. Here, the critique of Engels verges on invective: "Your attempt to protect the small peasant in his property does not protect his liberty but only the particular form of his servitude; it prolongs a situation in which he can neither live nor die."

The False Chimera of Freedom

We shall denounce the diseased formula of the first premise, which, from one error leads to another greater error, with less generosity than was displayed by the great Engels; we do not have a Paul Lafargue before us, in whom Marxism has momentarily gone dormant and who only needs to be reawakened, but a despicable gang of traitors and defeatists whose souls are already damned.

The premise seems to respond to this question: when will the producers be free? And it responds: when they are not separated from their means of production. It is this slippery slope that leads to the idealization of an impossible and impoverished society of small peasant landowners and artisans, and the master did not desist from hurling the bitter accusation of reactionary at this position, since such a society is much more backwards than the society of proletarians and capitalists. The error, however, one that is completely metaphysical and idealist, which has completely erased any determinist and historical-dialectical perspective, consists in that of assuming a stupid position, professed today by many self-proclaimed “leftists” on both sides of the Atlantic, i.e.: socialism is a struggle for the individual liberation of the worker. This premise embeds certain economic theories within the framework of a philosophy of Freedom.

We repudiate such a starting point: it is stupidly bourgeois and only leads to the degeneration whose spectacle is unfolding throughout the world in the form of Stalinism. The formula would be no less of a distortion if one were to speak of the collective liberation of the producers. For it is a matter of establishing the limits of this collectivity, and it is on this reef that all the “immediatists” founder, as we shall see below. The domain enclosed by these limits is so vast that it must include manufacturing and agriculture and every form of human activity in general. When human activity, which embraces much more than production, a term that is linked to bourgeois society, has no limits in its collective dynamic, nor any temporal limit between generation and generation, it will be understood that the postulate of Freedom was a transitory and obsolete bourgeois ideology, and then we shall be able to say that it was once dangerous but is now soporific and false.

Property and Labor

In the third premise mentioned above, its proponents thought they could base their arguments on something as incontestable as the fact that the mission of socialism consists in uniting, rather than separating, property and labor. Engels did not want to be too vicious, but he repeated that, “the latter in this general form is by no means the task of socialism. Its task is, rather, only to transfer the means of production to the producers as their *common possession*”.

If one loses sight of this fact, Engels said, it is clear that one “imposes upon socialism the imperative duty to carry out something which it had declared to be impossible in the preceding paragraph. It charges it to ‘maintain’ the small-holding ownership of the peasants although it itself states that this form of ownership is ‘irretrievably doomed’”.

Here we must dig even deeper, mindful of all the Marxian-Engelsian precepts and our whole doctrine. Above all, the question of this “separation” is not metaphysical, but historical. It is not a matter of just saying that the bourgeoisie has separated property from the worker and that we, intending to rectify this, will reunite them. This would be pure foolishness. Marxism has never depicted, in the revolution and in bourgeois societies, a process of separation of property from labor, but a process of the separation of the men who labor from the conditions of their labor. Property is a historical-juridical category. The aforementioned separation is a relation between very real elements and materials: on the one side, the men who labor; and on the other, the possibility of having access to the land and to the use of the tools of labor. Feudal servitude and slavery united these two elements in a very simple way: they imprisoned both

elements in the same concentration camp, from which a portion of the products (another concrete, physical element) was extracted at the whim of the ruling class. The bourgeois revolution broke up this self-enclosed circle and said to the workers: you are free to leave; then the circle was once again closed and the separation we are discussing was carried out. The ruling class cut the barbed wire and monopolized the conditions of production, keeping the whole product: the serfs who fled to hunger and impotence are still paying homage to the miracle of Freedom!

Socialism seeks to abolish, for everyone (individual, group, class or state), the possibility of being surrounded by barbed wire; but this cannot be expressed with the meaningless phrase, reunite property and labor! It means that socialism works to bring about the end and final destruction of bourgeois property and wage labor, the final and worst of all servitudes.

When the text of the Nantes Program then says that labor and property are the two factors of production, whose separation leads to servitude and poverty for the proletarians, it commits a yet greater outrage. Property as a factor of production! Here Marxism is forgotten and completely renounced. In the description of the capitalist mode of production, the central thesis of Marxism is that there is only one factor of production, and that is human labor. Landed property, and property in the form of tools and buildings, is not another factor of production. To call them factors of production is to regress to the trinity formula that was annihilated by Marx in the third volume of *Capital*: this trinity formula maintains that wealth has three sources: land, capital and labor, and this vulgar doctrine justifies the three forms of distribution: rents, profits and wages. The socialist and communist party is the historical form in struggle against the rule of the capitalist class, the class whose doctrine holds that capital, with just as much right as labor, is a factor of production. In order to trace the doctrine that defends the right of the third term, the third factor of production, we have to go even further back in time, beyond Ricardo, to the Physiocrats of the feudal era, whose doctrine provided the historical justification (pay a little attention here) for precisely the hated rule of the feudal lords!
To reunite the land with labor is therefore a grave Marxist heresy, and this is just as true with regard to collective labor as it is for the individual laborer.

Industrial and Agrarian Enterprise
It is precisely the slippery fourth premise that contains the trap of the defense of the small plot of cultivated land, a defense that is based on the comparison of the big industries that “must be seized from their lazy owners”, that is, the urban bourgeoisie (who were not so lazy, however, during the times of the “*Maître des Forges*”), with the large landed estates that must be “collectively or socially” handed over to the agricultural proletarians. In a later passage, Engels makes a very different comparison between the socialist and revolutionary expropriation of the factory owner and that affecting the agrarian landowner. The Nantes Program, besides the fact that it did not elaborate on the essential distinction between “collective” and “social” management, a question that it barely addresses, sidesteps the no less important distinction between large landed estates or large scale landownership and large scale industrial agriculture. Where the management of a unit of production based on wage labor constitutes a single form of technical exploitation—even when part of the wage is paid not in money form but in the form of products—a form that Marx defined as a medieval remnant and which is “protected” by the Italian Togliattian “Marxists” in order to more closely bind the rural proletariat to the wretched form of ownership of little parcels of land—then there is no reason not to treat this productive unit the same way we would treat the factory of Mr. Krupp, to employ the example used by Engels. Difficulties arise, however, when there is a large rural property owned by a single individual, which is nonetheless divided into a large number of separate parcels cultivated by many technically independent family-based units, composed of small sharecroppers and tenant farmers. In this case, expropriation will not possess the historical

character of the expropriation of large concentrated industry, but will be reduced—if feudal forms still survive, as was the case in Russia in 1917—to a liberation of glebe serfs that will not yet surpass the inferior condition of the distribution of many small plots of land. In a consolidated bourgeois regime, such as the French regime of the late 19th century, the programmatic formula must not be limited, in the opinion of Engels, to the transformation of the tenant farmers who pay their rents in money or in kind into "free" worker-landowners; the socialist parties must resolutely propose as a goal for the peasants—those who can be accepted by the party and those who are under its influence—the formation of agricultural production cooperatives under unitary management, which is also a transitional form insofar as it will have to be gradually transformed into "co-operative, large-scale production", "under the control of the community". This formula is employed by Engels to stigmatize, with proper severity, any inclusion in the program—even the immediate program—of any partition of large landed property and its distribution among the peasants in order to reduce it to so many small individual or family parcels.
Concerning this point another consideration must be added—a consideration that must be linked to other Marxist texts—with regard to the destination point of the socialist program. The collective management of enterprises that have already been unified under the ownership of the bourgeoisie could be conceived as a transitory expedient if one thinks about the collectivity of the workers of the enterprise as the subject of such management. But such a consideration must not cause one to think that socialism is fulfilled with the replacement of capitalist or individual ownership of the factory (which is today collective in the form of corporations) by collective working class ownership. In the correct formulation of this position, the word we encounter is not ownership [property], but possession, that of the taking of possession of the means of production, and even more correctly, that of the exploitation, of management, of direction, to which terms we have to add the exact subject. The expression, social management, is better than cooperative management, while it would be completely bourgeois rather than socialist to refer to "cooperative ownership". The term, national management, can be used to attempt to express the hypothesis that the expropriation of the industrial means of production and the land might be carried out in one country but not in another, but it recalls state management, which is nothing but a form of state capitalist ownership of enterprises.

While we are still discussing agriculture, we would like to make it clear that—according to the communist program—the land and the means of production must pass into the hands of society, society organized on new foundations, foundations that can no longer be called commodity production. Consequently, the land and the rural productive apparatus pass into the hands of all the workers as a whole, whether industrial or agricultural workers, and the same is true of the industrial plant. It is only in this sense that one can interpret Marx when he speaks of the abolition of the differences between city and country, and of the overcoming of the social division of labor, as pillars of communist society. The old propaganda slogans: the factories to the workers and the land to the peasants, and those of an even more insipid variety—the ships to the sailors—even though they are all-too-often employed even in recent times, are nothing but a parody of the formidable power of the Marxist revolutionary program.

The Most Extreme Aberration

Before we proceed to explore other texts by Marx for early anticipations of the principles we have just recalled, we shall conclude our comprehensive examination of the study published by Engels with a reference to his indignation, because it is so relevant to our time, at the last of the five premises, the one that attributes to the party the duty to help the peasant sharecroppers and tenant farmers exploit wage labor! We shall pass over the subtle destructive critique directed by Engels at the details of the Nantes Program, which include reform measures that either have no chance of being implemented or else would lead the peasants themselves to the very condition that had constituted the origin of their poverty and

brutalization, in France and elsewhere, by the misuse of the lever with which those who drafted the Nantes Program sought to mobilize the peasantry.

We shall also omit the final part about Germany, where, fortunately, the party had not committed similar mistakes, and where it was demonstrated that the party had to rely on the dispossessed peasantry of the east, semi-serfs of the Prussian Junkers, instead of the peasantry of the west, which was devoid of any revolutionary potential.

We are disappointed not to have found any reference in this text by Engels to Italy, where during that time the party, with a high degree of class consciousness, led the struggle of the agricultural day laborers, in the Romagna and Apulia, for example, against the wealthy bourgeois tenant farmers, a struggle that assumed the most violent forms, embodying what Engels presents as the correct goal, that is, that the peasant wage workers should be in the socialist party and the tenant farmers and sharecroppers should be in some other, petty bourgeois party, which in Italy was the Republican Party. Today, meanwhile, to the contrary, the “communists” are pursuing the same policy that was shamefully incorporated into the French program of 1894, that is, crushing the class struggle of the wage-workers employed by the middle class peasants and sharecroppers, as we have mentioned.

The words of Engels apply to today’s traitors:

“Here, we are entering upon ground that is passing strange. Socialism is particularly opposed to the exploitation of wage labor. And here it is declared to be the imperative duty of socialism to protect the French tenants when they ‘exploit day laborers’, as the text literally states! And that because they are compelled to do so to a certain by ‘the exploitation to which they themselves are subjected’!

“How easy and pleasant it is to keep on coasting once you are on the toboggan slide! (Oh, father Engels, you could not imagine the extremes to which this lust for demagogic success and betrayal has gone!—[Bordiga’s interpolation].) When now the big and middle peasants of Germany come to ask the French Socialists to intercede with the German Party Executive to get the German Social-Democratic Party to protect them in the exploitation of their male and female farm servants, citing in support of the contention the ‘exploitation to which they themselves are subjected’ by usurers, tax collectors, grain speculators and cattle dealers, what will they answer? What guarantee have they that our agrarian big landlords will not send them Count Kanitz (as he also submitted a proposal like theirs, providing for a state monopoly of grain importation) and likewise ask for socialist protection of their exploitation of the rural workers, citing in support ‘the exploitation to which they themselves are subjected’ by stock-jobbers, money lender, and grain speculators?”

We may conclude with one last quotation concerning the peasants and their relevance to the party that truly constitutes a rule that we must never forget:

“I flatly deny that the socialist workers' party of any country is charged with the task of taking into its fold, in addition to the rural proletarians and the small peasants, also the idle and big peasants and perhaps even the tenants of the big estates, the capitalist cattle breeders and other capitalist exploiters of the national soil…. We can use in our Party individuals from every class of society, but have no use whatever for any groups representing capitalist, middle-bourgeois, or middle-peasant interests.”

This is how to defend the party, its nature, its doctrine which is not for sale, its revolutionary future! And this is why the political party is the only form that can prevent the degeneration of the class struggle of the urban and rural proletariat of all countries.

Marx's Great Pronouncement
Our French comrades brought to us in Turin a text by Marx whose note on publication is as follows:

"This manuscript, found after the death of Karl Marx in his archives, is possibly an addendum to the work on the nationalization of the land that Marx had written at the request of Applegarth. This work has remained undiscovered until now. The title of the notebook is 'On the Nationalization of the Land'."

This welcome development comes to the aid of our modest reiteration that Marxism does not modify the forms of property, but radically negates the appropriation of the land. We shall begin by quoting a theoretically less-difficult passage:

"At the International Congress in Brussels, in 1868, one of my friends said (this was the First International and the way he expresses himself indicates that he was not a Bakuninist libertarian—[Bordiga's note]): 'Small private property is doomed by the verdict of science; great private property by justice. There remains then but one alternative. The soil must become the property of rural associations, or the property of the whole nation. The future will decide the question.' I say, on the contrary: 'The future will decide that the land can only be owned nationally. To give up the soil to the hands of associated rural laborers would be to surrender all society to one exclusive class of producers'."

The content of this brief note is vast in its scope. Above all, it proves that it is not in accordance with Marxism to dispose of difficult questions by referring them to the revelation and decision of future history. Marxism knows quite well, from its beginnings, how to definitively resolve the essential characteristics of the future society, and explicitly enunciates them.

Secondly, the terms, national and nationally, are only adopted for the purposes of engaging in a Socratic dialogue with the first formulation. In the positive thesis he speaks of transference and not of property; not of the nation, but of all of society.

Finally, one may further explicate the proposition, which is so masterful in the highest sense of the term, in the following way: The socialist program is not expressed as either the abolition of the surrender of a sector of the productive means to a class of individuals, or to a minority of non-producers who live in leisure. The socialist program demands that no sector of production should be ruled by any single class, not even a class of producers, but by all of society. As a result, the land will not be transferred to associations of peasants, nor will it be transferred to the peasants as a class, but to all of society.

This is the pitiless condemnation of all immediatist distortions, which have hounded us incessantly for so many years, even among alleged left wing revolutionaries.

This Marxist theorem strikes a fatal blow at all communalism and syndicalism, as well as all "enterprise-based socialism" (see the relevant chapters of our "Fundamentals of Revolutionary Communism"), because these old fashioned programs, superannuated and rotten, "surrender" indivisible energies of society to limited groups.

This fundamental postulate annuls any definition, whether advocated by Stalinists or post-Stalinists, of socialist property in accordance with the agrarian forms in which the Kolkhozes have been seen to deliver all of society, the material life of all of society, into the hands of a particular class of producers.

Furthermore, not even the handing over to the state of all the industrial enterprises, as is the case in Russia today, merits the name of socialism. This state, due the very fact that it is in the process of being transferred to “particular groups of producers”, by farmstead or by province, is not a historical representative of the integral, classless society of tomorrow. A character of that kind can be realized and maintained only on the plane of political theory, thanks to the party form, which brutally thrashes all immediatism and which is the only form that can exorcise the opportunist plague.

But we shall return briefly to this passage from Marx, which shows us how all attribution of ownership, indeed all material transfer of the land, to limited groups, cuts off the royal road to communism.

“The nationalization of land will work a complete change in the relations between labor and capital and finally do away altogether with capitalist production, whether industrial or rural. Only then the class distinctions and privileges will disappear together with the economical basis from which they originate and society will be transformed into an association of 'producers' (note that these quotation marks have been inserted by Marx, and that is they way it should be read—[Bordiga’s note]). To live upon other people's labor will become a thing of the past. There will no longer exist a government nor a state distinct from society itself.”

Before submitting these essential, immutable and never changing principles of Marxism to one more examination, we shall state for the record that Marx never hesitated to resolutely depict the communist society, assuming an unlimited responsibility for the entire revolutionary movement of a historical stage.

This is the solid metal of original Marxism that sparkles so brightly from underneath the rime of a thousand subsequent incrustations, and which will tomorrow shine directly in the light.

Marx and Landed Property

In the text by Karl Marx referred to above, the program of the communists is defined under two aspects. Historically and economically, it defends big agricultural estates, for which the term “cultivation on a large scale” is used, as opposed to the small farm and plot of land. In addition, the communist program calls for the disappearance or, as it is often less correctly expressed, the abolition of every form of landed property, which also implies every subject of property, whether individual or collective.

Marx did not spend a lot of time addressing the traditional philosophical and juridical justifications for man’s property relations as they affect the land. These justifications go back to the old inanity that property is an extension of the person. The ancient syllogism begins to be false in its very premise, which is passed over in silence: my person, my physical body, belongs to me; it is my property. We deny even this, which is at bottom nothing but a preconceived notion born from the hoary forms of slavery, in which land and human bodies together were seized by force. If I am a slave, my body has an alien owner, the master. If I am not a slave, I am the master of myself. It seems crystal clear and is also pure foolishness. In that development of the social structure in which the odious form of possession of another human being underwent a process of decline, instead of heralding the decline and fall of all subsequent forms of property, it was logical that the ideological superstructure—in the illustrious tradition of all real processes!—should only take this tiny little pygmy step: for it merely registered a simple change of the master of the slave, something that poor humanity was all-too-accustomed to. Before, I went from being a

slave of Titus to being a slave of Sempronius; now I have become a slave of myself…. Perhaps that was not such a good deal!

This vulgar, anti-socialist mode of reasoning is more foolish than the myth that there was an original solitary man who declared himself king of the universe. According to the Biblical construction, it must even be admitted that, due to the multiplication of humans, the system of relations between the ego and the others only became more dense, and the illusory autonomy of the ego became ever more dispersed. For us, Marxists, every step from simple to new and more complicated modes of production augments the network of multiple relations between the individual and all his kind, and reduces the conditions currently designated by the terms autonomy and freedom. This is how all individualism dissolves.

The modern, atheist bourgeois who defends property sees the course of history according to his class ideology (whose debris are today the patrimony of only petty bourgeois and so many alleged Marxists). He sees the process upside-down, as a succession of stages of a ridiculous disconnection of the individual-man from social bonds (while, in reality, the bonds between man and external nature are becoming more and more dense over the course of history). The liberation of man from slavery, liberation from servitude and from despotism, liberation from exploitation!

In this construction that stands opposed to ours, the individual loosens his bonds, breaks free and constructs the autonomy and greatness of the Person! And many people interpret this series as the stages that lead to the revolution.

Individual, person and property all go well together. Given the false principle that we just examined (my body is mine, and so is my hand), the tool with which our powers are extended for the purposes of labor is also mine. The land, too, is a tool of human labor (here, the second premise logically follows). The products of my hand and of its various extensions are also mine: Property is therefore an inalienable attribute of the Person.

Just how contradictory such an argument really is, can be seen in the fact that, in the ideology of the defenders of the private ownership of agricultural land who preceded the enlightenment and the capitalists, the Earth is itself productive of wealth, before and even without the labor that man applies to it. How, then, is the right of possession of man over parcels of land converted into a mysterious “natural law”?

How Marx Responds

Asked for his view on the nationalization of the land, right from the start Marx liquidated all such impotent philosophical formulas.

“The property in the soil — that original source of all wealth — has become the great problem upon the solution of which depends the future of the working class.

“While not intending to discuss here all the argument put forward by the advocates of private property in land — jurists, philosophers, and political economists — we shall only state firstly that they disguise the original fact of conquest under the cloak of ‘natural right’. If conquest constitutes a natural right on the part of the few, the many have only to gather sufficient strength in order to acquire the natural right of reconquering what has been taken from them. In the progress of history (Marx means that the first acts of violence created ownership of the land which, at the beginning, had been free, and which was later held in common—[Bordiga’s note]), the conquerors attempt to give a sort of social sanction to their original title

derived from brute force, through the instrumentality of laws imposed by themselves. At last comes the philosopher who declares those laws to imply the universal consent of society. If indeed private property in land is based upon such a universal consent, it evidently becomes extinct from the moment the majority of a society dissent from warranting it. However, leaving aside the so-called 'rights' of property…."

Here, our proposal is to follow Marx's thinking to the negation of "any kind" of property, that is, of any subject of property (private individual, associated individuals, state, nation, and, finally, society) as well as of any object of property (the land, concerning which we are speaking here, the instruments of labor in general, and the products of labor).

As we have always maintained, all of this is contained in the initial formula of the negation of private property, that is, in the consideration of such a form as a transitory characteristic in the history of human society which is destined to disappear in the present stage.

Furthermore, property that is not conceived as private will also logically come to an end. With regard to the land, what is most obvious concerning the characteristic of the institution is the enclosure within which no one may trespass without the consent of the owner. Private ownership means that the owner is not deprived of the right to enter. Regardless of the identity of the subject of this right, a single person or a multiple-person entity, this "private" character survives.

Against All Divided Property

Marx then goes on to take a position against the practice of agricultural production on small, individual farms.

Leaving aside the philosophical question, and after making a few sarcastic remarks, he continues as follows:

"… we affirm that the economical development of society, the increase and concentration of people, the necessity to agriculture of collective and organized labor as well as of machinery and similar contrivances, render the nationalization of land a 'social necessity', against which no amount of talk about the rights of property will avail.

"Changes dictated by social necessity are sure to work their way sooner or later, because the imperative wants of society must be satisfied, and legislation will always be forced to adapt itself to them.

"What we require is a daily increasing production whose exigencies cannot be met by allowing a few individuals to regulate it according to their whims and private interests or to ignorantly exhaust the powers of the soil. All modern methods such as irrigation, drainage, steam plowing, chemical treatment, etc., ought to be applied to agriculture at last. But the scientific knowledge we possess, and the technical means of agriculture we command, such as machinery, etc., can never be successfully applied but by cultivating the land on a large scale. Cultivation on a large scale — even under its present capitalist form that degrades the producer himself to a mere beast of burden — has to show results so much superior to the small and piecemeal cultivation — would it then not, if applied on national dimension, be sure to give an immense impulse to production? The ever growing wants of the people on the one side, the ever increasing price of agricultural products on the other, afford the irrefutable proof that the nationalization of land has become a 'social necessity'. The diminution of agricultural produce springing from individual

abuse ceases to be possible as soon as cultivation is carried on under the control, at the cost, and for the benefit of the nation."

It is obvious that this text was intended to serve as propaganda and was aimed at a milieu that was not yet converted to Marxism. Very soon, however, he will arrive at the radical theses that we have denominated under the subheading of "Marx's Great Pronouncement". Here we can see displayed his preference for a national management of a state character, when he speaks of costs and benefits. Further along he will clarify that the bourgeois state will always be incapable of providing the necessary impulse to agriculture.

The author still deals with contemporary issues of his time, and it is interesting to see how he poses them exactly the same way Engels did in 1894 (as discussed in the first part of this study). How can anyone today usurp the name of Marxist who has come to maintain that, first the sharecropper, and then the tenant farmer and finally the day laborer of the countryside, must become landowners, as the present-day "communists" of Italy and Europe do?[4] For us, this essential part of Marxism, just as it was between 1868 (actually, even before that) and 1894, remains completely valid today.

The Agrarian Question in France

Marx goes on to refute the cliché of the "rich" small-scale cultivator in France. His words require no commentary. The reader will discern their relation not only to the propositions of Engels, but also to those of Lenin, whose strict orthodoxy as an agrarian Marxist we have already demonstrated in depth in our study of Russia.

"France has often been alluded to, but with its peasantry proprietorship it is farther off the nationalization of land than England with its landlordism. In France, it is true, the soil is accessible to all who can buy it, but this very faculty has brought about the division of land into small plots cultivated by men with small means and mainly thrown on the resources of the bodily labor of both themselves and their families. This form of landed property and the piecemeal cultivation necessitated by it not only excludes all appliance of modern agricultural improvements, but simultaneously converts the tiller himself into the most decided enemy of all social progress, and above all, of the nationalization of the land. Enchained to the soil upon which he has to spend all his vital energies in order to get a relatively small return, bound to give away the greater part of his produce to the state in the form of taxes, to the law tribe in the form of judiciary costs, and to the usurer in the form of interest; utterly ignorant of the social movement outside his petty field of action; he still clings with frantic fondness to his spot of soil and his merely nominal proprietorship in the same. In this way, the French peasant has been thrown into a most fatal antagonism to the industrial working class. Peasantry proprietorship being thus the greatest obstacle to the 'nationalization of land'. France, in its present state, is certainly not the place where we must look for a solution of this great problem. To nationalize the land and let it out in small plots to individuals or workingmen's societies would, under a middle-class government, only bring about a reckless competition among them, and cause a certain increase of 'rent', and thus lend new facilities to the appropriators for feeding upon the producers."

The hypothesis advanced in the above paragraph foresaw the possibility that state measures in favor of nationalization would produce a class of tenant farmers who would take advantage of the wage laborers, and exploit them.

Classes and Producers

It is at this point in the manuscript where Marx inserted the fundamental passage on the debate at the international congress of 1868. Regarding this passage, we placed enormous emphasis on the thesis that

the land is handed over to the ‘nation’ rather than to the associated agricultural workers. The latter formula is anti-socialist because it would “surrender all society to one exclusive class of producers”, an observation that we must always keep in mind. Socialism excludes not just the subjection of producer to owner, but also that of producer to producer.

The Russian agrarian formula, with its Kolkhozes, is spurious communism. The Kolkhozniki form a class of producers who have in their hands the subsistence of the entire “nation”. Their rights with respect to the “state” are expanding every year: their taxes have been reduced, the prices paid for their farm products have been raised, they have been granted a certain degree of “economic” independence, etc. We shall clearly distinguish between the terms, state, nation and society; for now we have the right to say that, economically, competition and rent have reappeared in the Russian structure.

In the Sovkhozes, the agricultural workers are reduced to pure wage workers, like the industrial workers, without any rights over the disposal of the products of the countryside (to this date), and do not form a class of producers erected against society, just as the industrial workers do not form such a class, the industrial workers who are acclaimed as the owners (although this term makes them blush for shame in Russia!) of society itself, that is, as possessing hegemony over the peasants (!).

The classic Russian discussion concerning the question of the land was posed in three ways: Repartition (populists); Municipalization (Mensheviks); and Nationalization (Bolsheviks). Lenin always defended nationalization in revolutionary doctrine and practice, just as Marx defended it in the passage quoted above. The repartition of the populists, an abject peasant ideal, is at about the same level as the policies of the modern communist parties, in Italy for example, where they adorn themselves with the adjective popular and are just as deserving of the adjective populist. Municipalization corresponds with the program of giving the monopoly over the land not to society, but only to the peasant class. The Russian municipality, as this theory views it, is understood to be the rural village whose entire population is composed of peasants and which has tenuous links to the communitarian tradition of the primitive *Mir* (see our series on the economic structure of Russia).[5] The system of Kolkhozes is neither Marxist nor Leninist, and could very well be defined—especially in view of the “reforms” that are currently being implemented—as a provincialization of the land, over which the cities are increasingly losing all influence. This deformation, accentuated by the historical events of 1958, is in total contradiction to the doctrinal position of the party of 1868, according to which the land must not be given to “one exclusive class of producers” (the associates of the Kolkhozes), but to the entire collectivity of rural and urban workers.

The thesis of nationalization must not be understood in the manner of Ricardo: the land to the state, along with all the rent of the land. This means: the land to the industrial capitalist class or to its representative, the industrial capitalist state (like the Russian state). Marxist nationalization of the land is the dialectical contrary of its division into parcels and allotment to peasant cooperatives and associations. This dialectical opposition is just as applicable to the structure of communist society, without classes or state (see the fragment quoted above), as it is to the political struggle, with respect to both the party and the class, within capitalist society, where the demand for the division and re-allotment of the land is much more indecent than it was when it was advocated under the Czarist regime. When the theses of the doctrine of the party are established as invariant and inviolable by both the party center and the militant rank and file, they constitute the defense against the future threat of the opportunist plague, and the thesis of nationalization is an appropriate and typical example.

Nation and Society

The term “nation”, however, presents an advantage with respect to the term “society”, whether it is employed in the context of theory or agitation. As an extension in space, it is well known that we consider socialist society international, and that internationalism is a concept that is firmly rooted in the class struggle. Marx advises us, however, whenever he engages in the critique of the capitalist economic structure, that he will be speaking of the nation in his study of the dynamic of the economic forces, even though society spans the different nations, but never with the intention of imprisoning the revolutionary transition to socialism within strict national limits. Furthermore, although it might be useful to speak of the nation rather than the state, we must not forget that, as long as the class state which expresses the rule of the capitalist class exists, the nation will not constitute the unity of all the inhabitants of a territory in a homogeneous complex, and this will not even be realized after the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat in one or more countries.

The term “nation”, restrictive with respect to class, internationalist and revolutionary demands, is still useful as an expression of the contrasting position against the surrender of particular spheres of productive means (the land, in this case) to isolated parts and classes of national society, to local or enterprise-based groups, or to professional categories.

The other advantage that we mentioned, is reflected with respect to the limitation in time. A nation is born, and it includes the succession of living generations, future and even past. For us, the real subject of social activity becomes more extensive, in time, than the same society of living men at any given date. The idea of progeny (keeping in mind, of course, that we are referring to the progeny of the whole human race, the species, a word that was employed by Marx and Engels, and which is more powerful than the nation and society) goes beyond all the bourgeois ideologies of power and juridical sovereignty that are professed by democrats.

The concept of class alone is enough to refute the idea that the state represents all the living citizens, and we laugh at those who propose to draw such a bold conclusion from the grant of universal suffrage to all adults. We know quite well that the bourgeois state represents the interests and power of one single class, even when it holds general elections.

There is more, however. Even if a representative or structural network is enclosed in the limits of a single class, that of the wage labor force (it would be worse if it assumed the generic designation of the Russian people), we are not satisfied with a construction of sovereignty based on the mechanism of consultation of all the individual elements of the rank and file (assuming that this mechanism could exist). And the same is true both under bourgeois power, in order to direct the revolutionary struggle, and after it has been overthrown.

We have often proclaimed, especially in the “Fundamentals of Revolutionary Communism”, that only the party—obviously a minority within society and the proletarian class—is the form that can express the historical influences of successive generations in the passage from one form of social production to another, in its unity in space and time, in its doctrinal, organizational and strategic unity.

Consequently, the proletarian revolutionary force is not expressed by a consultative democracy within the class, neither during the stage of the struggle nor after its victory, but by the uninterrupted course of the historical line of the party.

Obviously, not only do we admit that a minority of the living and present generation can direct, against the majority (even of the class), the historical advance, but, even more importantly, we think that only this

minority can constitute the directive layer that can provide the guidance that will link it to the struggle and the efforts of the militants of past and future generations, acting in the capacity as guides of the program of the new society, as has been exactly and clearly pre-established by the historical doctrine.

This construction that, in spite of all the philistines, leads us to proclaim the frank demand, dictatorship of the communist party, is undeniably contained in the system of Marx.

Not Even Society Will Own the Land

In the third volume of *Capital*, edited by Engels after the death of Marx, Chapter 46 bears the title: "Building Site Rent. Rent in Mining. Price of Land". Its conclusions are especially striking in the powerful doctrine of land rent, reiterated line by line by the great combatant Lenin throughout his life. Since it is maintained and proven in our economic science that the rent extracted by the landlord has the character of an aliquot part of the surplus value that the class of wage laborers produces and which is converted into capitalist profit, it is clear that our adversaries may pose this objection: there are business transactions in which the owner receives the rent, as in the case of residential and commercial property transactions, while the land lies sleeping under the sun and not even one worker puts a shovel to it. From what labor, and from what resulting surplus value, does this owner's profit derive?

Our economic science, however, is not invalidated by this objection. We are not an academic department, but an army formed in battle order, and we defend the cause of those who have worked and died as well as those who have not yet worked and have not yet been born.

If you seek to reason following the bureaucratic formulas of the debts and assets of corporations, or if you deduce legal power within the limits of the names and results of elections, please leave now.

Marx responds by bringing future generations onto the scene of the battle (this is an old aspect of our doctrine and not a clever invention on our part to make our thesis seem more correct, since, in opposition to the theory and practice of the revolution, the majority of the currently existing proletarian class could also be mistaken and could find itself in the ranks of the enemy):

"That it is only the title of a number of persons to the possession of the globe enabling them to appropriate to themselves as tribute a portion of the surplus-labour of society and furthermore to a constantly increasing extent with the development of production, is concealed by the fact that the capitalised rent, i.e., precisely this capitalised tribute, appears as the price of land, which may therefore be sold like any other article of commerce."

Is this clear? If I think that a piece of land, which in the future will presumably yield five thousand liras per year to its owner, can be sold for one hundred thousand liras, I have converted into an active force the surplus labor of the workers who will labor not twenty years from now, but in an infinite number of years from now.

"In the same way, the slave-holder considers a Negro, whom he has purchased, as his property, not because the institution of slavery (which was a gift to him from past generations—[Bordiga's note]) as such entitles him to that Negro, but because he has acquired him like any other commodity, through sale and purchase."

He will pay money for the future years of the negro and his descendants!

“But the title itself is simply transferred, and not created by the sale. The title must exist before it can be sold, and a series of sales can no more create this title through continued repetition than a single sale can.” (This allusion of the Doctor of Jurisprudence, Marx, refers to the fiction of the bourgeois legal codes which hold that the “proof of ownership” is obtained by presenting the documentation of title conveyances reflecting the chain of ownership for a certain number of years, twenty or thirty, for example—[Bordiga’s note].) What created it in the first place were the production relations. As soon as these have reached a point where they must shed their skin, the material source of the title, justified economically and historically and arising from the process which creates social life, falls by the wayside, along with all transactions based upon it.”

For example, we shall add, in order to clarify the concept for the reader, when the slave system of production collapsed because it was no longer profitable and due to the revolt of the slaves, all the latter became free men, and all previous contracts of sales of slaves were nullified! Here, however, we shall invite the reader, once again, to read this powerful passage of the brilliant and original interpretation of history of human societies, which is no less applicable to the society of tomorrow:

“From the standpoint of a higher economic form of society, private ownership of the globe by single individuals will appear quite as absurd as private ownership of one man by another. Even a whole society, a nation, or even all simultaneously existing societies taken together, are not the owners of the globe. They are only its possessors, its usufructuaries, and, like *boni patres familia*s, they must hand it down to succeeding generations in an improved condition.”

Utopia and Marxism

Marx’s method is also clearly displayed in this decisive passage. Our forecast of the death of property and capital, of its disappearance (which is a much higher goal than its inept transference from the individual subject to the social subject) and also our refusal to attribute it to the decision and the will of the individual-subject (even if it is the subject of the oppressed class), but only to the party-collectivity, a collectivity whose energy does not derive from quantity, but from quality, are constructed on the basis of a total scientific analysis of today’s society and its past. The capitalism that we want to hang from the gibbet and kill, must first be studied and understood with regard to its structure and its real development. It is a duty, not in the moral and personal sense, but an impersonal function of the party, an entity that is superior to the changing opinions of men and the confines of successive generations.

It is this point that provides the response to a possible objection to our acceptance of Marxism, the only one that captures its power and scope. The Marx that has been presented for decades by the revolutionary current when the latter champions the maximum program of the communist social structure, is precisely the Marx who went beyond, fought against and left behind all utopianism.

The opposition between utopianism and scientific socialism does not reside in the fact that the Marxist socialist declares that, with regard to the nature of the future society, he is looking out the window waiting for its forms to pass by before he describes them! The error of the utopian lies in the fact that, after verifying the defects of contemporary society (which, in some of the utopian masters, Marx respectfully praises), he does not deduce the framework of the future society from a concatenation of real processes that form a chain that links their previous course to the future, but from his own head, from human reason and not from the social and natural reality. The utopian believes that the destination point of the course of social evolution must be contained in the spirit of man. Whether it is God the creator that they have induced in the spirit of man, or the introspective philosophical critique that they have discovered in the spirit of man, it is ideological systems composed of Justice, Equality, Liberty, etc., that comprise the

colors of the palette in which the socialist idealist dips his paintbrush to depict the world of tomorrow as it should be.

This naïve, but not always ignoble, origin, causes utopianism to expect its utopia to come about from a labor of persuasion and emulation among men, according to the word that is so fashionable today to express in a truly inappropriate way the conflagration of history. The utopians, impelled by their good intentions, once thought they could be victorious by winning over the existing power centers to their rose-colored projects. Their preconceived ideas prevented them from participating in the process of the struggle and the social conflict, of the overthrow of power and the use not of persuasion, but of unmitigated force, in the work from which the new society will emerge.

Our conception of the human problem is completely the opposite. Things are not the way they are because someone made a mistake, or was deceived, but because a causal and determinate series of forces has entered into play in the development of the human species: it is first of all a matter of understanding how, and why, and by what general laws; and then, to deduce its future directions.

Marxism, then, does not shrink from declaring in its battle programs what will be the character of the society of tomorrow and, specifically, how the rigorously individualized characters that comprise today's capitalist and mercantile social form measure up against each other. Marxism makes it possible to explicitly describe them with much greater validity and certitude than those who sketched out the pallid depictions of utopia, even if they were sometimes quite bold for their time.

To renounce the effort to engage in such anticipation of the features of the communist social structure is not Marxism, nor is it worthy of the powerful corpus of classical writings of our school. It is truly a regressive and conservative revisionism that parades as objectivity what is nothing but mean-spirited cynicism, that is: waiting for the revelation, on a virgin background, of a mysterious design that would be a secret of history. In its philistine pride, this method is nothing but the alibi prepared in advance by the professional cliques that have never experienced life on the heights of the party form and have reduced it to a stage for the contortions of a handful of activists. If these features are to remain secrets, one might just as well wait for the fortunate turn of events in the sacristies for the revelation of the divine will, or in the antechambers in service of the powerful where you can lick their plates in the kitchen.

Property and Usufruct

One proof of the total opposition between Marxism and utopianism, which we have sought to highlight on the terrain of doctrine, is the passage where Marx traces the outlines of the future structure, a passage that is just as obligatory as the one that describes society as not being the owner of the land.

The administration of the cultivation of the land, in reality, must not be conducted in such a way as to only satisfy the appetites of the present generation. Marx's accusation, constantly invoked against capitalism, that the prevailing form of production exhausts the resources of the soil and renders the problem of feeding the people insoluble, is correct. Now that people are becoming increasingly more numerous, "scientists" are studying—with the seriousness with which we are so familiar—new ways to end hunger among the inhabitants of the planet.

The management of the land, the cornerstone of the whole social problem, must be oriented in such a way that it will correspond to the best future development of the population of the globe. Human society today, even if we were to understand this term to transcend the limitations of states and nations, and when it has established a "superior form of organization", and even to transcend classes (then we shall

not only have advanced beyond the somewhat vulgar opposition between “leisure classes” and “productive classes”, but also beyond the opposition between urban and rural productive classes, and manual and intellectual classes, as Marx teaches), this society, which will consist in the aggregate of several billion men, will always be a set restricted to the “human species”, even though it is becoming increasingly more numerous due to the extension of the average lifespan of its members.

The management of the land will be voluntarily and scientifically subordinated, for the first time in history, to the species, that is, it will be organized in the forms that most effectively respond to the goals of the humanity of the future.

This is not fantasy—heaven preserve us from science-fiction!—or utopia, but is instead based on the realistic and practical criteria that Marx used: the difference between ownership and usufruct.

In modern legal theory, property is “perpetual”, while usufruct is temporary, limited to a pre-established number of years or the natural life of the usufructuary. In bourgeois theory, property is defined as “*ius utendi et abutendi*”, that is, ownership confers the right to use and abuse. Theoretically, the owner could destroy the thing he owns; for example, irrigate his fields with salt water, sterilizing it, as the Romans did to Carthage after having burned it to the ground. Today’s jurists engage in subtle discussions about a social limit to property, but this is not science, only class fear. The usufructuary, on the other hand, has a more restricted right than the owner: the right to use, yes; the right to abuse, no. Once the term of the contract of usufruct has expired, or when the usufructuary dies, in the case of a life estate contract, the land reverts to the owner. Positive law requires that it be returned in the same condition that it was in when it was delivered into the power of the usufructuary. Even the modest sharecropper who rents his little piece of land cannot neglect its cultivation, but must administer it like a good *paterfamilias*, just as the good landowner does, for example, for whom the perpetuity of its use or enjoyment consists in its hereditary transmission to his children or heirs. In the Italian Civil Code, the sacramental formula of the good *paterfamilias* may be found in Article 1001 and also in Article 1587.
Therefore, society will have only the use and not the ownership of the land.

Utopianism is metaphysical, Marxist socialism is dialectical. In the respective stages of his gigantic theoretical construction, Marx can successively support:

a) large-scale property (even capitalist large scale property, although the wage workers employed in such property are mere beasts of burden) against small-scale property, even when the latter does not hire wage labor (no reference is made, for the sake of decency, to the small farm, like that of the French tenant farmer of 1894 or the Italian tenant farmer of 1958 who, by employing human beasts of burden, adds to the reactionary trend of micro-parcelization);

b) state property, even if it is capitalist, against large-scale private property (nationalization);

c) state property after the victory of the proletarian dictatorship;

d) for the higher organization of integral communism, only the rational use of the land by society, and putting the disgraced term of property in Engels’ museum of old rubbish.

Use Value and Exchange Value

The fundamental thesis of revolutionary Marxism easily extends the negation of individual ownership and then social ownership of the land to the other instruments of production that are the result of human labor, and to the products of labor, whether they are production or consumption goods.

There are capital goods on agrarian properties that are essential for their exploitation. One fundamental case, which is the source of the word, capital (as Marx frequently reminds us), is that of the draught animals and cattle. In Italian we call this, *scrota viva*; in French, *cheptel*, which is the same word as capital. The term for pigs raised commercially comes from *caput*, which means “head” in Latin. But the bourgeois do not delude themselves when it comes to the human head, and lead us to prepare another natural law: Capital, as the extension of the Person.
This is the head of the bull. The extension of the head of the bourgeoisie is not the eternal principles of human law, but only the horns.

It is clear that the person who administers the land cannot eat all his cattle—we have seen historical examples of this—without destroying that special instrument of production, capable of reproducing itself if it is wisely cared for.

Society will be the usufructuary, rather than the owner, of the animal species. In the book by Engels there is an amusing passage about the ludicrous proposal that the peasants should be allowed unrestricted rights to hunting and fishing in France, with regard to the danger posed by the destruction, which subsequently did take place, of certain species of game animals.

It might take some time, but it will not be difficult, to extend our deduction to all private capital in agriculture and industry. But we shall attempt to proceed by sketching the broad outlines of our position.

In his magisterial chapters on the land, Marx demonstrates that its price and value, derived from capitalized rent, does not enter into the capital of exploitation of the agrarian enterprise because, if there is no unfortunate devastation of the fertility of the soil, it will be intact at the end of the annual cycle. He also draws the obvious comparison with the “fixed part of industrial constant capital”, the part that only enters into the calculation of the circulating capital by the part that is expended in one cycle and is reintegrated (amortization). The land renews itself; and this is also true of the cattle (with a certain amount of labor on the part of the rancher). In agriculture, the tools are replaced to a large extent each year from the total value of the products. In industry, on the other hand, these tools are only replaced annually to a very small extent.

Setting aside the quantitative examination, we want to draw attention to the fact that humanity also has fixed capital that is amortized over very long cycles, as is the case with the Roman Aqueducts which, after two thousand years, are still in use. Criminal capitalism seeks to amortize its investments in very short terms and attempts to rapidly replace—at the expense of the proletariat—all the fixed capital. Why? Because it is the exclusive owner of the fixed capital, while over the circulating capital it only enjoys rights of usufruct. We refer the reader to the distinction between dead labor and living labor that is elaborated in the reports of Pentecostés and Piombino.[6]
Capitalism insists on the frenzied activation of the labor of the living, and makes the labor of the dead its inhuman property. In the communist economy we shall limit ourselves to what the bourgeois theoreticians call amortization, that is, replacement of fixed capital goods, in an opposite way, by revivifying them.

The antithesis between property and usufruct corresponds to that between fixed capital-circulating capital; and to that between dead labor-living labor.

We are in favor of the eternal life of the species; our enemies are on the sinister side of eternal death. And life will sweep them aside, synthesizing the opposed terms in the reality of communism.

We must add one more formula under this same antithesis: monetary exchange and physical use. Mercantile exchange value versus use value.

The communist revolution is the death of the world of buying and selling.

Objectified Labor and Living Labor

Our comrade readers, who, according to our method of work, collaborate in the common activity of the party, should refer at this point to the entire second part of the summary of the meeting at Piombino, where the *Grundrisse* of Marx is thoroughly summarized.
In this vast construction, economic individualism is annulled, and Social Man makes his appearance, whose confines are identical with those of Human Society in its entirety, or rather, those of the Human Species.

In the capitalist form, industrial fixed capital is counterposed to human labor, which is converted into a measure of the exchange value of the products or commodities. Fixed capital is the monstrous enemy—whether or not the capitalist as an individual person lies behind it, and with reference to this question our quotations from Marx have been innumerable—that weighs on the mass of the producers and monopolizes a product that not only concerns all, but is also of concern to the entire active course of the species for millennia, to Science and Technology elaborated and deposited in the Social Mind. Now that the capitalist Form is descending down the developmental scale into degeneracy, this Monster is killing Science itself; it mismanages it, it criminally administers its usufructuary rights by destroying the patrimony of future generations.

In these pages we see the current phenomenon of Automation predicted and theorized for the distant future. What we shall permit ourselves to call the Romance of objectivized labor has its metamorphosis for an epilogue, by means of which the Monster is transformed into a beneficent force for all of humanity, which will not allow the extortion of useless surplus labor, but will reduce necessary labor to a minimum, “for the total benefit of the artistic, scientific, etc., training of individuals”, who will from that point on be elevated to the status of Social Individuals.

Here we would like to draw from the classic and authentic materials, which are more valid and obvious today than they were when they were first conceived, another no less authentic formulation. Once the proletarian revolution has put an end to the destruction of Science, which is the work of the Social Mind; once labor time has been compressed to a minimum that will be transformed into a pleasure; once Fixed Capital—today’s Monster—has been elevated to human forms, that is, once Capital—a transitory historical product—has been abolished, rather than conquered for man or for Society, then industry will be like the land, once the productive machinery, equipment and buildings as well as the land have been liberated of all ownership, regardless of the owner.

It would not be much of a conquest if the productive apparatus were to remain a monopoly of a clique of non-workers, which is a rather hollow phrase insofar as the bourgeois were, at first, a bold class that constituted the bearers of the Social Mind and the most advanced Social Praxis. For its part, society organized in a higher form—international communism—will not possess the productive apparatus in the form of property and Capital, but in usufruct, saving the future of the Species with each step it takes against the physical needs caused by Nature, which will be the only adversary then.

Once property and Capital have died out in both agriculture and industry, another commonplace, i.e., "individual ownership of consumer products", which was a concession to the arduous task of traditional propaganda, must be tossed on the ash-heap of the past. In reality, any revolutionary transformation will fail if every object does not shed its commodity character, and if labor does not cease to be the measure of "exchange value", another form that, together with monetary measures, must die along with the capitalist mode of production.

Here we shall provide some textual citations:

"As soon as labour in the direct form has ceased to be the great well-spring of wealth, labour time ceases and must cease to be its measure, and hence exchange value [must cease to be the measure] of use value."

Taking pity on the mediocrity of Stalin and the Russians who persist in claiming that the law of value prevails in socialism (!), we were led to conclude: May the lightning of the Final Judgment fall upon your heads![7]
The drunk who waves his bottle, saying, it's mine, I bought it with the money from my wages (paid by private or State institutions), while he is a victim of the Capital form, is also a usufructuary traitor to the health of the species. And so is the idiot who smokes cigarettes! Such "property" will be eliminated from the higher organization of society.

The debasement of the wage slave reaches new lows in the crisis of unemployment. Engels wrote to Marx, on December 7, 1857:

"Among the Philistines here, the crisis drives them terribly to drink. No one can endure his life at home, with the family and all its worries. The circles become agitated and the consumption of spirituous liquors undergoes a steep increase. The deeper they sink into boredom, the more they want entertainment. But on the next day they present the most discouraging spectacle of physical and moral complaints." 1857 or 1958?!

Therefore, man will not consume himself as a beast-person, in the name of the infamous ownership of the object of exchange; use, or consumption, will be conducted in accordance with the higher requirement of social man, the perpetuation of the species, and no longer under the influence of drugs, as is the rule today.

The Death of Individualism
It is not possible for the proletarian class party to orient itself in the correct revolutionary direction if its agitational material does not totally correspond with the stable, invariant foundations of the theory.

The questions of everyday action and the future program are only the two dialectical sides of the same problem, as has been demonstrated on so many occasions by Marx right up until his death, and by Engels and Lenin ("April Theses", Central Committee of October!).

These men did not improvise or rely on revelations; they grasped the compass of our action, which is too easy to lose.

This clearly indicates the danger, and our questions are well posed when they go against the general mistaken directions. Its formulas and terms can be falsified by traitors and mental defectives; but its use always provides a sure compass when it is continuous and consistent.

If we employ the language of philosophy and history, our enemy is individualism, or personalism. If we employ the language of politics, our enemy is democratic electoralism, regardless of the camp. If we employ the language of economics, our enemy is mercantilism.

Any tactic that seeks to utilize these insidious methods in an attempt to achieve an apparent advantage, is equivalent to the sacrifice of the future of the party to the success of one day, or one year; it is equivalent to unconditional surrender to the Monster of the counterrevolution.

Mao's China, Certified Copy of the Bourgeois Capitalist Society (1957)

Mao Zedong, in a speech given at the Supreme State Council on February 27th1957, confirmed item-by-item, the doctrinal deviations that put the Chinese "communism" completely out of Marxism. Chinese revisionism rises from the desperate effort to display as a transition phase to socialism a form of state and a stage of society that are instead in a transition phase to capitalism. Mao Zedong and other Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leaders describe current China as a form of society - which we experienced in Western Europe in Eighteenth and Nineteenth - passing from feudalism to capitalism, but then they claim that the People's Republic of China is a form of state that is building socialism. They break openly with the fundamental statements of Marxism, but nevertheless keep on professing a hypocrite formal deference to it.

At the moment we can leave aside Chinese counterfeits concerning the specific field of the communist economic program. It's clear that only the future will show that the economic form today being "built" in China is pure capitalism, barely disguised by semi-statist forces of the industrial management and by co-operatives forms in which are attempted to be re-tightened the immense potential of agricultural production. It will come the day, we are sure about that, when CCP leaders will proclaim to have reached the "socialism", following the example of Stalin, Malenkov and Khrushchev. We deny even now that the CCP can keep its demagogic promises. But then it will be the case to compare the findings of the "built up" Chinese socialism with Marxist propositions about the features of socialist society, and to see the way CCP leaders bluff.

Now it's worthwhile to do a different but not less useful work. CCP leaders will always be able to argue that it's possible to reach socialism through the political means they have molded, so following the "Chinese way." Unavoidably the material events will prove we to be right and them to be wrong. But even now it is possible to verify that the "Chinese way " to reach socialism is something quite different from the one predicted by Marx. This task is possible. On one hand we have Marxist texts concerning the issue about the transition to socialism, on the other one the "People" state machine.

Fundamental point of the CCP's doctrine and political propaganda is the claim that China is currently in the "building socialism" historical stage. Necessarily, it follows that nowadays China's society is – according to the CCP's version – in a transitioning phase to socialism, which is materialized, on the political field, in the form of the People's Republic. Well, let's compare the latter with the "model" of the State to which Marx, in the "Critique of the Gotha Program", committed the task of the transition from capitalism to socialism.

As we read in the abovementioned work: "Between capitalist and communist society there lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat."

The Popular Republic of China presents itself as a dictatorship, but not as a dictatorship of the proletariat.

Mao Zedong, in his mentioned speech, gives more than one definition. He proclaims: "Ours is a people's democratic dictatorship led by allies, based on the alliance of workers and peasants". Therefore, it is the dictatorship of the people. We will see below just as the concept of the "dictatorship of the people" is in irreconcilable contrast with Marxist classism principles, according to which the dictatorship is exercised by some of the people against another part of it. It remains clear, for the moment, that in the "democratic dictatorship of the people", the proletariat has functions and rights of a shared power management, in which other classes also take part.

Which are the other classes involved in wielding the dictatorship? On this point, Mao Zedong is strangely reticent. He vaguely talks about "civil rights" and about "those who enjoy civil rights," and then he admits this latter join that dictatorship which the "people" bring to bear on the "reactionary classes." As a good revisionist, afraid of being caught red-handed, he says and does not say the things; and when he says it, he takes upon himself to sow them in a flood of words. So, a patient puzzle-like work is necessary to piece the truth together.

"Our Constitution - he writes in the chapter " Two different types of contradictions "- establishes that the People's Republic of China citizens enjoy freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, demonstrations, religious faith and so on. Our Constitution establishes also that organs of the state must put into practice democratic centralism and they must be based on the masses. Our socialist democracy is a democracy in the broadest sense, as you cannot find in any capitalist country. "

And he continues: "Our dictatorship is known as a workers-led people's democratic dictatorship, based on the alliance between workers and peasants. And this means that democracy works IN THE RANGE OF THE PEOPLE, while the working class, UNITED WITH ALL THOSE WHO ENJOY THE CIVIL RIGHTS - farmers first - strengthens the dictatorship against the reactionary classes and elements, and against all those who resist the socialist transformation and oppose the socialist construction. We regard as civil rights political freedom and democratic rights".

Mao Zedong's words remove all doubts. The dictatorship is exercised to the detriment of the reactionary classes - that would be the "bureaucratic" capitalists and the class of landowners - but the relations between those classes protected by such dictatorship, are mediated by democracy, the so called democratic centralism. Mao Zedong forgets to list systematically those who, enjoying civil rights,

are allowed to participate in democracy, therefore to print newspapers, to organize themselves into political parties, to make demonstrations and marches and so on. He says only that among those who enjoy democratic rights, peasants are listed first. But we know that immediately after (or just before) there are the "national" capitalists and intellectuals, classes that swore fidelity to the Constitution and enjoy the rights conferred on citizens.

Meanwhile, which role does the "national bourgeoisie "plays in the production process??

At the beginning of the chapter entitled "The problem of industrialists and businessmen", Mao Zedong stated: "In year 1956, the transformation of private industrial and commercial enterprises into STATE AND PRIVATE JOINTLY owned enterprises, and the organization of cooperatives in agriculture and crafts as part of the transformation of our social system". He goes on: "The speed and ease helping to carry out this process, are closely related to the fact that we faced the problem of the contradiction between the working class and the national bourgeoisie as a contradiction among the people."

Formally, the workers and peasants allied exercise the dictatorship of people. But "national" capitalists' class is elevated to the rank of people's state co-owner, owing industrial and commercial companies too; so therefore this class shares profits with the state. This means that the bourgeoisie maintains, in the production process, the class position of owner and manager. But it enjoys the participation in economic power, being equal in this to the peasants but not to the workers, who are economically exploited class. Peasants and "national" bourgeoisie, apart from the differences of social development, have at least a productive relation in common, because they directly control and legally own the means of production.

Workers remain a destitute class. And it does not matter that the landlords' property, industrial and commercial companies of the "bureaucratic "capitalists are transferred in people's state property. Leaving aside that the "state property" has a negligible weight in Chinese economy, we have seen that it is closely related to private property. How can proletariat be defined "dominant class" in a society where state finance is a partner of the private finance is hard to comprehend. Rather, it is hard to comprehend if you examine it from a Marxist point of view.

The political power of the bourgeoisie is expressed in various ways. First of all, as a class owning and managing industrial and commercial business, bourgeoisie is able to influence state's economic policy.

The reader would remember, according to the previous article, what we reported about Mao's odd theory of the differences of social contradictions' types that would exist in China. There would be a kind of contradiction of antagonistic nature, therefore solvable only by the violent means of the dictatorship. This type, according to Mao, belongs to the contrast dividing the "people" by his enemies: the "bureaucratic" capitalists and the class of landowners. We would have also a type of non-antagonistic contradiction in which the dictatorship has no jurisdiction and it is replaced by the democratic centralism. But to argue, as Mao does repeatedly, that class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat falls in the case of "contradiction among the people" or "antagonistic contradiction" or "a contradiction that can be resolved peacefully and democratically", is to acknowledge the bourgeoisie the right to participate in political life of the country and, directly or indirectly, to the government of the state, isn't it?

The bourgeoisie is not placed in the field of social classes that are subject to the people's democratic dictatorship, but rather in the people who exercise this dictatorship. This means, in doctrinal and practical terms, to place the "national" bourgeoisie in the field of political forces being SUBJECT, not OBJECT, of political power; it means to admit the bourgeoisie among the forces exercising dictatorship over the rest of society.

Bourgeoisie does not only participate in the power indirectly, but also as a class keeping control of the means of production, which constitute the technical equipment of current Chinese society. In China, bourgeoisie is also a class excluded by the discrimination against the "enemies of the people", and furthermore subjects the latter to dictatorship's harshness. Bourgeoisie is an organized political Party. Indeed, it's well known that in China there are more than a half a dozen parties, among which stands out the Democratic National Construction Association. On 14th March 1956 the newspaper "L'Unità"1 informs us that this party includes mainly industrialists and businessmen. For those who are keen on statistics, the article also reports that during 1956 this party, which Nenni would call "economic rightist", has triplicated its members. Do not think it's strange that, while is occurring the full transition to socialism, a capitalist party sees its members increasing. Indeed, "L'Unità" warns that many of the members of this Association are among "those who have taken an active role in the socialist transformation of private industry and commerce."

Only in China could be rooted the strange social species of capitalists who build socialism!

To give the reader the Chinese political spectrum complete outline, we list the other parties: Guomindang Revolutionary Committee (senior officers and officials of the Guomindang) Democratic League (traditional intellectuals), the Association for Promoting Democracy (professors, teachers, educators), Workers and Peasants Democratic Party (rural and urban petty bourgeoisie), Zhigongdang ("Solidarity": deriving from ancient religious sects and consisting mostly of Chinese returned from emigration), Jiusan Society (university professors and scientists), Taiwan Democratic Self-government League (Chinese native of Formosa). This list, including captions in parentheses, was transcribed from "L'Unità" of the 20th of October 1956, in which we also find data about the political composition of the Chinese Parliament. On 1,226 members, there are 659 Communists, 453 from other parties and 114 without parties. The government has 15 non-communist ministers and 21 non-communist vice-ministers.

All these parties, including the capitalist Democratic National Construction Association and the China Communist Party, are united in the Unique National Front. In other words, the Unique National Front puts into practice the principle of the people's democratic dictatorship, based on classes' collaboration building up the "people". These classes regulate their mutual relations according to democratic centralism, but they all together exercise the dictatorship over the "enemies of the people".Which are the classes "strengthening" the "led by the workers" dictatorship, helping to keep under the rigors of law reactionary classes opposing the construction of socialism? We have seen: they are the capitalist bourgeoisie, the urban petty bourgeoisie and rural intellectuals: those classes possesses well-organized parties, print newspapers, send their representatives to Parliament and even ministers and vice-ministers to Beijing government.

Thus, for the first time in the not brief history of Marxist revisionism, appears the monstrous theory that: during the transition phase to socialism the dictatorial power is no longer exercised by the proletariat alone, or at least with the people's lowest classes, but rather by the people as a whole. But it is not the people, as described by the Cagliostro-like2 CCP theorists - as a whole of the bourgeoisie, the peasantry, the proletariat, the petty bourgeoisie, the intellectuals - a certified copy of the bourgeois society we know in the West? When you have the courage to write, as "L'Unità" does, that the capitalist Party's members - who then are the industrialists and businessmen benefitting from the protection of the people's state - take "an active role in the socialist transformation of Industry and Trade" (strange, however: we thought that socialism suppresses, rather than transforms, trade...), when you dare to pass the capitalists -no matter if "national-capitalists"- off as build-helper of socialism, any Blasphemy is possible. No wonder if, according to the logical consequences of the CCP leaders statements, you go as far as socialism is no longer seen as the historical outcome reached through the revolutionary work of only one class of the bourgeois society, but of all these together.

It is also conceivable that such an enormous nonsense does not elude the critical sense of a part of the CCP militants. The point is that the false theory concerning the possibility of the transition to socialism through an alliance policy with the bourgeoisie and other similar social stratums, did not pass by without a inner struggle in the Central Committee of the CCP, as we will see afterwards. Revisionist is such precisely because it is convinced that there are interests higher than the preservation of doctrine's integrity. And that's what happens to the CCP leaders who might also realize - we wouldn't make a too ruthless hypothesis – that, having the pretext that Marxism is not a dogma, modified it to such an extent of making it unrecognizable. But now they are the most stubborn conservative force of a state which formidable foreign powers contribute, albeit aiming opposite purposes, to keep alive. And it's difficult, indeed, to determine whether the material support offered by Russia to Beijing's government was more decisive, for the People's Republic, than United States opposition. The latter, threatening China from outside through the Formosa government, allowed the CCP to hold the flag of the patriotic national union.

In the name of national policy and its ambitions of big power, Mao's China needs the support of all of the social classes. While Chiang Kai-shek forces in Formosa waiting in ambush the right moment to invade the continent rely on American support, Beijing rulers have to maintain the "domestic front", i.e. must avoid like the plague the class struggle. If any other "non-Marxist Party" was in the place of "communists" and had to fight an external enemy would do exactly as CCP leaders do.

Now let's say something may sounds "new" to someone: even an unedited Marxism based party would apply a policy of alliance BUT ONLY IF THE GUOMINDANG AND THE FORMOSA GOVERNMENT REALLY REPRESENTED A MOVEMENT OF FEUDAL RESTAURATION. But the whole last decades' Chinese history is there, reminding that these forces belong to the bourgeois revolution field. The big industrial bourgeoisie and the "compradors", big financiers and speculators who worked in the wake of the imperialist influences in China (do not forget that capitalism in China was imported from imperialist colonialism), certainly cannot be regarded as representative of feudalism.

CCP labels them as "bureaucratic capitalists" not by accident. On the other hand, the landowners dispossessed through agricultural land reform cannot be considered feudal class. The landowner is, at the origin of capitalism, a bourgeois financial capital owner who can grab farmland from the feudal aristocracy by buying it. In a few words, making it a commodity. Now these are the two classes of

"bureaucratic capitalists", who after all are not a class, but a political orientation of the Chinese bourgeoisie and the landlords, both placed by CCP in the "reactionary" field, politically represented by Guomindang government led by Chiang Kai-shek. As you can see, they are social elements coming from a common bourgeois and capitalist matrix. Nevertheless, theorists like Mao based the theory of antagonistic contradiction between the PEOPLE and the ANTI-PEOPLE on the supposed irreconcilable conflict between them and ... the classes' consortium taken under people's state protection.

Marxism admits that if feudalism - overthrown by the bourgeois revolution - counter attacks, the proletariat must agree to align with a "united front" with the bourgeois forces.

Now, Guomindang and the Chiang Kai-shek government, it's worthwhile to repeat it, do not represent the feudal restoration. In a separate article the history of the function performed by the Guomindang in the Chinese bourgeois revolution need to be done. But even if, hypothetically, were encamped at Formosa the Chinese equivalent of French "emigrants", even in that hypothesis, every good Marxist would be obliged, while recognizing the need of insurgent alliance with the bourgeois forces, to harshly criticize and reject the CCP policy.

One of two is the right one: or the Guomindang represents the field opposing socialist revolution, as claimed by Mao Zedong, and then China is actually passing through a transition to socialism, and, in this case for Marxism only the mono-classist dictatorship of the proletariat can victoriously support the fight; or - as those unfamiliar with the recent history of China may think - the Guomindang stands in the field facing the bourgeois revolution. In this case it would be the task of Marxist party to be the leader of all the anti-feudal forces. But even in the latter case, Marxist party rejects CCP's false theories about alliances. It has been shown, indeed, both in the theory and in the practice, that an insurgency alliance between proletariat and bourgeoisie is only a temporary one. It neither can provoke a surrender of the absolute autonomy of the proletariat nor - after the revolution - a ruling classes co-partnership.

What's "alliance" real sense?

The "four classes" alliance, postulated by CCP leaders has solid historical precedents. It is not only a program cornerstone, but also a historical phenomenon happened several times during the transition from feudalism to capitalism. So, CCP leaders are dead wrong, standing in the end of the long line of Marxism falsifiers, when they claim even to establish a state on the basis of such a formula. This has never happened in history, and if it happened, it would break into pieces Marxist classism. And it is not enough. They reach the extreme limit of impudence, claiming that such prodigy- state represents a "way to socialism."

In the Marx's and Engels' writings concerning the 1848-52 period is repeatedly stated the thesis about the support of the revolutionary proletariat to the bourgeoisie against feudal reaction. But Marx and Engels never cease to stir up workers to class struggle against the bourgeoisie while giving the latter the necessary support in order to provoke the defeat of the "revanchist" feudalist forces. Furthermore, Lenin himself made use of of these Marxist teachings in a no less explicit way.

The February 1917 Russian Revolution and the 1911 Chinese Revolution, except much different stages of development, have common features. Indeed, both of them are belated anti-feudal revolution cases, i.e. revolutions occurring during a historical period in which the conditions for the communist revolution already exist elsewhere. On the other hand, both in Russia and in China, albeit in different forms and

grades, a counterrevolutionary alliance between the feudal indigenous power and the foreign capitalist imperialism is operating.

An example of "united front" involving bourgeois forces having an anti-feudal function and a Marxist party, here the Russian Bolshevik Party, is given by the episode of the fight against Kornilov. The world scenery is completely changed, if compared to the one present at the age of the French Revolution. Now, in world economy, the prevailing mode of production is no longer the small agricultural and handcrafts production, but the modern capitalism. In the world most powerful countries the dominant form of the state is no longer the absolute monarchy, but the super-imperialist state, an expression of financial capital dominating the world. The feudal economy, although still involving vast regions of the planet, it is now only surviving.

But this does not facilitate the task of the revolutionary democratic forces struggling for a bourgeois-democratic revolution, because of the feudal-imperialist alliance, under the protection of imperialism and financial capital monarchies and principalities perpetuating the antiquated pre-capitalist relations, replaced the absolutist holy alliances as an obstacle to the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the colonial or quasi-colonial countries. Under these historical circumstances, in the colonies, revolution clashes with pre-established positions and influences t gained by imperialism in backward countries.

The new states' struggle, emerged from the anti-colonial revolution, fits perfectly with the Leninist doctrine on the small nations struggling against the stifling domination of imperialism. Of course, the notion of "smallness" is not limited to the mere territorial fact, but to the economic and political efficiency. China, where an immense territory is coupled to an extreme economic weakness and, until recently, to an unprecedented political nullity, exactly represents the clearest form of this phenomenon. Everyone knows that the Chinese democratic revolution had to fight for over twenty years against the Japanese and the U.S. imperialism intrusions to finally reach the triumph.

But lets' go back to Czarist Russia. Here the imperialist-feudal alliance is crystal clear. The Czarist State is embroiled in the international bank loans to such an extent that the outbreak of the first imperialist war drags it into catastrophe. Because of the relations between the nascent Russian industry and the imperialist financial bourgeoisie, Russian bourgeoisie - which has already experienced the terrible "shock" by the 1905 Revolution and the rise of the workers and peasants Soviets - tends to compromise with Czarism inland and imperialism abroad. In short, these circumstances deeply change the historical framework in which take place the anti-feudal revolution of the 20th Century, if compared with those occurred in past centuries. But this does not prevent Lenin to apply to Russia, in a period before the October Socialist Revolution, the same tactic that Marx and Engels predicted since 1848, concerning the cases of attack on the feudal power or latter's restorer attempts.

When, in September 1917, Gen. Kornilov, Russian army Commander in chief, attempts to crush the Soviets aiming for Czarism restoration, Lenin does not hesitate to link the Russian situation to the 1789 France and 1848 Germany cases together, and in perfect coherence with Marxism, launches the keyword: "united front" with the bourgeois democratic forces.

September 1917 is a clear case of anti-feudal revolution threatened by the offensive Czarist feudal power counterattack. The bourgeois-democratic revolution is at a turning point. The Czarist regime is overthrown, but still has reserves to counterattack. The revolutionary camp is split. In July, Kerensky's government is able to suppress Petrograd Soviet's workers and soldiers armed insurrection, supported

by Kronstadt sailors too, and it forces the Bolshevik Party to go underground. Lenin and Zinoviev must hide. Trotsky and Lunaciarskj are arrested. But the government reaction fails to seriously affect the offensive potential of Bolshevism. On the other hand, the same anti-Bolshevik field appears divided by irreconcilable political dissension. In Moscow, between 25th and 27th August, the Conference of State gathers. It includes representatives from all political groups except the Bolsheviks, but the right and the left does not reach an agreement. Czarist forces see this fact as auspicious for a restorer action. This brings us to September 6th when General Kornilov lead his troops marching on Petrograd, Revolution's Capital.

In such a dramatic circumstance, Bolshevism, despite being outlawed, apply a tactic of "united front" with the forces of bourgeois democracy. But this maneuver is carried out with a masterful execution of the Marxist dictates, so that the defeat of the absolutist and feudal counter-offensive increases the possibilities of struggle of the socialist proletariat and that this emerges strengthened by the common struggle and can successfully revolt against the bourgeois camp. We read, by the way, in the "Theses on the Left" and specifically in the chapter entitled "Nature, function and tactics of the revolutionary Party of the working class" this passage:

"Bolshevik Party, in realizing anti-Kornilov United Front, actually fought against a concrete reactionary-feudal resurgence and furthermore had not to fear a Menshevik and Socialists-Revolutionaries organizations additional reinforcement. This reinforcement would have affected Bolshevik action as an eventual reinforcement of feudal power would have let this latter taking advantage of a contingent alliance with Bolsheviks in order to turn against them." (Prometeo, 1947, n. 7)

In other words, the Bolsheviks not only managed to avoid the carnage that the bourgeoisie has reserved in other historical periods to proletariat, even when helped it to abolish feudalism; as the case of "Babuefists" under the Thermidorian reaction. Not only they were able to come out stronger from the "united front" against Kornilov, but also were able to use their increased political influence for the conquest of power and the outlawing of the bourgeoisie itself, as it happened in the following October.

This should make deeply think those who find "new" our thesis, according to which the proletariat must support, in the colonies, the anti-colonial movement even if it doesn't propose socialist aims. The problem is not if to accept or to reject this principle, which is perfectly consistent with Marxism. It's rather to know how to approach and resolve it as the Bolsheviks did in Russia, until the proletariat was not able to do ITS OWN revolution and establish the dictatorship on the bourgeoisie. We'll never cease to repeat that this revolutionary tactics does not concern in any way the social areas where capitalism has completely accomplished its cycle, but only in the Afro-Asian countries, where is taking place a transition from feudalism to capitalism.3

We have already certified the policy carried out by CCP leaders. They describe Chinese nowadays society breaking down into the two areas of "people" and "enemies of the people" and conclude saying that this "antagonistic contradiction" requires the exercise of democratic dictatorship based on the alliance of those classes making up the people.

The Marxist classism knows only one historical situation, in which the society is split into opposing camps of the "people" and "anti-people", as they define the field of landed aristocracy. And this situation is that of a society in transition to capitalism. China is at this stage and will be for a long time. Just think of how Mao himself says about the industrialization of China. According to him, it will take

"three five-year plans or a little more" to transform China from an agricultural backward country to an industrial one. This means that it will take, to be optimistic, about twenty years to erase the pre-capitalist legacy.

Is the world proletariat concerned in these transformations? Must Marxists have a good judgment about the "capitalization" of the immense Chinese space? Or are they obliged to entrench themselves behind an anti-dialectic indifferentism like some of our squinting critics? These latter, can only look towards the direction of Western society and capitalist states that accomplished historical evolution, and are powerless to observe what happens in two whole continents where outmoded relations of production explode due to internal contradictions and new social classes see the light. The only wish that we can make to them - insult them would mean to put ourselves to their level - is to live long enough to see Asia and Africa, finally awakened from their secular sleep, playing its role in the socialist revolution. Already now it's clear that the future Communist International will be able to work with more revolutionary achievements in transitional societies, where nothing is solidified and everything is boiling, instead of social fossils, as few years ago were the colonies, where classes seemed to be carved in the granite of immutability.

Nowadays China quickly flows into the channel of transition to capitalism. It is walking through all the historical paths that France, for example, ran from 1789 to 1870. Of course, today's technical level will shorten in a few decades such a long historical period. But we deny, indeed the reality denies it, that Chiang Kai-shek Guomindang government, which threaten from outside the People's Republic, and count followers even within it, represent a danger of reactionary return of feudalism. The Guomindang, actually, is a political pole of the bourgeois-democratic revolution of China, as CCP is the other one. And this is not a historical exception. France, England, Germany, Italy and other countries, in the history of their transition to capitalism, include many examples of struggles between the parties in the field of revolutionary democracy, struggles that often intrude into civil war. Just think of the terrible conflict between the Girondins and the Jacobins.

In other words, since THE GUOMINDANG DOESN'T REPRESENT A DANGER OF FEUDAL RESTORATION, the only historical condition that CCP's revisionists could invoke to justify their lynch mobbing politics of alliance is dropping. Them, passing off ideologies betraying and misrepresenting non-adulterated Marxism's tactical and doctrinal principles and struggle traditions as original Marxist, are proving ad abundantiam4 to be fallen in the filthiest bourgeois nationalism. In other words, they - assuming for a moment that they are communists - are subordinating and sacrificing the proletariat's world revolution interests to those of China industrialization and put China's national interests - making themselves even promoters of a sort of "Pan-Sinicism"- before those of proletarian internationalism.

Chinese "communists" guilt is not to take power and use it to "build capitalism", and so therefore: modern industry based on wage labor, agriculture which overcame village's narrow borders and entered a national market, transformation of all social labor products into commodities. In nowadays China, an agricultural country among the most backward in the world, there is no other alternative. We must have the courage to say so, and we Marxists say it easily. For Chinese "communists" to build capitalism is not "guilt" or a "crime": they cannot do otherwise. Socialism will arrive in China, as far as is possible to predict the future, on the explosive wave that the socialist revolution will raise in the capitalist metropolis of the West and in Russia itself. Then what is CCP role? Chinese "communists" are in a contradictory position. They have double personality. On one hand they are revolutionaries. And this is

clear when you consider the work they do in view of the final abolition of feudal survivals in the country. On the other side they are dangerous counter-revolutionary because they meaningfully work for Marxism corruption and falsification, daily carried out from the political area subordinated to the fake Russian communism.

The proletariat has the obligation to take power wherever the conditions of the class struggle permit it. If the proletarian dictatorship is imposed in a PRE-CAPITALIST country, which is not able to "jump" to socialism with its own resources, the proletariat must not necessarily relinquish the power. The whole history of the Bolshevik Revolution is there to teach this lesson.

Looking forward to see the revolution flood into developed capitalism countries, the proletarian dictatorship, aground in the shoals of a backward country, is not able to carry out any other task except abolishing feudal relations and taking the direction of economic management. In other words, it cannot do anything but encourage the industrialization process, which will not cease to be essentially capitalist although the industrial companies will be managed in the state form. And in this work party's words must reflect its actions. But the proletarian Party, forced to this difficult task by economic necessity, which pretends - as the rulers of the CCP - "to build socialism", would pronounce a colossal false doctrine to the detriment of Marxism. It would work for counter- revolutionary defeatism and renegade workers' internationalism. How? With the spread of ideological confusion in the workers movement, by lending a hand to the enemies of the socialist revolution, to whom nothing is more important than preventing workers revolutionary Party rises and strengthen itself. And anyone who contributes, in any measure, to falsify Marxism, brings his stone to the wall that capitalism erects against the socialist revolution.

The CCP revisionism has a poisoning power no less deadly than the one we have experienced by the revisionists standing on this side of the Great Wall. Yes, because the CCP - unlike the European communist parties leaders, which are not even able to win a strike - can dazzle the astonished eyes of the world proletariat with the inevitable successes of industrialization of China. Thanks to that, they present the capitalist evolution achievements as material proof of the legitimacy of the policy based on alliance with bourgeoisie and non-proletarian classes. And with that, they give a great help to our own opportunists, who base their political activity precisely on the false doctrines of: inter-classism, popular fronts and "dialogues" with the bourgeois forces.

Of course, in political relations, there is an exchange of mutual benefits between the Chinese revisionism and the multicolored field of international opportunism. The benefit gained by Chinese has to be found in the global campaign that Russian-communist parties have orchestrated in the West -and now including large areas of the bourgeois intelligentsia- to exalt "People's" China. It can only help the ambitious policy of nationalism pursued by Beijing government under the camouflage of humanitarian rhetoric.

The economic and social transformation step

We cannot finish this article without analyze filo-Russian communist parties' attitude. For this purpose Italian Communist Party's (ICP) case is really useful, so therefore we have chosen a Scoccimarro text taken from a report given at ICP Central Committee after he just came back from China, where he attended the 8th Congress of CCP. This document is published in the "L'Unità" 10/20/1956 edition.

At the beginning of the abovementioned report we read about the two divergent tendencies appeared within CCP in 1952, concerning the problem regarding "the peaceful and democratic transition from democratic-bourgeois revolution to socialist-proletarian revolution, from democratic-popular dictatorship to the dictatorship of the proletariat."

It's necessary not to forget what official historiography tells about the transition of historical phases in China. According to its instructions, the year 1949 - when Mao's armadas completed Chinese whole territory occupation and Chinese People's Republic was proclaimed - marks democratic-popular revolution's victory. But Chinese courtier-historians don't reveal the historic meaning of 1911 revolution, which inspired Lenin's famous writings (we should reissue it afterwards). Whatever, they all at one state that in 1952 historical scene changes again and China goes on the socialism stage. But, at the beginning, to reach this single-thought position wasn't smooth at all, if Scoccimarro refers the truth about CCP ideological split occurred at that time in the CCP.

He said verbatim: "A deviation on the right asserted the need to stop at the bourgeois-democratic revolution and rejected the policy of control and limitation of capitalist forces in the cities and in the countryside: this trend expressed the lack of confidence in the ability of the Party to lead the peasants and the whole people to socialism. A deviation on the left demanded the immediate implementation of socialism, the disappearance of the national bourgeoisie through confiscation, the removal of capitalist industry and commerce: this position expressed the lack of confidence in the ability of the Party to establish socialism by stages and in a peaceful and democratic way".

It may seem a paradox, but it is a matter of fact that if you submit to a critical analysis these two positions, we get that in the "right deviation" there is a minor deviation from Marxism. Aside from an exceeding liberalism, consisting of the request to relieve any control on the capitalist forces, it reflected the objective reality better that the lefties positions.

We have already seen how Mao himself admits that China can reach the status of industrial country within no less then twenty years, and since to be official estimates, so too optimistic. To complete the picture we give data provided by Scoccimarro report. We already know that out of a population of almost 600 million inhabitants (counting the overseas Chinese, according to the habit firmly established by the pan-Sinicist rulers in Beijing), 500 million people are employed in agriculture. But to get an idea of the tremendous conservative force inevitably emanating from every agricultural economy, it's necessary to be aware of the degree of scattering reached by this huge mass of peasants. Consider then that there were in China at the time of land reform, 120 million farms. After the reform, 110 million (97.7 per cent) of them are organized in 1 million of cooperatives. But, the juridical superstructure of cooperatives' boundaries and the actual concentration of the agricultural means of production, which is a phenomenon connected to the industrial transformations, are really different things. Moreover, Chinese society situation is reflected by CCP social composition, which enrolls 10 million and 730,000 subscribers (year 1956), divided into: 14% of workers, 12% of intellectuals and an impressive 69% of peasants.

It's clear that the tremendous weight held by agrarian conservation, keeping China development level among the lowest in the world, will be neutralized in two ways. One is the long path traced by five-year plans established by central government, which cannot be anything different from the martyrdom of wage labor, as in most ferocious traditions of Stalinism and the Stakhanovism. The other way is The World Revolution. Only revolutionary power conquered by the workers of Europe and America will be able to snatch from Chinese proletariat shoulders, in front of which there are long and dark decades of

ruthless exploitation, the cross of the hyper-industrialization forced march, established by Beijing megalomaniacal leaders plans. But as long as these continents will remain under the yoke of capitalism, and until a new revolutionary wave will have wiped out the national bourgeois power, camped in Russia and fueling an imperial expansion policy at the expense of smaller nations, the Chinese proletariat will not to be able even to think about the impossible effort of "building socialism" in China - such as the mermaids of revisionism are singing - relying only on its own resources.

In absence of the socialist revolution in developed capitalist countries and remaining the relations between Russia and China at a state to state level, as it is inevitable to happen between two nation-states, any worker government can only, despite all the good intentions and also heroic sacrifices, work in the direction of capitalism. CCP leaders do not seek alliance with the bourgeoisie because they have discovered a new "road to socialism" that allows to get there "using the bourgeoisie itself". No. They, cold, invent absurd and monstrous theories peddling under the name of Marxism, to hide the ugly truth from the proletariat, to proclaim boldly to be the "Builders" of socialism in a country where it is impossible to eradicate the bourgeoisie from the production process. By the way, let's hear what Scoccimarro says in the full session of the Central Committee of the Italian "Communist" Party: "The national (Chinese) bourgeoisie is politically and economically weak, but has a large ideological and cultural influence in STILL BACKWARD CHINESE SOCIETY. ITS COOPERATION IS PRECIOUS DUE TO ITS TECHNICAL AND PRODUCTIVE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS, ESPECIALLY IN THE ECONOMIC FIELD".

The Chinese contribution to the falsification of Marxism

In the light of these admissions, what we said earlier appears validated. So that, the CCP rightist tendency is less "deviated" from Marxism than the leftist one. Socialism "immediate implementation" in a backward country like China, where the bourgeoisie is still irreplaceable, is a statement of utopian extremism. Socialism is not to be realized through law decrees, but through a production relations' revolutionary transformation, whose starting point is represented by a high degree of means of production concentration. Now, in China, this is what is missing: the concentration of production, which is scattered in a feudal-like manner in the villages and just now takes a run towards an industry led accumulation.

For a whole century, while elsewhere there were laying modern industrialism foundations, the vast Chinese space was subjected by great powers' colonial domination. The latter, forcing the Manchu dynasty to indiscriminately "liberalize" Western goods imports, have systematically prevented the emergence of a Chinese national industry. As long as China's subjection to Western and Japanese imperialism lasted, in China there had not been an autonomous industrial capitalism. Commercially and industrially, the pre-revolutionary China was a kind "of large western industrial monopolies dependence"5. To build a national industrial machine, it had to be risen a protective wall that would have protected the nascent local industries from foreign goods competition. But foreign imperialism has never allowed it, frustrating every Chinese resistance effort through armed intervention. The long series of war - starting from the nefarious Opium War of 1840-42, ending with the Japanese-Chinese war 1937-45 and the one fought against the Americans in Korea - that China had to fight for over a century had no other purpose and invariably with disastrous consequences. Today, the protectionist wall, which will defend China against foreign invasion more effectively than the Great Wall did in the past, begins to rise and due to this shelter the industry starts to grow up.

The rightist tendency of the CCP is based evidently on a realistic consideration China's historical conditions, but reaches a conclusion that makes it completely out of the way of Marxism. Rejecting the "control policy and limitation of capitalist forces in the cities and in the countryside", it stands by Russian Menshevism side. It is known that the Mensheviks, starting from the correct principle that the anti-czarist revolution belonged to the democratic anti-feudal revolutions framework, opposed Bolsheviks, who stated that only workers and poor peasants dictatorship could overthrow Czarism and, by inserting itself into European and American proletariat anti-capitalist revolution, could establish Socialism. But the defeat of the "Chinese Menshevism" certainly did not mean the victory of Marxist communism. So therefore, the Chinese "Communists" have not to be compared to the Russian Bolsheviks for any reason, since Bolsheviks were those of Marxist communists fighting for socialism in a historical context of an anti-feudal revolution and succeeded in establishing a socialist state.

CCP "centrists", which then made up the dominant part holding the Party and government levers, had, for sure, to condemn and reject both Menshevik liberalism of the "rightists" current and lefties" childish extremism ", but did not reach a Bolshevik position. Indeed, the theoretical approach and the political program of the CCP establishment are just a hybrid mixture of the respective positions of the right and left. In practice, it digs the ground under the feet of its left by the request of the "construction of socialism", and ensures the rightists' support by carrying out a policy of alliance with the non-proletarian classes. In this way, the left tendency is neutralized by proclaiming the state's socialist nature and by the popular policy statement about the "building of socialism". But, at the same time by giving full satisfaction to rightists demands, which practically require bourgeoisie class rights to be recognized. The result is that those last few milligrams of unconscious Marxism - that existed in the ideological composition of both left and right positions- completely evaporated. We don't understand how it could be found even a trace of Marxism in a political platform of a party claiming to "build socialism" in alliance with the bourgeoisie and other non-proletarian classes.

This policy gains the Italian Communist Party full consent. The alliance between Chinese Communist Party and the "national" bourgeoisie, far from being seen as one of the usual revisionist "amendments" of Marxism, is presented as an "original contribution" to it. Here we go again! Marxism, going out to China, is "enriched" with new theoretical tools. And this would be due to a peculiarity of the Chinese bourgeoisie - its anti imperialism - that Marx or Engels obviously could not foresee.

On other occasions we sketched the broad outlines of modern Chinese history. We must rearrange that archive material, but even now it is enough to make us understand how Chinese bourgeoisie's anti-imperialism was and is still the ideological coating of its jealousy and impotent rage against the overseas capitalists who, not satisfied with just opening China's ports to international trade, forced the monarchy to keep import tariffs as low as to prevent the development of indigenous industry. The anti-imperialism Chinese bourgeoisie has nothing to do with the socialist struggle against imperialism. This conveys in the form of the political ideology, the Chinese bourgeoisie awareness of its inferiority towards the foreign capitalist bourgeoisie and the certainty that China's industrial future is resulting from the expulsion of the imperialists' economic influences. In other words, anti-imperialism is the colonial or ex-colonial countries bourgeoisie's nationalism. In order to measure how deep is the abyss dividing communism from anti-imperialism, is enough to consider that anti-imperialists see, as a result of the struggle against imperialism, the creation of independent states and the formation of national markets protected by protectionist barriers. While the communist revolutionaries - i.e. the Communists who remain faithful to Marx and Lenin and who do not think their doctrines need any correction or "enrichment" - call for the

destruction of all the states and all the national markets in the end of the victorious struggle against the capitalist imperialism.

For "communists" like Mao Zedong or Togliatti, there is a kind of anti-imperialism supposed to be shared by bourgeois and workers. But if we look closely, we realize that it is the bourgeois anti-imperialism, nursed by the bourgeoisie of the colonial countries.

In Scoccimarro's report, approved by the Central Comity of the Communist Party with the usual unanimity, we can read: "Both trends (CCP right and left) ignored a an essential peculiarity of Chinese situation: the existence of a middle class, politically and economically weak but anti-imperialist; therefore possible ally of the working class. The two trends have been rejected: the judgment of the Congress was that, following the one or the other of those ways, it would not build socialism, or at least not in the favorable conditions that we have today."

The Italian "communists" are very pleased that Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee, victoriously emerged from the fight against the extreme wings, established, as Scoccimarro reports, its policy in order to:

1) Develop in a peaceful and democratic way the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist revolution and the people's democratic dictatorship into the proletariat's dictatorship

2) Keep all alliances, including the one with the national bourgeoisie

3) Proceed gradually, through persuasion and conviction, towards the construction of socialism

4) Strengthen the cohesion of the democratic parties, to facilitate their action, to stimulate their politics and their control.

As you can see they are the same positions that Mao Zedong had to develop in the examined speech.

It is not very impressive for Scoccimarro that the transition from democratic revolution to the socialist one took place peacefully. Acting as nothing happened, he proclaims that: "The transition from the bourgeois-democratic revolution to the socialist revolution took place (in China) through a revision of the constitution, legally approved by the National Assembly". Obviously, to him and to the Central Committee of the Communist Party listening to him, the fact that an elected assembly, in which all China's classes, including the bourgeoisie were represented, decided by a vote to put an end to the revolution and give the starting signal to another one, was not something exceptional. Instead, it seems to us that if this statement were the truth, we should take all the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin and throw them into the fire. It's clear that, if we admit that a inter-classes elected assembly, even in China, may pave the way for a social revolution, we must say openly that we believe in the Marxist classism as we believe in fairy tales. But for the ICP Central Committee such considerations are dogmatic froths.

"The new fact - Scoccimarro says emphatically - is the maintenance of the alliance with the national bourgeoisie, a issue related to the transition to socialism by peaceful means. Here you will find the CCP most original contribution."

This shout reveals the bond that joins our Italian revisionists with the Chinese ones. In their desperate search of election platforms based on classes "common interests", the treacherous ICP leaders accept as "manna" from heaven the "original contributions" that come from Beijing. The Stalinists of yesterday

and Khrushchevites of today need ideological pretexts to justify the policy of alliance with the non-proletarian classes that they stubbornly pursue, both for incurable opportunism and subjection to the Russian state. The deformed doctrine of anti-imperialism meets the needs of the Russian Communists. Just that the bourgeoisie of any state tied to NATO starts to oppose the United States, the Russian Communists discover an anti-imperialist vocation. This eventuality is not to be discarded. World War II presented several cases of alliances front reversal. Just a few examples: the Petain regime in France, Quisling's one in Norway. Anyway, muscovite communism has not created the anti-imperialism doctrine in recent times. It was broadly applied even at time of Stalin-Hitler alliance, assuming that Germany's war pursued anti-imperialist aims. No one has forgotten that until Hitler's armies tore up the agreements and invaded Russia, Communist parties argued indeed that the struggle against imperialism of Western democracies was a common interest of Nazism and Communism in Moscow.

In a potential crisis of NATO - the looming movement called "neo-Atlanticism" within the Italian bourgeoisie represents just a symptom of it - the manipulation of anti-imperialism theory will considerably help the Russian-like Communist Parties. Once again, it will serve to confuse the proletariat and force it to bite the bullet of the patriotic union of classes against American imperialism. It will certainly be very useful to justify the open collaboration with the bourgeois established powers and the abjuration of the class struggle. Then the Russian-like Communist Parties will have carried out their dual task of counterrevolution agents - assigned to maintain" classes' "peaceful coexistence", and imperialist mercenaries permanently occupied to find allies for the generals of Russian NATO.

This explains why the Italian "Communist" Party CC warmly welcomes, imitating the example of allied parties, the unprecedented falsification of Marxism coming from the Beijing headquarters. But in the praxis, namely the reality of social relations, how does the policy of alliance with bourgeoisie is applied in China? Which benefits do Chinese workers get? It will be necessary to mention, and readers will forgive us, another passage taken from Scoccimarro's report. Here it is:

"Beside reactionary classes, in China there was a national bourgeoisie openly struggling with imperialism, the feudal forces and the large-scale capitalism (of course, the speaker alludes to the great foreign capitalism that subjugated and humiliated the Chinese bourgeoisie). Towards this national bourgeoisie, CCP applied a policy able to reconcile workers interests with those of the ruling class, in the common interest framework of reconstruction".

Please allow us to break in two the golden passage. So, in the end what's CCP's original contribution? It's merely social accommodation. How are Mao Zedong's "communists" managing to reconcile bourgeoisie and workers, capital and waged labor interests? We hear:

"Workers avoided unemployment and capitalists avoided the ruin, workers achieved improvements and capitalists realized benefits. Enterprises kept themselves alive and were able to develop aided by the State. It's the so-called policy of "using" the bourgeoisie capitalist."

Another pause. Policy of "using" the bourgeoisie! But who does use and who is used in the happy People's Republic? It is stated that capitalists' enterprises were saved from ruin by State help, i.e. by money. But then it is clear that "national" bourgeoisie "used" the people's state, that is the "dictatorship of the workers and peasants", i.e. the power that "is building socialism!"

Let’s go on: "Does this mean that class struggle disappeared? No, class struggle continues, but takes on new forms. The intervention of a State that made it possible for capitalists to save their companies - reduced almost to failure by the civil war- has also imposed limitations and conditions, such as to subdue the particular and individual interests to the general and national one. Limits and conditions concern the direction of the production, prices, government contracts, sales, the tax system, workers conditions, and so on. This is the so-called policy of "limitation", which is basically a control policy aimed at supporting to the healthy production activity and struggling against speculation, contract fraud, tax evasion, against the embezzlement of state assets, etc."

In essence, the people's state made available its finance and its own power to those capitalist companies reduced to bankruptcy. In doing so, it made itself alike all the states of the bourgeois world. Just think about what the Fascist regime after the democratic one did in Italy, through I.R.I.6, which was called precisely "the hospital of sick of companies." The mixed companies that the Chinese blurt out as the result of "new forms of class struggle" are nothing more than a carbon copy, apart from quantitative differences, of I.R.I.’s companies, where the state capital is happily married with private capital. One would expect that a people's state, builder of socialism, made on those companies different controls than those that are the ordinary administration of the bourgeois governments. Alas, it is not so. Among all the controls and limitations that Beijing government exerts on capitalists there is no one, which is not necessarily present in daily politics of modern bourgeois governments. In which capitalist state of Europe and America, government does not handle with production planning, analysis of price, tax revenue? A bureaucracy managing: orders, taxes, prices, etc. may vary from country to country: here less rapacious and more plodding, there more thief and slacker, but wherever it operates, it administers capitalism. We can also take Chinese Communists and their coaxers at their word, assume by true that Chinese bureaucracy has been unburdened from the traditions of "mandarinism", becoming a model administrator. And then? An economy based on the triad of: prices, wages and profits is unquestionably a capitalist economy. On the other hand, socialism is a mode of social life organization in which economic goods production process takes place outside the mercantilism and monetarism. Consequently, only who demolishes mercantilism "builds up" socialism. Now this colossal challenge is not possible at present in China, and not expected to be possible until the proletarian revolution will shake the foundations of the western imperialist states. Indeed, the general trend of the Chinese economy is completely opposite to the one that Marxism provides for societies going towards socialism. What is taking place in China is the race for the marketization of the entire national economy, in which, you know, there are vast areas where production is still at a pre-capitalist level.

Supporting the "healthy productive activities", fighting against the squandering of capitals, requiring a minimum of order in the sick of secular inertia Chinese administration, the people's state performs the single task to facilitate the development of economic forces that tend to: concentrate the means of production; transform the working masses into wage earners; commercialize all the social labor products. But these elements unequivocally make up the picture of modern capitalism. And in vain, the "communists" like Mao Zedong attach to it the label of socialism: Its content does not change.

If "communist" parties constituted an international organization with classist purpose, the shameless revisionism of CCP would be universally condemned and rejected. But nothing like that happens, indeed our communist parties applaud enthusiastically to the unheard falsifications of Beijing. Chinese revisionism betrays the international proletariat and the Chinese proletariat interests, as it serves the national interests of the Chinese state and, under the mask of alliance policy, allows the bourgeois

forces to develop freely, as was not possible during the China's subjection to the foreign imperialism. On the international stage, it puts abominable theoretical abortions around, giving only the result of increasing the proletariat ideological confusion, extending capitalism and imperialism lifetime.

Notes of the translator:

1 Italian Stalinist party's newspaper.

2 Eighteenth Century's Italian alchemist and magician, alias of Joseph Balsamo.

3 Our political current states that from the ’70 even in Africa and Asia we don’t have these conditions anymore.

4 Latin in the original. Meaning: "although no more needs to be added".

5 French in the original

6 "Istituto per la ricostruzione industriale", Institute for Industrial Reconstruction

The Fundamentals of Revolutionary Communism (1957)

INTRODUCTION

We need to begin, first of all, by explaining that the aim of our present exposition is not to systematically examine every economic, historical and political aspect of the communist scheme and its programme, nor to provide an exhaustive treatment of what we might call the 'connective tissue' which binds all these different aspects of communism together, by which we mean our original and completely distinctive way of resolving the questions of the relationship between theory and action, economy and ideology, determining causality and the dynamics of human society; that is, the method which Marxism, and Marxism alone, has used since it first appeared in the first half of the 19th century, and which, for brevity's sake, may be referred to as the philosophical aspect of Marxism, or dialectical materialism.

Moreover, if we tried to systematize these concepts in order to explain our particular view of the function of the individual in society, of the relation of both individual and society to the State, and the significance our doctrine attributes to class, we would be laying ourselves open to the usual accusation of abstractionism; we would thus risk being misunderstood, and appear as though we had forgotten a key element of our doctrine; namely, that the formulas needed to unravel these questions are not fixed for all time, but are variable within a succession of great historical periods, which for us are equivalent to different social forms and modes of production.

Therefore, though asserting the consistency with which Marxism has responded to events in different historical situations, our 're-proposition' will be closely linked to the wretched, world-encompassing,

phase which has been affecting the revolutionary movement against capitalism for the last few decades – and will certainly affect it for many decades to come. Our aim will be to set the cornerstones of our science back in their correct position, realign the ones which our enemies are most keen to undermine, and take action to compensate against their deforming tendencies.

In order to do that, we will focus on the one genuinely revolutionary doctrine's three main groups of critics, paying particular attention to the criticism which most stubbornly claims to be drawing on the same principles and movements as ourselves.

The reader might recall that a similar theme was developed during our 1952 meeting in Milan (Invarianza storica del marxismo nel corso rivoluzionario, in Programma Comunista, nos.1-5, 1953, and reproduced in nos. 5-6, 1969). The first part of the report lay claim to the historical invariance of Marxism which, it was maintained, is not a doctrine still in the process of formation but rather one completed in the historical epoch appropriate to it, that is, the period which witnessed the birth of the modern proletariat. It is a touchstone of our historical vision that this class will go through the whole arc of the rise and fall of capitalism using the same unaltered theoretical armoury. The second part of the report – "The False Expedient of Activism" – developed a critique of the perennial illusion of "voluntarism", portraying it as an extremely dangerous and degenerate form of Marxism which continues to be exploited whenever there's an outbreak of the opportunist disease.

SURVEY OF THE OPPOSITION

In the first part of that report, we divided our position's enemies into three camps: those who deny the validity of Marxism, those who falsify it, and those who claim to be bringing it up to date.

Today, the first group is represented nowadays by the open defenders and apologists of capitalism, who portray it as the ultimate form of human "civilization". We won't be paying too much attention to them; they have already received a knockout blow from Karl Marx and this frees us to apply the same knockout blows to the other two groups. (We put here in parentheses here, once and for all, that our declared "re-proposition" does not aspire so much to a definitive polemical victory, but aims, within the limits of this summary, to clearly define our positions and our characteristic features, and to show how they haven't changed at all in over a 100 years).

The defeat of Marx's deniers, today only doctrinal (tomorrow social) is confirmed by the fact that as every day goes by more and more of them are compelled to "steal" the truths discovered by Marx; but having found it impossible to destroy these truths when stated clearly (we revolutionaries have no such fears about their classical theses) they join the second group, the falsifiers, or (why not?) the modernizers.

The falsifiers are those who have been historically defined as "opportunists", revisionists or reformists, i.e. those who have eliminated from the integrated whole of Marx's theories – as though it were possible without destroying it in its entirety – the prospect of revolutionary catastrophe and the use of armed violence. However there are also many falsifiers among those who claim to accept violent rebellion: they are just as bad, and just as prone to the superstition of activism. What both of them share is an aversion to the identifying, discriminating feature of Marx's theory: armed force, no longer in the hands of particular oppressed individuals or groups, but in the hands of the liberated and victorious class, the class dictatorship, bugbear of social-democrats and anarchists alike. We might have

entertained the false hope in 1917 that this second group, rotten to the core, had been laid out by Lenin's blows; however, although we considered this victory as definitive in the realm of doctrine, we were also among the first to warn that the right conditions existed for the re-emergence of that infamous breed. Nowadays we can see it both in Stalinism, and in the Russian post-Stalinism which has been current since the 20th Congress of the Russian Communist Party.

Finally in the third category, the modernizers, we put those groups which, despite considering Stalinism to be a new form of the classical opportunism defeated by Lenin, attribute this dreadful reverse in the fortunes of the revolutionary labour movement to defects and inadequacies within Marx's original doctrine; which they claim to be able to rectify on the basis of evidence which historical evolution has provided subsequent to the theory's formation; an evolution, according to them, which contradicts it.

In Italy, France, and elsewhere there are many of these groups which have totally dissipated the first proletarian reactions against the terrible sense of disillusionment arising from the distortions and decompositions of Stalinism; from the opportunist plague which killed off Lenin's Third International. One of these groups is linked to Trotskyism, but in fact fails to appreciate that Trotsky always condemned Stalin for deviating from Marx. Admittedly, Trotsky also indulged rather too much in personal and moral judgements; a barren method as evidenced by the shameless way in which the 20th Congress has used precisely such methods to prostitute the revolutionary tradition much more than even Stalin himself.

Every one of these groups has succumbed to the disease of activism, but their enormous critical distance from Marxism means they have failed to see that they are making the same mistakes as the German Bernsteins; who wished to build socialism within parliamentary democracy by opposing their everyday practice to what they saw as the "coldness" of theory. The activism of these groups is likewise akin to that of Stalin's heirs, who have smashed to pieces Marx, Lenin and Trotsky's positions on the internationality of the socialist economic transformation in an indecent display of armed might, with which, whilst exacerbating their hunger for power, they claim to have built this new economy already.

Stalin is the theoretical father of this method of "enrichment" and "modernization" of Marxism, a method which, whenever and wherever it appears, destroys the vision of world-wide proletarian revolutionary strength.

Thus, whilst we adopt a standpoint which opposes all three groups simultaneously, it is the misleading distortions and arrogant neo-constructions of the third group which most urgently need to be addressed and set to rights. Being contemporary they are better known, but it is still difficult for today's workers, following the ravages of Stalinism, to relate them to the old historical traps; against which we propose one stance and one alone: a return to the fundamental communist positions of the 1848 Manifesto, which contains, in potential, our entire social and historical criticism, and which likewise demonstrates that everything which has happened since, all the bloody struggles and defeats experienced by the proletariat during the course of the last century, only serve to confirm the validity of what some people foolishly wish to abandon.

I. THE PARTY AND THE CLASS STATE AS ESSENTIAL FORMS OF THE COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

THE CENTRAL QUESTION OF POWER

In spite of the preventive counter-measures taken by the 20th Congress of the Russian Communist Party, the number of critics of the Moscow degeneration has continued to grow after the events in Hungary, Poland and Eastern Germany, and they are even to be found on the margins of the official Stalinist parties in the West, and include people like Sartre and Picasso who are highly dubious and petty-bourgeois in our opinion. Their not entirely unsuccessful condemnation of Moscow sounds something like this: abuse of dictatorship, abuse of the centrally-disciplined political party, abuse of the State power in its dictatorial form. All of them put forward similar remedies: more liberty, more democracy, socialism to be brought into the ideological and political atmosphere of liberal and electoral legality, and the use of State power in relation to different political proposals and opinions should be renounced. As usual, the main targets of our criticism are not those who hold this point of view because they openly advocate the bourgeois mode of production (sanctified by just such an ideological, juridical and political framework), but those who wish to graft such nonsense onto the trunk of Marxist doctrine.

We hold exactly the opposite point of view, so let's set the record straight immediately. The revolutionary movement, freed from servile admiration of the American "free World", freed from subjection to a corrupt Moscow and immune from the syphilitic putridity of opportunism, can only re-emerge by recovering its original radical Marxist platform, and by declaring that the content of socialism surpasses and negates such concepts as Liberty, Democracy, and Parliamentarism and reveals them to be means of defending and propping up Capitalism. But perhaps the supreme lie and main plank of counter-revolutionary thought is the notion of the State as neutral arbiter of class and party interests, and therefore also of a farcical freedom of opinion. Such a State, and such a freedom, are monstrous inventions that history has never known nor ever shall know.

Not only is it indisputable that Marxism established and declared all this right from its inception, but it must also be emphasised that the concept of the use of physical force against an enemy minority – or majority – presupposes the intervention of two essential forms contained within the Marxist historical scheme: Party and State.

A "Marxist historical scheme" exists, in other words, insofar as the Marxist doctrine is based upon the possibility of mapping out a pattern within history. If that pattern cannot be found, or is wrong, then Marxism will fall apart and its deniers will be right. As for the falsifiers and "modernisers" of Marxism, they would be highly unlikely to capitulate even if provided with evidence that their views were mistaken!

Those who oppose our thesis that Party and State are main, rather than merely accessory, elements within the Marxist scheme, and who prefer to insist that Class is the principal element, with party and State as accessory features of class history and class struggles (and as easy to change as the tyres on a car) are directly contradicted by Marx himself. In a letter to Weydemeyer (March 5, 1852) quoted by Lenin in State and Revolution, Marx wrote that the existence of classes wasn't discovered by him but by bourgeois economists and historians. It was other people who discovered Class struggles as well, which doesn't mean they were communist or revolutionary. The content of his doctrine, he said, resides in the historical concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a necessary stage in the transition from capitalism to socialism. Thus speaks Marx, and it is one of the rare times when he speaks about himself.

We are, therefore, not particularly interested in a working class which is statistically defined, and neither are we particularly interested in attempts to work out where the interests of the working class diverge from other classes (there are always more than two). What interests us is the class which has set up its

dictatorship, i.e. which has taken power, destroyed the bourgeois State, and set up its own State: that is how Lenin put it, shaming those in the 2nd International who had "forgotten" Marxism. How is it that Class can form the basis of a dictatorial and totalitarian State power, of a new State machine opposed to the old like a victorious army occupying the positions of the defeated enemy? Through what organ? The philistine's immediate answer is: a man, and in Russia Lenin was that man (whom they have the nerve to lump together with the wretched Stalin, denied today and maybe murdered yesterday by his worshippers). Our answer is quite different.

The organ of the dictatorship and operator of the State-weapon is the political class party; the party which, through its doctrine and its continuous historical action, has been potentially granted the task, proper to the proletarian class, of transforming society. We not only say that the struggle and the historical task of the class cannot be achieved without the two forms: dictatorial State, (i.e. the exclusion, as long as they exist, of the other classes which are henceforth defeated and subdued) and political party, we also say – in our customary dialectical and revolutionary language – that one can only begin to speak of class – of establishing a dynamic link between a repressed class in today's society and a future revolutionised social form, and taking into consideration the struggle between the class which holds the State and the class which is to overthrow it – only when the class is no longer a cold statistical term at the miserable level of bourgeois thought, but a reality, made manifest in its organ, the Party, without which it has neither life nor the strength to fight.

One cannot therefore detach party from class as though class were the main element and the party merely accessory to it. By putting forward the idea of a proletariat without a party, a party which is sterilized and impotent party, or by looking for substitutes for it, the latest corrupters of Marxism have actually annihilated the class by depriving it of any possibility of fighting for socialism, or even, come to that, fighting for a miserable crust of bread.

AN ERROR UNMASKED 100 YEARS AGO

As a result of their confused critique, today's "enrichers" of Marxism have made similar blunders, and have inadvertently ended up adopting the same bourgeois and petty-bourgeois insinuations which were made when the Russian Revolution was still following the classic Marxist line – admired even by the "enrichers" – in which Class, State, Party and Party members stood together on the same revolutionary plane, precisely because on these essential points there were no hesitations of any kind.

They fail to realize that in diluting the party and its function as the main revolutionary organ they declass the proletariat; which having been deprived of the ability to overthrow the ruling class, or even to mitigate its effects in restricted fields of activity, ends up helplessly shackled to it. They really think they have improved Marxism by having learnt from history a banal commonplace of the "don't push things too far"! variety, worthy of the pettiest shop-keeper. What they don't see is that it isn't a correction we're dealing with here but a liquidation; or rather, an inferiority complex born out of an impotent lack of understanding.

The Party form and the State form are key elements in the earliest Marxist texts; and are two fundamental stages in the epic development which the Communist Manifesto describes.

There are two revolutionary stages referred to in the chapter 'Proletarians and Communists'. The first stage (already touched on before in the first chapter 'Bourgeois and Proletarians') is the organisation of

the proletariat into a political party. This follows on from another very famous statement: every class struggle is a political struggle, but it is much clearer, and tallies with our thesis which states: the proletariat is a class in a historical sense when it has started to struggle politically as a party. In fact, the Manifesto states: 'This organisation of the proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party'.

The second revolutionary stage is the organisation of the proletariat into a ruling class. Here the question of power and the State arises. 'As we have seen above, the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class'.

A little further on we find Marx's blunt definition of the Class State: 'The proletariat organised as the ruling class'.

Perhaps we needn't point out here that another of the essential theses reinstated by Lenin, the eventual disappearance of the State, is also included in this famous early text. The general definition: 'Political power, properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another' underscores the classic assertions: the public power will lose its political character, classes and all class domination will disappear, even that of the proletariat.

Therefore Party and State are at the heart of the Marxist viewpoint. You either accept or reject it. Searching for the class outside of its Party and its State is a waste of energy, and depriving the class of them means turning your back on communism and the revolution.

But this foolish attempt, which the "modernizers" consider an original discovery of the post 2nd World War, had already been made before the Manifest, when it had been routed by Marx in his formidable polemical pamphlet against Proudhon: The Poverty of Philosophy. This pivotal work destroyed the notion (which in fact was very ahead of its time) that the social transformation and abolition of private property might be achieved without the need to engage in a struggle for political power. Finally there is the famous sentence: "Do not say that the social movement excludes the political movement", which leads on to our unequivocal thesis: by Politics we don't mean a peaceful ideological contest, or worse still, a constitutional debate; we mean "hand to hand conflict", "total revolution", and finally, as the poetess George Sand put it: "Le Combat où la mort".

Proudhon rejects the idea of political conflict because his view of the way societies change is fundamentally flawed: it doesn't involve the complete overthrow of capitalist relations of production; it is competition orientated, localised and co-operativist, and is trapped within a bourgeois vision of business enterprise and market. He might have proclaimed that property was theft, but his system, remaining a mercantile system, remains one which is property orientated and bourgeois. Proudhon's myopia about economic revolution is the same as today's "factory socialists", who duplicate in less vigorous form the old Utopia of Robert Owen; who wanted to liberate the workers by handing over to them the management of the factories, right in the middle of bourgeois society. Whether these people label themselves Ordinovists in Italy, or Barbarists in France, they are in the end, all of them, chips off the same Proudhonian block and deserve the same invective as Stalin: Oh Poverty of the Enrichers!

RESURRECTED AND TENACIOUS PROUDHONISM

In Proudhon's system we find individual exchange, the market, and the free will of the buyer and seller exalted above all else. It is asserted that in order to eliminate social injustice, all that is required is to

relate every commodity's exchange value to the value of the labour contained within it. Marx shows – and will show later, pitting himself against Bakunin, against Lassalle, against Duhring, against Sorel and against all the latter-day pygmies mentioned above – that what lies beneath all this is nothing other than the apologia, and the preservation, of bourgeois economy; incidentally, there is nothing different in the Stalinist claim that in a Socialist society, which Russia claims to be, the law of exchange of equivalent values will continue to exist.

In The Poverty of Philosophy, in a few succinct lines, Marx points out the abyss which lies between these by-products of the capitalist system and the tremendous vision of the communist society of the future. It is his reply to the society "built" by Proudhon, where unlimited competition and a balance of supply and demand achieve the miracle of ensuring that everyone gets the most useful and essential goods at "minimum cost", eternal petty-bourgeois dream of the idiotic servants of capital. Marx easily disposes of such sophistry and ridicules it by comparing it to the claim, given that when the weather is fine everybody goes for a walk, Proudhonian people go out for a walk to ensure fine weather.

"In a future society, in which class antagonism would have ceased, in which there will no longer be any classes, use will no longer be determined by the minimum time of production; but the social time of production devoted to different articles will be determined by the degree of their social utility".

This extract, one of the many gems that can be found in the classic writings of our great school, shows how shallow it is to maintain that Marx loved to describe capitalism and its laws, but never described socialist society for fear of lapsing into. .. utopianism. A view shared by Stalin and second-rate anti-Stalinists alike.

In fact, in their wish to emancipate the proletariat whilst preserving mercantile exchange, it is the Proudhons and Stalins who are the utopians; and the latest version of such attempts is Kruschev's reform of Russian industry.

The free, individual exchange, on which Proudhon's metaphysic is based leads to exchange between factories, workshops, and firms managed by workers, and results in the rancid banality which locates the content of socialism in the conquest of the factory by the local workers.

In his crusade to defend competition, old Proudhon was the precursor of that modern superstition – productive 'emulation'. Back in his day, the orthodox thinkers (unaware of being less reactionary that today's Krushchevs) used to say that progress arises from healthy 'emulation'. But Proudhon identifies productive 'industrial' emulation with competition itself. Rivals for the same object, such as 'the woman for the lover', tend to emulate one another. With a note of sarcasm, Marx observes: if the lover's immediate object is the woman, then the immediate object of industrial rivalry should be the product, not the profit. But since in the bourgeois world profit is the name of the game (and this is true a hundred years on) the alleged productive emulation ends up as commercial competition. And beneath the seductive smiles the Americans and Muscovites are currently casting in each other's direction, profit is still what they are both after.

Along with his defective view of the revolutionary society, Proudhon is the precursor of the worst aspects of today's fashionable "factory socialists": the rejection of Party and State because they create leaders, chiefs and power-brokers, who, due to the weakness of human nature, will inevitably be

transformed into a privileged group; into a new dominant class (or caste?) to live off the backs of the proletariat.

These superstitions about "human nature" were ridiculed by Marx a long time ago when he wrote in a short, pithy sentence: Monsieur Proudhon ignores that all history is nothing but a continuous transformation of human nature. Under this massive tombstone can be laid to rest countless throngs of past, present and future anti-Marxist idiots.

In support of our declaration that not even the most minor restrictions can be placed on the full and unqualified use of the weapons of Party and State weapons in the workers' revolution, and in order to get rid of these hypocritical scruples, we should add that in order to deal with the inevitable individual manifestations of the psychological pathology which proletarians and communists have inherited, not from human nature, but from capitalist society, with its horrible ideology and its individualistic mythology of the "dignity of the human person", there is only one organisation capable of providing an effective and radical remedy. That organisation is specifically the communist political party, both during the revolutionary struggle, and after it, when it assumes its most definitive function – that of the wielding of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Other types of organisations which think they can replace it must be rejected not only because of their revolutionary impotence, but because they are a hundred times more susceptible to the degenerating influence of the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie. And yet the criticism of these organisations, which they have been subjected to from all sides since time immemorial, should adopt a historical rather than a "philosophical" approach. And yet, it is still of prime importance to make a Marxist analysis of the justifications put forward by the proponents of these schemes, and clearly demonstrate that are influenced by an ideology which is essentially bourgeois in outlook, or even less than bourgeois, such as the views proposed by the pseudo-intellectuals who so dangerously infest the margins of the working-class movement.

The Party, which at an organisational level sets the non-proletarian at the same level as the proletarian, is the only form of organisation which can allow non-proletarians to arrive at the theoretical and historical position which is based on the revolutionary interests of the labouring class; finally, though only after much anguish and torment, these renegades from other classes will serve as revolutionary mines rather than as bourgeois booby-traps in our own ranks.

The party's superiority lies precisely in its overcoming of the disease of labourism and workerism. You join the party as a consequence of your own position in the hand to hand struggle between historical forces for a revolutionary social form; and your position as party member and militant is not merely a servile copy of your position "in respect to the productive mechanism", i.e. that mechanism which is created by bourgeois society and related "physiologically" to that society and to its ruling class.

II. THE PROLETARIAT'S ECONOMIC ORGANISATIONS: PALE SUBSTITUTES FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

A HISTORY OF IMPOTENT SYSTEMS

In our fight against the Stalinist betrayal, we have always considered its distortions of economic theory as a thousand times more serious than the "abuse of power" which so scandalised Trotskyists and Khruschevians, or the famous 'crimes' which world philistinism keeps on harking on about. In order to

combat these distortions, we always have recourse to Marx's classical thesis against Proudhon which appears in the first volume of Capital, chapter XXIV, note: "We may well, therefore, be astonished at the cleverness of Proudhon, who would abolish capitalistic property by enforcing the eternal laws of property that are based on commodity production".

Every criticism and 'improved' programme put out by all the various so-called anti-Stalinist groups relies on the ridiculous notion that there needs to be a detoxification – sterilisation as far as the revolution is concerned – of the Party and the State, forms (according to the extremely hackneyed thesis of 'the tyrant and his cronies') which were supposedly abused by Stalin because of his "insatiable lust for power". It is important show that all those who nurture this bigoted preoccupation (and who probably want to be leaders, and crave personal success, themselves) have succumbed, as far as economic and social matters are concerned, to the same reactionary illusion as Proudhon: they are blind to the fact that the historical opposition between communism and capitalism means that communism and socialism are opposed to mercantilism.

First of all we need to consider the historical evidence. This shows us that every interpretation which has attempted to repel the monsters of Party and political State, by putting forward new types of organisation to marshal the proletarian class in its struggle against capital and to establish a post-capitalist society, has been a miserable failure.

In the third part of this report, we will deal with economics, or rather we shall demonstrate that the goal, the programme, which all these "non-party" and "non-State" movements set themselves is not a socialist and communist society, but rather a petty-bourgeois economic pipedream, which has resulted in them all ending up bogged down in modern capitalism's game of Parties and States.

First of all, it must be recognised that all these attempts based on formulas or "recipes" for organisational miracle cures are clearly not Marxist. They echo the stale banalities of the political hucksters of fifty years ago, who used to treat the events of historical struggle as though they'd been selected from a trendy fashion magazine. According to these gossiping pedants the political club was the motive force of the French Revolution (Girondins, Jacobins), then along came the electoral parties, followed by the locally based organisations advocated by the anarchists. Then (let's say, around 1900) the fashionable thing becomes workers' occupational trade unions, with an inherent tendency to replace all the other organisational forms and use their revolutionary potential to set themselves up in opposition to Party and State (Georges Sorel). A very hackneyed refrain. Today (1957), another "self-sufficient" form – the factory council – is given pride of place under various guises by the Dutch "tribunists", Italian Gramscists, Jugoslavian Titoists, the so-called Trotskyists, and a number of other batracomiomachian "left-wing" groups.

Just one of Marx, Engels and Lenin's theses is enough to bury all this empty talk: "Revolution is not a question of forms of organisation".

The real issue is the clash of historical forces and the new social programme which will replace capitalism when its long cycle is over. Instead of discovering the goal scientifically, in determining factors of past and present, the old pre-Marxist utopianism invented it instead. The new post-Marxist utopianism eliminates the goal, and replaces it with the frantically active organisation (or in the words of Bernstein, chief social-democratic revisionist: "The aim is nothing: the movement is everything").

We shall briefly record the "proposals" of these fashion designers, who want to parade the battle-weary proletariat up the political catwalk with a new set of chains yoking it to capital.

THE SUPERSTITION OF THE LOCAL "COMMUNE"

Anarchist doctrines are the expression of the following thesis: centralised power is evil; and they assume that the entire question of the liberation of the oppressed class can be resolved by getting rid of it. But for the anarchist, class is only an accessory concept. He wishes to liberate the individual, the person, and thereby conforms with the programme of the liberal and bourgeois revolution. He only reproaches the latter for having installed a new form of power, failing to see that this is merely the necessary consequence of the fact that it didn't have as its content and motive-force the liberation of the person or the citizen, but the achieving of dominion of a new social class over the means of production. Anarchism, libertarianism – and even Stalinism, in its Westernised guise – is nothing other than classical revolutionary bourgeois liberalism plus something else (which they call local autonomy, administrative State, and entry of the working class into the constitutional powers). When such petty-bourgeois peccadilloes are grafted on to it, bourgeois liberalism, which in its time was a real and serious matter, becomes just an illusion with which to castrate the workers' revolution.

Marxism, on the other hand, is the dialectic negation of capitalist liberalism. It doesn't wish to keep part of capitalism in order to improve it here and there, but to crush it with the class institutions it has produced at the local, and especially centralised, level. Such a task can't be achieved by encouraging complete autonomy and independence, but only by the formation of a centralised and destructivist power, whose essential and specific forms are the Party and the State, and these forms alone.

The idea of freeing the individual, the person, and making him autonomous, boils down to the ridiculous formula of the subjective refractory individual, who shuts his eyes to society and its oppressive structure because he is convinced that he can't change it, or else he dreams about one day planting a bomb somewhere; the end result is contemporary existentialism which is unable to effect Society in the slightest.

This petty-bourgeois demand, which arises out of the anger of the small autonomous producer expropriated by big capital and therefore from the defence of property (which Stirner and other individualists consider an inviolable "extension of the individual") adapted itself to the great historic advance of the working masses, and over the course of time acknowledged some forms of organisation. At the time of the crisis in the 1st International (after 1870) there was a split between the Marxists and anarchists over the latter's refusal to recognise economic organisations, or even strikes. Engels established that economic trade-unions and strikes weren't enough to resolve the question of revolution, but that the revolutionary party should support them, inasmuch as their value (as already stated in the Communist Manifesto) lies in the extension of proletarian organisation towards a single, centralised form, which is political.

During this phase, the libertarians would propose an ill-defined local, revolutionary "commune", sometimes described as a force which struggles against the constituted power and asserts its autonomy by breaking all links with the central State, and sometimes as a form which manages a new economy. This idea wasn't new but harked back to the first capitalist forms which appeared at the end of the Middle-Ages: the autonomous communes, which existed in Italy and in German Flanders where a young bourgeoisie was fighting against the Empire. As always in such cases, events which were then

revolutionary, in terms of economic development, have today become an empty repetition disguised as false extremism.

For the anarchists, during over fifty years of commemorations, the model for this local organ was the Paris Commune of 1871. In Marx and Lenin's far more powerful and irrevocable analysis it is, on the contrary, history's first great example of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, of a centralised, though here only territorial, proletarian State.

The French capitalist State, as embodied in Thier's 3rd Republic, moved to crush proletarian Paris and eject it from its capital city, having prepared its assault from behind the Prussian army lines. After the desperate resistance and horrifying massacre, Marx was able to write that from that day onwards all the bourgeois national armies were in league against the proletariat.

It wasn't a question of reducing the historical conflict from a national to the communal level (just think of the inanity of a poor defenceless provincial town!) but of extending it onto an international scale. At the time of the 2nd International there even emerged a new version of socialism (impressing the restless mind of the young Mussolini) called "communalism", which aimed to create cells of the future society by conquering municipal administrations: not – alas – with dynamite like the anarchists, but by winning local elections. Since then, the relentless forces of economic development, well known to Marxists, have ensured that every local structure has become tangled in an ever more inextricable web of economic, administrative, and political ties with the central government: just think of the ridiculousness of each little rebel town council setting up its own radio and TV stations to annoy the hated central State!

The idea of organisations forming confederations of workers in each town, and each town declaring itself politically independent, is therefore now defunct. Bourgeois illusions about self-government still survive, however, and will continue to befuddle the minds, and paralyse the hands, of working class militants for a long time to come.

The other forms of workers' "immediate" organisation would have a longer and more complex history, with a tendency to get caught up in the craft and professional trade unions, industrial unions, and the factory councils. Insofar as such forms are proposed as alternatives to the revolutionary political party, the history of these movements and the doctrines which are more or less confusedly based upon them, coincide with the history of opportunism during the 2nd and 3rd Internationals. As we have covered the subject on numerous occasions elsewhere, we will give only a brief summary here, but we will remark that the European masses are still largely ignorant of their class's history, and they will really need to learn from the immense sacrifices which have been made one day, and treasure them,

The history of localism, and of so-called anarchist and libertarian communism, is the story of opportunism within the 1st International. Marx fought to free the International of these tendencies by means of both theoretical criticism, and hard organisational struggle against Bakunin and his intractable supporters in France, Switzerland, Spain and Italy.

Despite being able to draw on the rich historical experience of the Russian Revolution, many "left-wingers", and declared enemies of Stalinism, nevertheless still look to the anarchists for potential support. We therefore need to reiterate that libertarianism was the first of the diseases to infect the proletarian movement, and was the precursor to all later opportunisms (including Stalinism) in that it

falsified politics and history in order to attract the petty and middle bourgeois strata of society onto the proletarian side – despite the fact that these classes have always ruined everything, and been the source of every kind of calamity and error. What resulted from this approach wasn't proletarian leadership over the "popular masses", but destruction of any proletarian features of the general movement, and a reinforced enslavement of the proletariat to capital.

This danger has been denounced by Marxism since its earliest days, and it is extremely sad to hear people say that it can be dealt with more effectively now than in Marx's day because there are more facts available, whilst they meanwhile misinterpret what was already clear over a century ago. The "popular" version of working-class revolution used to horrify Engels, and he condemned it often. In the preface to "The Class Struggles in France", for instance, he wrote: "After the defeats of 1849 we in no way shared the illusions of the vulgar democracy (...) This vulgar democracy reckoned on a speedy and finally decisive victory of the "people" over the "tyrants"; we looked to a long struggle after the removal of the "tyrants", among the antagonistic elements concealed within this "people" itself".

As far as Marxist doctrine is concerned, from that time on it was equipped with the basic concepts and principles needed to criticise all of today's popular variants of opportunism; including the models put forward by groups such as the Barbarists who in their lengthy palinodes dedicated to the Hungarian events have presented a "popular" movement as a class movement.

Those who substitute "people" for class, by prioritising the proletarian class above the party, believe they are rendering it a supreme homage whilst in fact they are declassing it, drowning it in "popular" confusion, and sacrificing it on the altar of counter-revolution.

THE MYTH OF THE REVOLUTIONARY TRADE UNION

By the end of the 19th century, the political parties of the proletarian class in Europe had become large and powerful organisations. Their role model was the German "Sozialdemokratie", which after a long struggle had forced the bourgeois Kaiserist State to repeal Bismark's special anti-socialist laws, and had also steadily increased its share of the votes and the parliamentary seats at each successive general election. This party was supposed to be the depository of Marx and Engel's tradition, and to this fact was due the prestige it enjoyed within the new 2nd International when it was set up in 1889.

But in this party a new current, Revisionism, had been growing with Eduard Bernstein as its main theoretician. This tendency openly stated that bourgeois society, during the relatively peaceful international and social period which followed the Franco-Prussian War, had developed new aspects which were pointing to "new ways to socialism", different from Marx's.

Be it no wonder to today's young militants that it was this very same phrase which was used to launch the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956: exactly the same words, but with everybody thinking they were brand new and hot off the press! The Italian revisionist Bonomi, expelled from the party in 1912 and later appointed as Secretary of State for War in Giolitti's cabinet, would end up shooting not fascists, but the proletarians who were fighting against them. Later on he would even became one of the leaders of the anti-fascist Republic. Before his expulsion he wrote a book which boasted the title: The New Ways to Socialism. Giolitti drew the fine sentence that socialists had relegated Marx to the attic from this same book. Today's international communist left movement is directly derived from the left fraction groups who, all those years ago, replied to this provocation by naming their journal The Attic.

The revisionists maintained that given the new developments within European, and world capitalism, neither insurrectional struggles nor the use of armed violence and the revolutionary conquest of power, were needed to achieve the passage to socialism and to achieve working-class emancipation; they therefore totally excluded Marx's central thesis: the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

Instead of Marx's "catastrophic vision" there would be legal and electoral activity and legislative changes in Parliament. It even got to the stage where socialist MPs were participating in bourgeois cabinets (Possibilism, Millerandism) in order to pass laws favourable to the working class, despite the fact that every international congress up to the 1st World War had consistently condemned such tactics, and despite the expulsion from the parties of collaborationists like Bonomi (though not the Bernsteins, nor the Turatis in Italy).

This political and theoretical degeneracy of the socialist parties, which we won't go into detail about here, led to a wave of distrust towards the organisational form of the party amongst large sections of the proletariat, and provided a favourable atmosphere for a range of anarchist and anti-Marxist critics. To begin with, only a few currents of minor importance fought the revisionists on the grounds of strict conformity to Marx's original doctrine (radicals in German, intransigent revolutionaries in Italy; and groups elsewhere dubbed "hard", "strict", "orthodox" etc.).

These currents, which in Russia were represented by the bolshevism of Plekhanov and Lenin (although during the war Plekhanov turned out to be just as bad as the German Kautsky) never ceased for an instant to defend the Party-form (though only Lenin would clearly defend the State-form, that is to say, the Dictatorship-form). But for about ten years or so, there had been another current fighting against social-democratic revisionism, namely revolutionary syndicalism. Georges Sorel was their main theoretician and leader, even if earlier antecedents certainly existed. It was a movement which was particularly strong in the Latin countries: to begin with they fought inside the socialist parties, but later split off, both because of the vicissitudes of the struggle and in order to be consistent with a doctrine which rejected the necessity of the party as a revolutionary class organ.

The primary form of proletarian organisation for the syndicalists was the economic trade union, whose main task was supposed to be not only leading the class struggle to defend the immediate interests of the working class, but also preparing, without being subject to any political party, to lead the final revolutionary war against the capitalist system.

SORELIANS AND MARXISM

A complete analysis of the origins and evolution of this doctrine, both as we find it in Sorel's work, and in the multifarious groups which in various countries subscribed to it, would take us too far off our track; at this point we shall therefore just discuss its historical balance sheet, and its very questionable view of a future non-capitalist society.

Sorel and many of his followers, in Italy as well, started off by declaring that they were the true successors of Marx in fighting against legalitarian revisionism in its pacifist and evolutionist guise. Eventually they were forced to admit that their tendency represented a new revisionism; left rather than right wing in appearance but actually issuing from the same source, and containing the same dangers.

The part of Marx's doctrine which Sorel reckoned to have retained was the use of violence and the struggle of the proletarian class against bourgeois institutions and authority, especially the State. Thus he appeared to be in strict conformity with the Marxist historical critique according to which the contemporary State which emerged from the bourgeois revolution, in its democratic and parliamentarian forms, remains an organisation perfectly adapted for the defence of the dominant class, whose power cannot be removed by legal means. The Sorelians defended the use of illegal action, violence, and the revolutionary general strike, and raised the latter to the rank of the supreme ideal, precisely at a time when in most socialist parties such slogans were being fiercely repudiated.

The culmination of the Sorelian theory of "direct action" – that is, without legally elected intermediaries between proletarians and the is the bourgeoisie – is the general strike. But in spite of it being conceived of as occurring simultaneously in all trades, in all cities of a particular country, or even on an international scale, in reality the insurrection of the syndicalists is still restricted, insofar as it takes the form of actions by individuals, or at most, actions by isolated groups; in neither case does it attain the level of class action. This was due to Sorel's horror of a revolutionary political organisation necessarily taking on a military form, and after victory, a State form (proletarian State, Dictatorship); and since Sorelians don't agree with Party, State, and Dictatorship they would end up treading the same path as Bakunin had thirty years before. The national general strike, assuming it to be victorious, would supposedly coincide (on the same day?) with a general expropriation (the "expropriating strike"), but such a vision of the passage from one social form to another is as nebulous and weak as it is disappointing and ephemeral.

In Italy in 1920 – in an atmosphere of general enthusiasm for Lenin, for the party, for taking power, and for the "expropriating dictatorship" – this superficially extreme slogan of the "expropriating strike" was adopted by both maximalists and ordinovists; this was one of many occasions when we had to defend Marxist positions strenuously and pitilessly, even at risk of being accused of bridling the movement.

Sorel and his followers are actually far removed from Marxist determinism, and the interaction which occurs between the economic and political spheres is a dead letter to them. Since they are individualist and voluntarist, they see revolution as an act of force which can only take place after an impossible act of consciousness. As Lenin demonstrated in What is To Be Done?, they turn Marxism on its head. They treat consciousness and will as though they came from the inner-self, from the "person", and thus, in one deft movement, they sweep away bourgeois State, class divisions, and class psychology. Since they are unable to understand the inevitable alternative – capitalist dictatorship or communist dictatorship – they evade the dilemma in the only way that is historically possible: by re-establishing the former. And whether this is done consciously or not may be a burning issue for them but, frankly, we are not that interested.

We are not really interested in following the logical evolution of Georges Sorel's thinking after that: idealism, spiritualism, and then a return to the womb of the Catholic Church.

THE TEST OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

As already stated above, we certainly can't provide here an in-depth analysis of the crisis of socialism which occurred in August 1914 at the outbreak of the First World War. We just need to see if the crisis affected only the political parties, or the trade unions, and indeed the syndicalist ideologists, as well. And the latter, although never thinking of themselves as a party, were in fact precisely that; indeed their

members were drawn mainly from the petty-bourgeois class, despite their superstitious attachment to notions of working-class purity. At that time, in typical anarchist fashion, the syndicalists consisted of a variety of ill-defined "groups" which declared themselves to be non-political, non-electoral, non-parliamentary, and non-party etc, etc. And we have plenty of contemporary examples to show that this show of chaste reserve with regard to political parties and revolutionary politics doesn't stop these free and easy "groupists" from joining bourgeois and opportunist parties, or even fighting in electoral campaigns for filthy class traitors. Autonomy rules!

There is no doubt – indeed it would form the basis for the restoration of revolutionary Marxism in Lenin's time – that the biggest European socialist parties had displayed a shameless bankruptcy. We need hardly recall that Lenin, unable to accept the news, would crush the newspapers underfoot as he furiously paced about his small Swiss room like a caged wild animal, unapproachable even to his incomparable wife for three whole weeks.

We retract not a single word we have ever said, or action we have taken, against these betrayers of socialism, who voted for war credits, and who entered the "union sacrée" cabinets. However in Italy, facilitated by a nine month delay (Italy entered the war on May 24th, 1915) the struggle to prevent the party leaders from deserting proletarian positions lasted until just days before the mobilisation order was issued. The leadership of the socialist party held firm, and although the reformist current predominated in the parliamentary group and was opposed to calling a general strike, it nevertheless pledged to vote against the Government and its war credits and actually did so, and unanimously at that. In fact it was the leaders of the General Confederation of Labour (CGL – broadly the Italian equivalent of the TUC) who took up the most defeatist position, and it was they we had to unmask in their sabotage of the strike proposal: although they said they feared the strike's failure, in fact they feared its success, and purely for bourgeois patriotic reasons.

In all countries it was the big trade unions which dragged the political parties down this road of incommensurable shame. Such it was in France, in Germany, and in Austria. In England, the Labour Party, that perennial bugbear and champion of counter-revolution to which the trade unions are affiliated, stepped bodily into the ranks of the war-mongers whilst Britain's small socialist party took up a firm opposition stand.

Sorelian critics of parliamentarism had quite rightly denounced the disgraceful manoeuvrings of worker MPs, but they failed to realise that these gentlemen, as they roamed around the bourgeois government lobbies, were being forcibly petitioned by trade union organisers to obtain material concessions for their members. Lenin warned that the betrayal and cowardice of the revolutionary leaders was not a cause of Opportunism, which was at its most virulent during the 1914 crisis, but rather an inseparable manifestation of opportunism, and indeed this had been the view of Marx and Engel ever since their letters about the German counter-revolution in 1850. Opportunism is a social fact, a deeply entrenched compromise between classes, and it would be sheer madness to ignore it. Capitalism would later offer a pact of mutual collaboration to certain sections of industrial workers who were exempted from military service. The Railway Workers Union in Italy would oppose the CGL's repudiation of the general strike (and in doing so put their members' exemption from military service at stake) and were only able to do so because of their political strength, and the close ties which this combative workers' organisation had forged with the radical wing of the Marxist party.

During the crisis in 1914, and during many other analogous though less sensational ones, the trade unions (we refer to their leadership, who the workers can only get rid of after years of struggle, ditto, party militants their leaders, and socialist electors their MPs) were veritable shackles on the class parties. The Sorelians, obviously not having seen this impressive array of evidence, proposed to remedy revisionism by boycotting parties and seeking refuge in the workers' unions.

The situation was worst in France and Italy, where there were even anarcho-syndicalist trade-union confederations. In France they were in the majority and led by Jouhaux, Sorelian to the marrow, and sworn enemy of the party and the socialist MPs group. But, as the First World War broke out, Jouhaux would subscribe to the jingoist politics of the socialist parliamentary deputies, and drag his organisation and its mass membership along behind him, barring a few, negligible exceptions. But he was not the only one. He would be joined by the famous anarchist scholar Elisée Reclus, and by the even more famous (total idiot) Gustave Hervé, leader of the European anti-militarists, editor of La Guerre Sociale, and organiser of the "citoyen Browning" (revolver-citizen), who had earlier felt obliged to stick the drapeau tricolore dans le fumier, the French flag into the dungheap. Hervé would change the title of his journal to "Victoire", start an incredibly venomous campaign against the "boches", and finally end up joining le fumier himself; the best place for him.

Nothing better emerged from the Sorelian ranks than from the French Socialist Party (S.F.I.O) which, even then, was not worth a brass farthing as far as Marxism was concerned. The "anti-party" syndicalists ended up like messieurs Guesde and Cachin; who came to buy Mussolini's newspaper with the Francs of the French State (Cachin later became a communist, and then a Hitler supporter, and then a staunch anti-fascist).

In Italy, the Confederation of Labour was confronted with the Italian Syndicalist Union. Although thoroughly imbued with a shallow reformism, the former had never complied with war politics. But the anarcho-syndicalist union had split into two currents, one against the war, the other with De Ambris and Corridoni openly interventionist.

The socialist party acquitted itself rather better: when Mussolini walked out in October 1914, at the Milan section's expulsion meeting not one voice was raised on his behalf.

THE FACTORY ORGANISATION

In the first place, the idea that the proletarian political party should be sacrificed in order to shift the centre of revolutionary gravity towards the trade unions involves a complete abandonment of the basic tenets of Marxist theory. It is thus a view which only receives support from those who have abjured Marxism's philosophical and economic creed (as did the Sorelians eventually, and the Bakunians right from the start); it is a view, moreover, which history has shown to be totally baseless. The argument that political parties allow non-working class elements to join, and that these elements end up in the executive posts, whilst this never occurs (simply not true) in the trade unions, flies in the face of the most resounding historical evidence to the contrary.

The narrowness of the trade-unionist perspective, when compared to the political, resides in the fact it is restricted within a trade, rather than a class, context, and is affected by a rigid, mediaeval separation of crafts. Neither should the recent transformation of trade – or professional – trade-unions into industrial unions be regarded as a significant step forward. In this latter form, for instance, a carpenter

operative who works in an automobile plant has to join the metal-workers union rather than the carpenters' union. But both forms are equally characterised by the fact that amongst the rank-and-file, contact between the union members is restricted is to dealing with the problems of just one narrow sector of production rather than that of society as a whole. Bringing about a synthesis of the various interests of local, professional and industrial proletarian groups, can only be accomplished by an apparatus which includes officials from the various organisations.

The different sectional interests of the proletarian class can therefore only be overcome in the party organisation, which avoids dividing its members according to trade or profession.

Not long after the First World War, with the large trade unions and confederations clearly co-responsible with the socialist MPs and parties for the betrayal of the socialist cause, there was a widespread tendency to overestimate a new form of immediatist organisation which had arisen amongst the industrial proletariat: the factory council.

The theorizers of this system maintained that it expressed, better than any other, the historical function of the modern working class. The defence of the workers' interests would pass out of the hands of the trade union and be entrusted to the local factory council, with the latter connected to other councils via a "councils system", operating at the local, regional and national levels as well as within the different sectors of industry. There was, however, a new demand which arose: the control, and eventually management, of production. Factory councils would demand a say not only in setting wages, hours, and everything else to do with management-labour relations, but also a say in the technical-economic operations decided hitherto by management, i.e., production quotas, acquisition of raw materials, and disposal of the products. A whole range of "conquests" of this nature would lead to total management by the workers, that is to say the effective elimination and expropriation of the employers.

In Italy at least, this enticing mirage was immediately described by revolutionary Marxists as extremely deceptive. It was a view which ignored the question of centralised power, insofar as the bourgeois State was supposed to co-exist (an early example of coexistence between wolf and lambs!) with an advanced degree of workers' control; or even with a network of workers' management spread over a number of industrial concerns.

All this was nothing other than a new revisionism, a worse version of reformism. This hypothetical scheme, insofar as it involved a network of locally managed operations, was even worse than that of the classical revisionists, who at least accepted the need for socially planned production, even though they entrusted it to a political State which was supposed to be conquered by the working class through peaceful means.

From a doctrinal perspective it is easy to establish that such a system is just as anti-Marxist as Sorelian syndicalism. In a very similar way we see those two suspect characters – class party and class State – totally banished from the political stage; at least the classical revisionists just confined themselves to just open sabotage of class violence and class dictatorship! In essence, though, it is revolution and socialism which are eliminated in both cases.

This banal suspicion of the Party and State forms continued to gain ground over the decades that followed, and the "content of socialism" came to be confused with these two postulates: workers'

control of production, and workers' management of production. And all this stuff was supposedly the "new Marxism".

Did Marx ever say what "the content of socialism" was? No. Marx never replied to such a metaphysical question. The content of a receptacle can just as well be water as wine, or indeed a rather more unpleasant liquid. As Marxists, it is appropriate to ask: what is the historical process which leads to socialism? What relations will exist between individuals "under socialism", i.e. within a society which is no longer capitalist?

To such questions it would be a nonsense to reply: control of production, management of the factory, or as is so often said: autonomy of the working class.

For over a century now, we have defined the historical process which leads from fully industrialised capitalist society to Socialism as follows: formation of the proletarian class, organisation of the proletariat into a class political party, organisation of the proletariat into the ruling class. The control and management of production can only start after reaching the latter stage. This will occur not in individual factories managed by staff councils, but within society as a whole, managed by the class State with the class party at its helm.

If the ridiculous search for "content" is applied to a fully socialist society, we have all the more reason for saying that the formulae "workers' control" and "workers' management" are lacking in any content. Under socialism, society isn't divided into producers and non-producers any more because society is no longer divided into classes. The "content" (if we have to use such an insipid expression) won't be proletarian autonomy, control, and management of production, but the disappearance of the proletarian class; of the wage system; of exchange – even in its last surviving form as the exchange of money for labour-power; and, finally, the individual enterprise will disappear as well. There will be nothing to control and manage, and nobody to demand autonomy from.

Those who have taken up these ideologies have shown their total inability, both theoretically and in practice, to struggle for anything beyond a pale imitation of bourgeois society. What they really want is their own autonomy from the power of the class party and the revolutionary dictatorship. When Marx was still very young, and imbued with Hegelian ideas (ideas which these people still believe in even now) he would have answered that those who seek proletarian autonomy find instead bourgeois autonomy, raised up as an eternal model of mankind (see On the Jewish Question).

HISTORY OF "FACTORY SOCIALISM"

The ancestors of the Italian ordinovist factory councils are the old anglo-saxon craft-guilds, which were formed not to fight against bourgeois employers but against feudal lords and rival guilds.

As soon as the Russian Revolution came to no longer be considered as an initial phase of the European proletarian revolution, but as a struggle of the peasantry to "seize the land" instead, this wretched distortion would give rise to the superficial parallel of "seizing the factories". In such ways as this does one end up wandering off the via maestra which leads to the conquest of power and the conquest of society.

Elsewhere in our press we have examined how Lenin settled the Russian agrarian and industrial questions, and we won't go into it here. Syndicalists and anarchists everywhere would withdraw their

support from the Russian revolution when they realised that Lenin saw "workers' and peasants' control" as subsidiary to the main aim of gaining control of central power; as a slogan to invoke in enterprises which the Russian State had not yet managed to expropriate. Attempts at achieving autonomous management of the factories by their operatives had to be repressed, sometimes by force, in order to avoid pointless economic damage; damage which was anti-socialist insofar as it adversely effected the military and political direction of the civil war.

Confusion between the State of the workers' councils, with the councils functioning as political and territorial organs, and the fictitious ordinovist factory Council State, with each council managing itself independently, was rapidly dispelled. On this subject we need only read the Theses of the 2nd Congress of the Communist International on Trade Unions and Factory Councils which define the tasks of such bodies before and after the revolution. The Marxist solution to the problem is the penetration of these organisms by the revolutionary party, and their subordination to (rather than autonomy from!) the revolutionary State.

We shall now briefly refer to the Italian experience. In 1920, the famous episode of the factory occupations took place. The workers, openly dissatisfied with the cowardly attitude of the big unions federations, and forced into action by the economic situation and the injurious demands imposed by the industrialists after the initial post-war euphoria, barricaded themselves inside the factories, set about organising their defence and expelled the management. In some places they tried to keep the factories running and even to dispose of the products they had manufactured through regular sale.

This movement might have gone on to achieve great things at this crucial time if the Italian proletariat had had a strong and resolute revolutionary party. Instead, following the 1919 unitary congress in Bologna and the sensational election victory with 150 socialist deputies elected to parliament, the Socialist Party was going through a profound crisis as the false extremism of Serrati's "maximalists" took hold. It was a crisis which wouldn't be resolved until January 1921, when the communist current seceded to form a new party at Livorno.

In the P.S.I (Italian Socialist Party) of the time, the procedure was always to refer decisions to various hybrid committees. These would include representatives of the party leadership (along with some of its peripheral organisations, contested by the various currents), socialist MPs, and the leaders of the Confederation of Labour. In vain did the Left declare that it was the party alone which was authorised to deal with problems relating to the political struggle of the working class. The socialist MPs and the trade-union leaders should be bound by its instructions since they were members of the party. It was a case of needing to take action on a nationwide scale, action which was about as political as you can get.

Moreover, as a veritable orgy of false extremist positions swept the country, we had proof of how damaging it was to the party to be lacking a solid doctrinal platform. The great factory occupation movement of the time led to the mistaken notion that the Soviet, or workers' council, system as established in Russia, could be immediately extended to Italy; indeed even open adversaries of the revolutionary conquest of power talked about proclaiming it. But Lenin and the World congresses had taken a very clear stand on the issue, and stated that Soviets are not bodies which can coexist with the traditional State. On the contrary, they arise when an open struggle for power is taking place, when their function becomes that of replacing the executive and legislative organs of a bourgeois State teetering on the verge of collapse. But all this would be forgotten, and in the midst of general confusion

and an absurd alliance between pacifists and revolutionaries, the movement would collapse into impotence.

The bourgeois leader Giolitti was much more clear-headed though. Despite the Law allowing him to deploy troops to expel the workers occupying the industrial plants, and despite being spurred on to do so by the forces of the right and of nascent fascism, he purposely refrained from issuing such orders. The workers and their organisations, occupying factories which had come to a virtual standstill, didn't look as though they were about to burst out of the factories with arms in hand, attack the bourgeois forces, and occupy the State and Police headquarters; hunger alone would be enough to undermine their untenable position. With Giolitti hardly needing to fire a single shot, the movement collapsed of its own accord. After a few isolated incidents, the bourgeois managers and bosses were soon back in charge of the factories and running them in exactly the same way as before. The storm had abated, and bourgeois power and privilege had escaped relatively unscathed.

The whole history of post-war Italy clearly shows that the proletarian struggle, even under favourable conditions, is doomed to failure unless it is led by a revolutionary party capable of settling the question of power in a radical way; a fact equally borne out by Fascism's history.

It was the final bankruptcy of that system of ideas which rejects revolution as a means to gain political control of society; which rejects launching the attack on the bourgeois State and establishing the Dictatorship of the Proletariat; which wishes to replace these measures with the petty delusion that workers will conquer and control the factories, and supposedly organise themselves into factory-councils which embrace the entire workforce, with no heed taken of political positions or party stand.

The Italian Ordinovist current had not yet gone so far as declaring the political party unnecessary since it broadly agreed with the 111rd International tactic of establishing contacts with other proletarian parties, even reformist and opportunist ones, since it supported the idea of a class-front composed of manual workers, industrialists and the petty-bourgeoisie. But future events, and the triumph of opportunism within Italy and the Communist International, would show that the doctrine of self-sufficient factory councils (with their own little self-contained revolutions), was a very dangerous starting point; as indeed was the illusion that communist victory was assured as soon as individual enterprises had passed from the hands of the management into those of their employees. In fact Communism involves the reorganisation of the whole of human life, and the old productive model – to which the spontaneously arisen networks of trade-union and factory based organisations subscribe – needs to be denounced, and then totally destroyed from top to bottom.

A FUTILE RETURN TO VACUOUS FORMULAS

The great Russian tragedy has been accompanied at every stage of its involution by attempts to breathe life into new forms of proletarian organisation. And this in despite of the fact that political party and Dictatorship of the Proletariat were considered central factors by the great pioneers of the October Revolution; central to their immense organisational effort which carried them to the forefront of the proletarian, anti-capitalist, advance which menaced capitalism at the end of the First World War.

No useful contribution towards a theoretical and practical revival of the class movement will ever emerge from an anxious mistrust about the Party and State forms of organisation. These are forms which are absolutely indispensable if the relations of class domination are to be over-turned once and

for all. The childish objection to these forms boils down to the idea that man is doomed by his very nature to resort to the exercise of power, whether defending the cause of forces within society (as part of a "hierarchical" system authorised to protect it), whether to defend the interests of individuals, or simply in order to satisfy an insatiable lust for power on the part of those who are invested with power within the party and the State.

Marxism demonstrates the non-existence of such a ridiculous fate; moreover, it states that the actions of individuals depend on forces developed by general, wider interests, and this is e just as much when individuals react as single molecules of the mass acting in concert with others, as – and above all – when they are brought together into groups, at crucial junctures in the historic struggle, by the general dynamics of society.

Either we read history as Marxists, or we relapse into scholastic masturbations which explain great events as due to monarchical manoevrings over hereditary claims and the transmission of the crown to heirs, or as the exploits of dashing buccaneers, urged on to perform great exploits in the quest for personal glory and posthumous immortality!

For us, and for Marx, it is just not possible for the lone individual, taking conscious foresight as his starting point, to go out and 'mould' society and History in conformity with his motive will. And this goes not only for the poor devil of a molecule floundering about in the social magma, but even more so for kings and the queens, for those invested with high office and honours, for those with dozens of titles and initials after their names. It is indeed particularly these people who don't know what they want, don't achieve what they thought they would, and to whom, if you'll excuse the noble expression, historical determinism reserves its biggest kick up the backside. In fact, if you accept our doctrine, leaders are more puppets of history than anyone else.

When viewed in the context of a succession of productive forms, each one replacing the one before, it will be seen that all revolutions go through a particularly dynamic stage in which the combatants, who at this point appear as the expression of socially determined forces pushing them towards a greater good, will as a general rule put up with any number of sacrifices and privations: there will be those, both in the ranks and in the higher profile roles, who will give up their lives, and their "hunger for power", whilst obeying the still un-deciphered forces which accompany the birth of every new social form.

In the final phase of each form, this social dynamism evaporates due to the fact that a new, opposed, social form is arising within the old. At this point there appears a conservative defence of the traditional form which tends to manifest itself as an underwriting of personal egoisms, individual belly-stuffing, and open corruption; bribe-takers, praetorians, feudal courtiers, debauched clerics, and the shady speculators and corrupt accountants of today's bourgeois regime are some examples.

But even though capitalism's hired thugs and scullery maids may be bogged down in a social mire of cynicism and existential arrogance, the work of defending capitalism and preventing its collapse continues as before. The organised State and political party networks are strongly committed to this task, and at key historical junctures they have demonstrated that they are quite capable of welding themselves into a unified, centralised, counter-revolutionary force (and if you can see beyond all the bogus intellectual hypocrisy, this is clearly also the case in contemporary Britain, America and Russia, and not just in fascist Germany and Italy). And since they are aware that the source of our power is the

knowledge we have of the 'geological stratification' of the historical underground, they even try and steal that from us as well!

Us, of all people, should we really be so unwarlike as to dishonour the power and the form which this unstoppable energy of ours will have to assume, namely: the revolutionary party and the iron State of the Dictatorship? Within these organisational structures particular individuals will hold certainly key positions, of course, but their duty, far from engaging in personal manoeuvring and secret intrigues and conspiracies, will be to rigorously abide by the tasks which the historical process has set these organs of irreversibly revolutionising the economic and social forms.

The assertion by certain organisations, different from the party, that they can guarantee against the degeneration of leaders, or other official appointees, is tantamount to a repudiation of our entire doctrinal edifice.

In fact the network of "leaders" and "hierarchs" in these organisations is the same as in the party, and in general it isn't even solely composed of workers. And even if they were, History has taught us the unhappy truth that the ex-worker who leaves his job to work in the trade-union bureaucracy is generally more likely to betray his class than somebody originating from the non-proletarian classes. Examples? We could provide thousands of them.

This entire palinode is generally presented as a move towards, an establishing of tighter bonds, of closer links, with the "masses". But who are the masses? They are the working class when deprived of historic energy, i.e. without a party to set them on the historic revolutionary path; a class, therefore, tied to and resigned to its state of subjection and tied to the way it happens to be distributed throughout the bourgeois social organism. And in certain historic situations, the masses may include also the semi-proletarian layers which have overflowed from the labouring "class".

Our approach to this issue, in total conformity with the dictates of the Marxist school, is to show that a dual historical moment occurs in such situations, and by making the proper distinction between the two aspects we can synthesise everything we have said before.

In the period before the bourgeois revolution proper breaks out, when feudal forms still need to be brought crashing down, as for example in Russia in 1917, elements amongst these still un-proletarianized "people" confront the power of the State and contest society's leadership. At certain decisive moments these strata tend to side with the proletarian class, adding not only a numerical advantage, but also contributing a potentially revolutionary factor which can be used during the transitional phase; on condition, that is, that the party of the workers' dictatorship has a clear historical vision, a powerful and autonomous organisation, and has guaranteed its hegemony by retaining close links with the proletarian class throughout the world. The situation changes when the revolutionary anti-feudal pressure subsides: the popular "framework" which encased the revolutionary and classist proletariat now becomes not only reactionary, but even more reactionary than the bourgeoisie itself. Now any steps to retain links with it lead to opportunism, to destruction of the revolutionary power, and to solidarity with capitalist conservatism. Today, throughout the whole of the "white world", this principle is still valid.

The present Russian opportunists, in their mad dash towards a total repudiation of anything that smacks of revolution, have not – yet – dumped the party-form, but they still seek to justify each successive stage

of their involution with an Appeal to the Masses, and every now and again to proclaim their solidarity with them.

No further a posteriori or historical evidence is required to show the sheer inconsistency of this hackneyed, insidious and irritating slogan, and the essential part it has played in the liquidation of the revolutionary party.

III. THE PETTY-BOURGEOIS DISTORTION OF THE FEATURES OF COMMUNIST SOCIETY IN THE "SYNDICALIST" AND "ENTERPRISE SOCIALIST" CONCEPTIONS OF PROLETARIAN ORGANISATION

THE POLITICAL PARTY IS IRREPLACEABLE

The view that the organisations formed by workers to conduct their struggles should be entirely structured around the production network of the bourgeois industrial economy – a view taken to its furthest extreme in Gramsci's system and revived today by various anti-Stalinist groups – has proved to be entirely ineffectual in practice and invariably goes hand in hand with a failure to identify the fundamental differences between the economic structure of today and tomorrow: between the present capitalist society and the communist society which will take its place after the victory of the proletarian class. Any such theory therefore falls far short of the Marxist critique of the present capitalist economic system.

The anti-Stalinists, Stalinists and XXth Congress post-Stalinists all make the same error. All of them share the illusion of a society in which the workers have defeated their employers at a local level, within their trade, or within their firm, but have remained trapped in the web of a surviving market economy. They don't seem to realize that this market economy is the same thing as capitalism.

The features of a non-capitalist and non-mercantile society which emerge from a genuine Marxist analysis, resulting from a critical and scientific forecast which is free of any trace of utopianism, are only thoroughly understood and shaped into a programme by the political party of the working-class. This is precisely because the party doesn't slavishly adhere to the system of organisation which the capitalist world imposes on the producing class. Any hesitation about the necessity for the party and State forms leads to a complete loss of the Marxist movement's programmatic conquests concerning the complete antithesis of the communist and capitalist forms; conquests thoroughly mastered by the party of the Marxist school. If we consider some key Marxist postulates, such as the abolition of the social and technical division of labour, meaning the breaking down of barriers between separate enterprises; the abolition of the conflict between town and country; and the social synthesis between science and practical human activity, we can immediately see that any 'concrete' plan to organise proletarian action which sets out to mirror the structure of the present-day economic world is doomed to remain trapped within the characteristic limitations of today's capitalist forms, and to be counter-revolutionary without even realising it.

The way to overcome this short-coming – which will involve many battles along the way – is through forming organisations which avoid modelling themselves on those drawn from the bourgeois world. These organisations are the proletarian party and the proletarian State, within which the society of tomorrow crystallizes in advance of its existence in a historical sense. Within those organisations which

we define as "immediatist", which copy and bear the physiological imprint of present-day society, all they can do is crystallize and perpetuate this society.

THE "COMMUNE" FORM

It is a very strange fact that the libertarians, who around 1870 or so engaged in their polemics against Marx in the First International, and whose short-sightedness we have already referred to, are still widely considered to be "to the Left" of Marx. Actually, in spite of their verbal opposition to militarism and patriotism, they never grasped the importance of going beyond the purely national level when criticising bourgeois economy and studying how it spreads onto the global scale.

Marx described the formation of the international market as the ultimate and crowning historical task of the modern bourgeoisie; after that it only remained to fight to establish the proletarian dictatorship in the countries which were most advanced, and, after the destruction of the national states which arose alongside capitalism, an expansion onto an ever vaster scale of the power of the international proletarian class. The anarchist proposal, when not actually advocating unlimited autonomy for all individuals, whatever their class, was to destroy the capitalist State so as to replace it with small social units, the famous communities of producers, which after the collapse of the central government would supposedly be totally autonomous, even with respect to each other.

The rather abstract form of future society based on local "communes" doesn't seem that different from today's bourgeois society, and its economic procedures don't seem that different either. Those who set out to describe this future society, such as Bakunin and Kropotkin, thought it enough merely to link it to a set of philosophical ideologisms, rather than to an analysis of historically verified laws of social production. When they did take up Marx's critique, it was only in the most minimal and selective way since they were unable to infer the conclusions implied by the theory: they were impressed by the concept of surplus value (which is an economic theorem) but used it merely to support their moral condemnation of exploitation, which they saw as arising from human beings exerting "power" over each other. Unable to attain the theoretical level of dialectics, they were debarred from understanding, for instance, that in the transition from the appropriation of the physical product of the serf's labour by the landowning lord to the production of surplus value in the capitalist system, an actual "liberation" from more crushing forms of servitude and oppression has taken place; for even if the division into classes, and the existence of a State power, still remained a historical necessity, and benefited the bourgeois class, in that period it also benefited the whole of the rest of society as well.

One of the principal causes of the greater output of labour as a whole, and of the higher average remuneration for the same amount of labour, was the creation of the nationwide market and the division of productive labour into different branches of industry, with the latter enabled to exchange their fully and semi-worked products within a zone of free circulation of commodities, and increasingly impelled to extend this zone beyond the State boundaries.

This increase (fully condoning the Marxist view) in the wealth of the bourgeoisie and in the power of each of each of its states, and along with this the production of surplus-value, does not immediately mean that an absolute increase in the gross revenue extracted is at the expense of the lower classes. To a certain extent, it is still compatible with a lessening of the hours of labour and with a general improvement in the satisfaction of needs. Therefore, the idea of dismantling capitalism by breaking up the national State into little islands of power, characteristic of the pre-bourgeois Middle Ages, makes no

sense at all. It would clearly be a retrograde step to force the economy back into these limited confines, even if the sole aim were to prevent a few lazy, non-workers from appropriating any of the resources from each of the little communes.

In this system of egalitarian communes, it is certain that the cost of the daily food supply, calculated in terms of the hours of labour of all the adult members of the community (leaving aside the niggling question of those who didn't want to work, and who would compel them to do so!) would be more than if production was organised at the level of the nation, take modern France for instance, where there is a continuous and regular economic traffic between the different communes, and a given manufactured article is obtained from the places where it is produced with least difficulty; even if the "hundred families" still gobble everything up for free.

In fact, these various communes would have no option but to trade amongst each other on the basis of free exchange. And even if we admitted that a "universal consciousness" would suffice to peacefully regulate these relations between the different locally based economic nuclei, there would still be nothing to prevent one commune extracting surplus value from another due to a fluctuating equivalence between one commodity and another.

This imaginary system of little economic communes is nothing more than a philosophical caricature of that age-old petty-bourgeois dream self-government. It can easily be seen that this system is just as mercantile as the one which existed in Stalin's Russia or in the increasingly anti-proletarian post-Stalinist Russia, and it is equally clear that it involves a totally bourgeois system of monetary equivalents (without a State mint?!) which is bound to weigh down the average productive labourer far more than a system of national or imperialist, large-scale industries.

THE "TRADE UNION" FORM

So far, we have been elaborating the historico-political part of our criticism of the trade-unionist (or syndicalist) conception of the proletarian struggle. Using the bitter proof of past experience, we have highlighted the doctrinal insufficiency and the ineptitude of the formula "Trade unions versus the bourgeois State": a formula put forward with the intention of getting rid of not only the organ of political struggle, the party, but also the organ of social direction – as indispensable as it is historically transitory – represented by the revolutionary State which Marx envisaged.

According to the thinking of Sorel and his followers, the trade union is sufficient, on its own, to both lead the struggle, and to organise and manage the no-longer-capitalist proletarian economy. In this part, we will show that such a position makes sense only on the basis of an unhistorical and distorted vision of the characteristic features of the opposed form of production which will succeed bourgeois capitalism. Such a distorted vision, which will never be realized and nor can it be, survives only in the semi-bourgeois imagination; nourished by a certain hatred against the big bosses, it fails to see the depth of the antithesis which exists between today's society, and the one which will emerge from the proletarian victory.

A lot of confusion has always been caused by Opportunism on the subject of what form the future society will take: we need only think of those political parties which, though considering themselves Marxist, would go so far as to declare that the formulation of such a historically final programme – which they called "maximal", not to contrast it with a programme which was immediate and

"minimum", but rather to deride the necessity of attaining it – was entirely superfluous. For a long time we have fought to prove that the decisive features of such a programme have been known to us since the Marxist current first appeared, and we will neede to continue to fight to prove it. But the vision of the imaginary socialist which will supposedly result from the victory of the trade union organisations over the capitalist bosses, and from the supposedly ensuing destruction and collapse of the bourgeois political State, is much more indefinite and vague than ours.

Throughout the history of the various socialist currents there has been – even in important texts – a great deal of confusing of co-operative forms – which are nothing but a derivation from pre-Marxist utopianism – with the socialist economic form. But this view of a society based on a network of co-operative producers we will examine later on when we describe the factory council current of socialism. As for the Sorelian syndicalist vision of the society subsequent to the collapse of capitalism, the first question we must ask ourselves is whether the fundamental unit of this society will be the small, locally based trade union, or the national, potentially international, trade union.

We should not forget that, within the framework of the organisations of economic defence which the working class formed at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, there was one institution, chiefly in the Latin countries, which would excel in terms of dynamism and energy. In Italy, it was known as the Camera del Lavoro and in France, less appropriately, it was called theBourse du Travail. Whilst the Italian denomination certainly reeks of bourgeois parliamentarism, the latter is worse in that it conveys the idea of a labour market, a place where workers are on sale to the highest bidder amongst the employers; it therefore gives the impression of being even further removed from the struggle to root out capitalist ideology.

Whereas individual trade unions and leagues, and even their national federations, being much less unitary and centralised, suffer the limitations of particular trade interests, which concern themselves with short-term, restricted demands, the chambers of labour of city and country, by developing solidarity amongst workers from different trades and workplaces, were more inclined to consider class problems at a deeper level. Even though the locally based nature of these organisations meant they couldn't completely free themselves of those defects which we examined earlier on (in our criticism of localist and "communalist" forms), real political problems were discussed there, not in the trite electoral sense, but in terms of revolutionary activity.

THE VIGOUR OF INTER-SYNDICAL FORMS

We could mention many episodes, which occurred in those post world war Red Years, in which the specific and highly active organ of the chambers of labour, the General Council of the Leagues, rallied the Italian workers to mass movements and uprisings, often entirely bypassing the trade-union officials by openly issuing their appeals in the name of socialist and then communist groups.

In France during the first part of this century, the Sûreté was shivering in its boots at the wave of movements emanating from the Bourses du Travail. Without knowing it, the Bourses' were political organs of the struggle for power, but the reformist and sometimes even anarchist trade-union "bonzes" would take advantage of their local isolation and prevent the movement spreading to the national level (or, as in the case of the aborted strike called in defence of Red Russia, which was under attack from the bourgeois armies of the Entente, an international level).

In September, 1920, during the occupation of the factories, terror stricken bourgeois shop-keepers unrolled their shutters allowing stocks of their consumer goods to be taken and pooled at the Chambers of Labour, who distributed them to the unemployed: involving the Chambers going well beyond a narrow trade-unionist concern with wages; under these circumstances, the supreme guardian of the established order, Prime minister Giolitti, kept his cool and was clever enough not to indict us for larceny, as a rigorous observance of the law would have required.

In the subsequent fascist phase, it was not Mussolini's squads, which at that time were suffering a series of bloody defeats, but the regular armed forces of the State which were deployed to attack the workers (in Empoli, Prato, Sarzana, Parma and Ancona, artillery was used, in Bari, even the navy) and only after repeated assaults did they defeat the armed workers holding out in heavily fortified Chambers of Labour.

The August 1922 strike failed because this defence wasn't co-ordinated at a nationwide level, which only the newly formed Communist Party would attempt: once again the trade-union leaders and the maximalist-reformist controlled Socialist party managed to curb the movement in the main cities, where the fascist movement counted for nothing, having gained control only of Florence and Bologna; in Milan, Rome, Genoa, Turin, Venice, and Palermo, the workers would be brought, peacefully and legally, under their paralysing leadership. Therefore it is from August 1922, and not October, 1922, the date of the ridiculous "March on Rome", that we can really date the victory of Italian capitalism over the proletarian revolution, killed by the infamous opportunist plague – but enough about Italy.

Within the trade-union organisation network, therefore, we can see how each trade is totally impotent at both the local and national levels, and how the national leadership is controlled almost everywhere by the opportunist parties, whereas the only real centres of class activity are the old regional and city based inter-trade centres.

During the present phase of Stalinist opportunism, even this one, last, precious resource has been destroyed. And since the Chambers of Labour, as main venues for the hectic meetings of the most combative workers, no longer exist (traditionally, thousands of workers used to attend every evening, making it easy for decisions to reach the whole area by the next morning) today's horrible, rose-tinted union officials have replaced it with corridors full of rows of bureaucratic counter windows, where each isolated, intimidated worker goes to ask what is due to him; or to accept orders from on high about some stupid, little action, so that he may later whisper around the orders, and bewail the latest castrated strike.

THE ECONOMIC FUNCTION

Let us suppose the working class had defeated the established order by trade-union action alone, and that a new economic and productive activity had started to unfold after bourgeois control was eliminated. In the case of a city with a strong, centralised and closely linked trade-union organisation, such a hypothesis is perhaps least far from reality, but we are still left with the objections we made about the "communal" form; as to the possibility of attaining a definitive victory in a particular city or region without having achieved it in the neighbouring areas of the same country too.

In order, therefore, to understand what the Sorelians mean by trade-union management of the "future" economy (without repeating what we have already said about the illusion of a system of locally

managed communes) we have to imagine a system of economic management which, in any given country (with our usual reservations about the negative prospects of a victory over capitalism limited to one country) assigns responsibility for the different branches of the economy to the leading bodies of the various national Trade Unions.

To clarify our point, let us imagine that the organisation of bread production, and of all other wheat-based products, is entrusted to the "Bakers' Union", with analogous arrangements for all other trades and industries. In other words, we have to imagine that all the products of a given branch of production have been placed at the disposal of large organisations resembling national trusts. Since all the capitalist managers would long since have been removed, these organisations would need to make decisions about how to utilise the entire product (in our example: bread, pasta etc,) in such a way as to receive, from other parallel organisations, not only what their members require for their personal consumption, but new raw materials, instruments of labour, etc, as well. Such an economy is an exchange economy, and it continues to be so whether or not the exchanges take place at the "higher", or the "lower", levels of the organisation. In the first case, exchange takes place at the apex of the various sectors of production, each of which distributes the various products required for production and consumption down through its hierarchical structure. Here the system of exchange remains, at its upper levels, a mercantile one, that is, it requires some law of equivalence in order to equate the value of the stocks of one syndicate with another; and we can easily suppose that these syndicates would be very numerous, and just as easily suppose that each of them would need to separately negotiate with all the others. Let us not even ask who is to establish this system of equivalent values, or what would guarantee the "social atmosphere" within which all this fantastical independence and "equality" of the various producers' unions, would take place. But let us be so "liberal" as to think it possible that the various equivalent values could be peacefully determined through a spontaneously arrived at equilibrium. A measuring system of such complexity couldn't operate without the age-old expedient of a general equivalent, in other words, money, the logical measure of every exchange.

It is no less easy to conclude that the "higher" system would eventually break down into the "lower", since it would be impossible to restrict the handling of money in such a society just to those top people entrusted with arranging the exchanges between one production trust and another (and here the word syndicate is entirely appropriate); inevitably this right would be extended to all trust members, to all trust workers, who would thus be empowered to "buy" whatever they wanted after receiving their quota of money from their particular trade syndicate: in other words, their wages, just like today, the only alleged difference being that it would be 'undiminished' (as in Duhring, Lassalle et all) by the bosses profit margin.

The bourgeois, Liberal, illusion of a system of trade unions existing independently from one another, and free to negotiate the terms under which they part with their stock of (monopolised) products, is connected with the idea that each producer, having been remunerated with the "undiminished proceeds of his labour" (a nonsense ridiculed by Marx) would then be able to do whatever he liked with it in terms of the consumer goods he acquired. And here is the rub: that these "free producers' economies" are shown to be just as far removed from the social economy, which Marx called socialism and communism, as capitalism, if not further.

In the socialist economy, it is not the individual who makes decisions about production (what is to be produced, and how much) or about consumption, but society, the human species as a whole. Here is the

essential point. The independence of the producer is just another of those vacuous, democratic stock-phrases which achieve precisely nothing. In the present society, the wage-earning worker, the slave of capital, may not be an independent producer, but he is independent as a consumer, insofar as (within a certain quantitative limit which isn't determined by sheer hunger as Lassalle's "iron law of wages" maintains, but which increases to a certain extent as bourgeois society expands) he can spend his wage-packet on whatever he wants.

In bourgeois society, the proletarian produces whatever the capitalist requires (or put in a more generalised and scientific way whatever the general laws of the capitalist mode of production require; whatever the inhuman monstrosity of capital requires) but as far as his own consumption is concerned, although restricted in terms of quantity, the proletarian can consume whatever, and however, he likes. In Socialist society, individuals will not be free to make "independent" choices regarding what productive activities they take part in, and what they consume, as both these spheres will be dictated by society, and in the interests of society. By whom? is the inevitable stupid question. To which we unhesitatingly reply: in the initial phase it will be the "dictatorship" of the revolutionary proletarian class, whose only organ capable of arriving at a prior understanding of the forces which will then come into play is the revolutionary party; in a second historical phase, society as a whole will exert its will spontaneously through a diffused economy, which will have abolished both the independence of classes and of individual persons, in all fields of human activity.

THE SAME OLD CONTROVERSY

At each step of the way our discussion has turned up formulas which appear rather strange. As a result, we feel obliged to stop every now and again, and patiently explain that our clearly defined school of Marxism has abided by these formulas for more than a century. But we are also keen to explain that it is not only the Stalinists and the rickety Semi-Stalinists currently in power who make us sick, but also the anti-Stalinists, currently swarming around like a plague of locusts who simply echo the corrected and 'enriched' old-fashioned Marxism of their alleged opponents, and who are content instead to break their lances on the violators of 'autonomy', attributing to such violations the constant succession of revolutionary defeats.

And what have these restless inventors of the latest formula come up with now? In one of the periodicals of the highly eclectic quadrifoglio (a federation of small groups claiming allegiance to the communist left) we see nothing other than the republished writings (from 1880-1890) of Francesco Saverio Merlino, the "libertarian socialist": early propagator of an ultra-rancid recipe which is still being cooked up today, in an eclectic variety of sauces, by a whole brood of little newspapers who have perched outside Palmiro Togliatti's window to provoke him with their naughty twitterings; but what they have failed to understand, when it comes to this particular recipe, is that good old Palmiro is a masterchef ! Compared to him they are just a bunch of scullery boys. And here is the recipe: salvation lies in grafting the values of Socialism onto those of Liberty!

Today we are told that the weird ideas of old Merlino, the valiant saviour from Marxism and revolutionary science, were triumphantly applied not only in Russia in 1905, and 1917 (!), but in the 1956 Polish and Hungarian uprisings, and even during the so-called Yugoslavian "experience".

Merlino's formulas are mainly drawn from an article he wrote about the 1891 "Erfurt Programme". Not bad as an example for modernizers, these old formulas simply revive the notorious confusion – dispelled

by the Marxist school in the post World War One years – of the nonsensical "popular free State" which the German Social Democrats proposed with Marx's powerful central tenet of the proletarian dictatorship; having failed to take into account that it was on this very issue, after 1875, that Marx and Engels were on the verge of disowning the German socialists. We will come onto that later. Meanwhile, here are a few excerpts from Merlino's article: "The power to direct, to manage, and to administrate the socialist society must belong not to a mythical 'People's and Workers' State', but to the mutually confederated workers associations themselves". "Shall we commit everything to one central power, or allow the workers' associations the right to organise themselves as they like, taking possession of the instruments of labour?". "We do not want a central government "or administration, which would constitute the most exorbitant of autocracies, but properly and freely confederated workers' organisations".

These formulas suit us well insofar as we can show how perfectly they express the thinking of Togliatti, Khrushchev, and Tito and co, and how perfectly they express the exact opposite of what we are fighting for. Let all associated and confederated anti-Stalinist groups take up their places beside them.

For them, their ultimate heart-felt cry is always "Bureaucratic centralism, or class autonomy?". If such indeed were the antithesis, instead of Marx and Lenin's "capitalist dictatorship or proletarian dictatorship", we would have no hesitation about opting for bureaucratic centralism (oh horror of horrors!), which at certain key historical junctures may be a necessary evil, and which would be easily controllable by a party which didn't "haggle over principles" (Marx), which was free from organisational slackness and tactical acrobatics, and which was immune to the plague of autonomism and federalism. As to "class autonomy", all we can say is that it is complete and utter crap. The socialist society is one in which classes have been abolished. Even if we concede that under a regime of class domination the dominated class may advance the demand for independence as a form of protest, in a society without a capitalist class, 'independence' can only signify a struggle between one set of workers and another, between one confederation and another, between different trade unions, between different sets of "producers". Under Socialism, producers are no longer a distinct and separate part of society.

Each association in possession of 'its own' instruments of labour, and producing in "its own" way, does not socialism make! Instead it substitutes class struggle, whose ultimate aim is dictatorship, with the absurd bellum omnium contra omnes: the war of all against all; a historical outcome which, fortunately, has proved to be as fruitless as it is absurd.

Slaves would be in a position of "Class autonomy" if they were to declare 'we are happy to remain slaves, but we want to decide what food to serve to our masters at table, and which of our daughters they can take to their beds!' Even the Christian position was thousands of times more revolutionary than that, for although it didn't herald a classless society, it did nevertheless clearly proclaim: "no difference between slaves and free men".

The concepts expressed here are all to be found, word for word, in Marx's writings as we will now proceed to demonstrate.

UNFORGETTABLE WORDS

The syndicalist and labourist currents – all of which we prefer to call "immediatist" because they confuse dialectically distinct moments of current organisation, historical development and revolutionary theory

– would like to restrict the entire historic cycle of the proletarian class to a simple enrolment of the workers in particular factories, trades or other small isolated sectors, and they base everything on this cold, lifeless model. And therein lies their fundamental error. Marxist determinism, on the other hand, destroys the bourgeois fiction of "the individual", "The person", "the citizen", and reveals that the philosophical attributes of this mythical entity are nothing but a universalization and eternalization of the relations which benefit the individual member of the modern ruling class, the bourgeois, the capitalist, the owners of land and money, the merchant. Having turned this wretched idol, the individual, on its head, Marxism replaces it with the economic society, which is "temporarily a national society".

All immediatists – that is to say, all those who have travelled only a thousandth of the distance separating them from the level of communist thought – want to get rid of society and put in its place a particular group of workers. This group they choose from the confines of one of the various prisons which constitute the bourgeois society of "free men" i.e.;the factory, the trade, the territorial or legal patch. Their entire miserable effort consists in telling the non-free, the non-citizens, the non-individuals (such is the great idea with which the bourgeois revolution unconsciously inspires them) to envy and imitate their oppressors: be independent! free! be citizens! people! In a word: be bourgeois!

For us, the objective is not simply to take one of the existing groups from the present social set-up and attribute to it functions which already exist under capitalism; our goal is a non-capitalist society. Such is the abyss which separates us from these petty little groups with their endless bickering. Confronted with the abortive results of their theories, they witter on about a new autocracy, a bureaucratic centre, an oppressive leadership having been created, and that in order to avoid this, that all-powerful, impersonal entity – society – will have to be broken up into lots of 'autonomous' fragments, free to ape the ignoble (and, furthermore, already obsolete) bourgeois models.

Go ahead and say it, but at least be open about it like Merlino. Go and place Karl Marx with the autocrats, the oppressors, the corrupters of the proletarian class; and with Lenin, it goes without saying, though Merlino didn't know him.

Antonio Labriola would agree with Merlino though when he protested against the idea of Lassalle (an immediatist par excellence) of "paving the way to the solution of the social question by establishing producers' co-operatives with the help of the State under the democratic control of the working people". This ghastly sentence would actually find its way into the Gotha Programme (1875), and only didn't appear in the 1891 Erfurt Programme due to Engel's tough interventions.

In texts which were kept hidden away for 15 years, Marx, and Engels as well, tore this despicable formulation into shreds, and in so doing they offered – in the "Critique of the Gotha Programme" – the most classic dialectical construction of future society ever; in those pages they smashed to pieces not only the immediatist concept of the State as foster-mother to the working class, but every federalism and particularism, every distorted notion of "autonomous spheres of economic organisation". Let us then look at these texts, complimented by Lenin's masterly commentary, and prove it once more.

Almost suffocated as we are today by all these damn "questions of structure", "problems to be solved" and "ways to be paved", let us breath in some vital oxygen from those pages left to grow yellow in Bebel's desk drawer.

"The existing class struggle is discarded in favour of the hack phrase of a newspaper scribbler – "the social question", for the solution of which one 'paves the way'. Instead of being the result of the revolutionary process of social transformation in society, the 'socialist organisation of the total labour' (in a previous passage, Marx had already pulverised another idiotic expression still much used today – "emancipation of labour " – whereas he always talks of the working class) 'arises' from 'state aid'".

A few lines on, Marx derides the formula of democratic control of the working people "a working people which in presenting the State with demands such as these is expressing full awareness of the fact that it neither rules nor is mature enough to rule!".

But the passage from the same text which shows what is, for us Marxists, the form of tomorrow's society is this: "The workers' desire to create the conditions for cooperative production on a social and, by beginning at home, at first on a national scale, means nothing beyond that they are working to revolutionise the present conditions of production; it has nothing in common with the foundation of cooperative societies with State aid!".

ON THE SCALE OF SOCIETY AS A WHOLE

This passage, along with many similar ones, is enough to establish that anyone who sinks from the "level of society", which at a certain historical point prior to the conquest of power coincides with the "national level", down to federal/trade-union levels (municipal, individual enterprise level, or worse still), falls into immediatism, betrays Marxism, and lacks any conception of communist society: in other words, they are nothing to do with the revolutionary struggle.

As to the other cyclopean antithesis between the "revolutionary transformation of society" and the "socialist organisation of labour", it could equally be addressed to Moscow's builders of socialism, just so we can look them in the eyes and say the transition to socialism is not something you contract out to a building firm. Marx, who weighed his words carefully (just as Lenin re-weighed them), would never have dreamed of using such a crassly bourgeois and vulgarly voluntaristic expression as "building socialism".

We won't recall here Marx's famously pointed criticism of the Popular Free State which were later re-echoed by Lenin before millions of people, no longer from the confines of a study, but under the blazing skies of the greatest revolution in History! And how much more miserable are they who have ignored the lesson for the second time! The freer the State, the more it crushes the working class to protect capitalism! We don't want to free the State, we want to put it in chains, and then strangle it. And with words such as these the anti-statism of the various Bakunin's and the Merlino's is sent back where it belongs: to take up its place among the clownish parodies of political thought. In place of the anti-State – and this is the height of dialectical thinking! – will be put the new State (Engels), whose purpose will not be freedom, but repression, but which will need to arise only to finally die once and for all, having attained the abolition of classes. The Popular Free State and class autonomy are well-suited and we hope they'll be very happy together! They are both nothing but forms of the immediatist impotence, and immanence of bourgeois thought.

As to the fundamental concept of a "unitary" society in place of the antithesis between capitalists and proletarians – between producers and consumers too – it is worth tracing the evolution of this idea as it appeared in the various, highly criticised, programmes of the German party. It was the Lassalean programme (Leipzig, 1863) which contained the formula which Marx felt obliged to lash out at:

elimination of class antagonisms, whereas Marx would say that classes themselves needed to be eliminated, and the means of achieving that was precisely through the antagonism which existed between them.

The programme of the "Marxists" (Eisenach, 1869), which Marx judged to have been drawn up without taking into account the theoretical conquests of the socialist movement, demanded the ending of class rule and the wages-system, but spoke still of the "undiminished proceeds of labour" to be given to each worker, and of an organisation of labour to be formed on the basis of cooperativism (but without State aid).

The Gotha programme, which was drawn up in 1875 after the highly disapproved of fusion between Eisenachians and Lassalleans, and which remained unaltered in spite of Marx's severe criticisms, talks about the instruments of labour becoming "the common property of the whole of society". Marx's only criticism of this phrase was that the expression "promotion of the instruments of labour into the common property" ought obviously to read their "conversion into the common property". We assume that Marx's correction here was intended to combat activism.

The Erfurt programme, influenced by Engel's suggestions, which had been largely accepted after the publication of the critique of the Gotha programme, is clear on this point: "Transformation of capitalist property into social property, and transformation of the production of commodities into socialist production, to be carried out by society and for society".

We can therefore draw certain conclusions about the doctrine which prompted the vision of a "society in which production is managed by workers' trade-unions": firstly, it doesn't constitute a historic foreshadowing of proletarian science; secondly, it won't ever come about in reality – unless socialist science itself springs a leak, and Marx, Engels, Lenin and all the rest of us sink without a trace – and thirdly, it doesn't have anything to do with the socialist and communist forms, not even as a transitory phase.

It is a scheme in which production and distribution do not attain the social, or even "national", level, since it is the "freely confederated" or "confederately free" trades unions who have the instruments and products of labour at their disposal, and who are free to do with them whatever they like. And even if these sectional organisations did manage to shut themselves off within their respective "independent" spheres of production, a competitive struggle would inevitably follow and lead to physical confrontations, especially given the "absence" of any kind of State.

In this fictitious programme, not only production is not carried out by society for society, but by trade unions for trade unions, but commodities continue to be produced; meaning that production is still non-socialist, since each article of consumption transferred from one trade-union to another does so as a commodity, and since this cannot occur without the existence of a monetary equivalent, it is necessarily transferred, as such, to each individual producer. As is always the case in these utopias of undiminished labour, the wage system still survives, and the accumulation of capital in the hands of the autonomous trades unions, and eventually into those of private individuals, also survives. If our critique has relied largely on a "reductio ad absurdum" approach, it is entirely the petty-bourgeois content of all these various utopias which is to blame!

We'll finish this doctrinal part by taking another passage from Critique of the Gotha programme, directing it at both the "immediatists" and, the "State capitalists" to remind them that the task of our indispensable proletarian dictatorial State is not to liberate capital, but to repress it, along with those who defend it whether they be bourgeois, petty-bourgeois, or even proletarian (that is those enslaved by bourgeois or lumpen-bourgeois tradition). It is a passage which Marx wrote to ridicule the "minimalist" proposal of a "single progressive income tax" (as it exists today in Russia): "Income tax presupposes varied sources of income for varied social classes, and HENCE CAPITALIST SOCIETY".

THE RUSSIAN EXPERIENCE AND LENIN

In the period between the 1920 and the 1921 international communist congresses, a debate took place at the 10th congress of the Russian party (3-16 March, 1921) with the so-called "Workers' opposition" (we've covered this topic in greater depth elsewhere in our study of Russia). We should remark that the oppositional stance put up by the Italian Left in 1920/21 (see our publication La Question Parlementaire dans L'Internationale Comuniste) was very different from the line of this opposition, which was harshly defined by Lenin as a "syndicalist and anarchist deviation within our party".

One of the many falsifications of Stalin's Brief History of the Communist Party was lumping Trotsky in together with these "workerists" simply because he happened to be engaged in a debate regarding the tasks of the trade unions. In fact, Trotsky was completely on Lenin's side at that stage, and the genuinely Marxist proposal he made was that the Trade unions should be absolutely subordinated to the proletarian State and Party (a party which, back in 1921, he did not consider – and neither did we – as having degenerated).

The "workers' opposition" based themselves on the immediatist conception of socialist economy and on the false and naïve opinion that socialism can be established in any place, at any time, as long as the workers are left alone and allowed to get on with managing the economy by themselves. Lenin reports the main 'thesis' of the workers opposition as: "The organisation of the management of the national economy is the function of an All-Russia Congress of Producers organised in industrial unions which shall elect a central body to run the whole of the national economy of the Republic".

You can bet that if Nikita Khruschev pushes on with his Sovnarkos any further, it won't be long before he revives this old idea but in an even worse form: but with regional unions instead of national unions of producers. Instead of considering the conquering and the gaining of control over a national territory as merely a springboard for the achievement of further international conquests (a cardinal rule of Marxism) these people make a point of rushing off to set up organisations at the local and regional levels instead; persisting in their mad pursuit of autonomy when all they'll end up with will be autonomous capitalist enterprises.

Although we don't propose to undertake a detailed description of Russian economic management at this point (we have covered it in depth in other party texts) it is worth pointing out that it was at this same congress, in his classic speech The Tax in Kind, that Lenin showed that it was not the transition to socialism which was on the agenda, but the transition to State-capitalism or even, for those who can see these things in a Marxist way, from an atomised form of production to private capitalism. This was a powerful clarification of doctrinal matters which would set everything straight, whereas the vile opportunism which followed would throw everything into confusion again.

It is important to show that the arguments Lenin used against the proponents of a producer-managed economy are exactly the same as the ones used by Marx and Engels, which we continue to use today against the latest syndicalist and anarchist distortions – which are emerging even amongst groups who never supported Stalin, Togliatti or Thorez, or for that matter even Khrushchev (though they like Tito, considering him as one of their "forerunners"!).

The Producers' Unions meet the same sorry fate in Lenin's writings as Lassalle's cooperatives do in Marx's.

"Ideas which are completely false from the theoretical point of view… complete break with Marxism and communism… contradiction with the experience of all semi-proletarian revolutions (take note!) and the current proletarian revolution" those are a few of the things Lenin said about them, and here are some more quotes from the debates at the 10th congress of the Russian Party.

"First, the concept "producer" combines proletarians with semi-proletarians and small commodity producers, thus radically departing from the fundamental concept of the class struggle and from the fundamental demand that a precise distinction be drawn between classes" [take note again! and compare this with the blasphemies of Stalin, of the 20th congress, of the enthusiastic defenders of the latest movements in Hungary and Poland].

"flirting with, relying on the party-less masses [take note Barbarists! and other demagogues preaching to empty halls!] is an equally radical departure from Marxism".

Can this be the same Lenin speaking who, according to certain diehard Stalinists, discovered the invaluable resource of "diving into the masses"!?

"Marxism teaches (here Lenin refers to statements issued at previous world congresses) that only the political party of the working class, i.e., the Communist Party, is capable of uniting, training, and organising a vanguard of the proletariat and of the whole mass of the working people that alone will be capable of withstanding the inevitable petty-bourgeois vacillations of this mass and the inevitable traditions and relapses of narrow craft unionism or craft prejudices among the proletariat".

This passage emphasises the inferiority of all the immediate organizations with respect to the political party, as well as the serious risks which these organizations take due to their historically inevitable contact with the semi-proletarian and petty-bourgeois classes. Lenin once again concludes by saying: "without the political direction of the party, the proletarian dictatorship is impossible".

In this same text Lenin denies that the 1919 programme of the Russian party had ever conceded the function of economic management to the trade unions. Certainly a few sentences from that programme spoke about the management of the whole of the national economy as "a single economic entity", and of the "indissoluble ties between the central State administration, the national economy and the broad masses of working people" as a target to be achieved, on condition that the Trade unions "divest themselves of the narrow craft-union spirit, and embrace the majority and eventually all of the working people".

TRADE UNIONS AND STATE CAPITALISM

The question of the Trade Unions and centralised State economic management would be back on the agendae in Russia, and indeed in the rest of the world, because it constitutes a modern, convenient expedient for the capitalism of every country, especially in the United States.

The "Leninist" criterion for dealing with this problem is that the Trade Unions lag far behind the revolutionary party, and if left to their own devices fall prey to petty-bourgeois weaknesses and collaboration with the bourgeois economy.

In Russian society between 1919 and 1921, with industrialisation was at its lowest point, the first, faltering steps were being taken in managing of industry which had recently been wrenched from the hands of private capitalism. At this stage it was clear that the Communist Party could establish a strong and reliable foothold in the industrial workers' unions as long as these were not autonomous, but solidly influenced by the Party itself, and, as Trotsky rightly maintained in 1926, as long as they were considered as parts and organs of the centralized State.

In order to understand this problem more clearly, we need to bear in mind that throughout this period we are witnessing not the creation of a socialist industry and economy, but rather a process of nationalisation. Industries, which have been taken from the private owners and trusts without awarding compensation, are managed by the State within an economic system which is still shaped by commercial transactions and individual enterprises. No matter how socialist this government may be in terms of its class base and its foreign policy, the industrial system of this society is still to be defined as State-capitalist, and not socialist. We do not need to rely on later developments in the Russian economy in order to define this economy as State-capitalist. The State loses its socialist-political, and class, content, when it is no longer dedicated to spreading revolution to other bourgeois States; because it contracts war alliances with them; because within the bourgeois States it establishes alliances with bourgeois and democratic parties, even to the extent of sharing political power; because it subordinates, within Russia, the interests of city and country proletarians to those of the petty-bourgeoisie and the peasant classes.

It is therefore worth asking ourselves what role do trade unions occupy during the State-capitalist stage. If the State is ruled by a party which not only doesn't carry out the policies of the world proletarian revolution but opposes them, then labour power is obviously still being dealt with within the framework of a mercantile-commercial system based on money and wages, and the existence of trade unions as organized bodies for the defence of the conditions of labour (whose opponent – whose boss – is precisely the employer State) is therefore justified. But even in such circumstances as these, dividing up the centralised running of the State amongst the different trade unions is not a useful formula. What is required is that the trade unions accept the leadership of a proletarian political party capable of resolving the question of the conquest of central power. If such a party does not exist, or where it only exists as an empty shell turned into an instrument in the hands of the capitalist State (as in Russia), then there must have been a relapse into the system of wage slavery; a situation which will never be resolved through the efforts of autonomous groups of workers aiming to seize control of separate sectors of production, and through the stupid scheme of 'redoing' the liberal revolution (in fact precisely such an empty manoeuvre is currently being adopted in Russia by Khruschev's State). Moreover, if these sectors of production should break away and generally disintegrate, they would fall into the hands of private capitalism, or at any rate into the long, grasping hands of international capital.

In the contrary situation – the decidedly progressive stage of State capitalism, in which the central political power strives to carry out the historic work of spreading the international revolution – trade

unions, unless they end up as defeatist organisations which have to be repressed, must be prepared to learn from the class party, the authentic party of the industrial wage-earners of the entire world, how to obtain from the class of factory workers (of whose courage and self-sacrifice history has given numerous inspiring examples) their contribution of labour, surplus labour and surplus value for the revolution, for the civil war, for the red armies of every country, for ammunition to be used in a social class conflict which overrides all borders and frontiers. Even in such historic circumstances as these, for the trade unions to claim the undiminished proceeds of labour would not only be anti-economic and anti-social, but defeatist too with regard to the terrible task which history has assigned to the class of pure wage-earners, and to that class alone: that of bring about the bloody delivery of the new society.

This task – the end point of centuries and centuries of tortured history – is exactly contrary to the dreams and superstitions of the 'immediatist' school of book-keepers and second-hand dealers, each generation of which wants to get its stunted hands on the advantages it would reap from "autonomously confederating".

THE FACTORY-BASED FORM

After our detailed examination of the 'immediatist' vision of a post-capitalist society managed by the trade unions, all the defects of the "factory council" form can be clearly seen.

The Italian Left current sounded the alarm when the first symptoms of faith in this revived myth took shape: at the time of the FIAT "shop-stewards" congresses held in Turin and of Antonio Gramsci's review Ordine Nuovo (New Order). The latter we both admonished and welcomed at the same time insofar as it bravely and resolutely entered the field against the Menshevik opportunism of the traditional Italian trade unions and against the inconsistency of the Socialist Party which, back in 1919, was claiming to be pro-Bolshevik.

Gramsci was then at the beginning of his ideological evolution – an evolution which he never dissimulated as the peculiar clearness of this man required – having passing from idealistic philosopher and war-interventionist to the anti-defencist Marxism restored by Lenin, and he gave his journal an honest title. He didn't talk of political rule by the new class, or the new Class-State, and only slowly did he accept the Marxist principles concerning the dictatorship of the party, and those concerning the influence of the Marxist view on factual relations occurring in the human and natural world outside the narrow limits of mere factory-economics. He openly admitted this at the 1926 congress of the Italian Communist Party in Lyon. We will always prefer those who learn new chapters of Marxism to those who forget them. In 1919, Antonio Gramsci was just emerging from an evaluation of the October Revolution which detected in it a reversal of determinism; as the miracle of the human will violating adverse economic conditions. Later on, seeing Lenin – the miracle maker – defend Marxist determinism in its strictest form, didn't fail to have an effect on him: both master and pupil were outstanding.

The factory system appealed to Gramsci's nimble spirit and he became besotted with its ideal, quasi-literary, even artistic, construction. And he was right to call it the New Order insofar as it encompassed the idea of the factory proletariat setting up, on its immediate foundation, a New Order, resembling those which existed prior to the liberal revolution, such as the three estates of pre-1789 French society. This is not surprising: all the "immediatists" which we have reviewed so far have done nothing but translate the claim of a dictating class that suppresses classes, and which doesn't even aspire to be the One Class, into a pedestrian request to be raised to the Fourth Estate. The immediatist can't help but

passively design the New on the template of the Old. Antonio would call his brand of immediatism 'concretism', having derived this word from the attitudes of bourgeois-intellectual enemies of the revolution: he didn't realise, and there wasn't much we could do make him realise, that "concretism" equals counter-revolution.

If Humanity had had to rely on the immediatists, it would never have known that the earth is round and that it moves, that air has weight, that Epicurus's atoms exist, that the recently discovered subatomic particles exist; it would never have known about Galileo's and Einstein's theories of relativity…. And it could never have forecast any social revolution, past or future.

Antonio did not know (and not through any lack of reading … he had the misfortune of being one of those people who read everything) that the concept of 'Orders' had been left behind as early as 1847 when Marx wrote about it in his anti-Proudhonist book, Poverty of Philosophy: "Can it be supposed that after the collapse of ancient society there will be a new class rule, expressing itself in a new political power? NO". (If only our many contradictors had just read this one monosyllable).

But why not?

Because "the redemption of the working class consists in the abolition of all classes, in the same way as the redemption of the Third Estate, of the bourgeois Order, consisted in the abolition of all estates, of all Orders".

Many generations have come and gone, three Internationals have lived and died. We have seen hundreds of people shuffle off this mortal coil who thought they could go one better than Marx and Lenin, without even attaining the level of that incorruptible bourgeois, Maximilien Robespierre: who for 160 years has lain under the tombstone marking the death of all New Orders!

MARXISM AND "COUNCIL ECONOMY"

Out text demonstrates the irreconcilable antithesis between Marxism and Gramscism. This is a subject which interests us not so much because of the history of the polemics between him and us, but because there are groups of confused anti-Stalinists and squalid epigones who still want to revive these positions.

The independent, local enterprise is the smallest social unit which we can think of, being limited both by the nature of its particular trade and the local area. Even if we concede, as we did earlier, that it was somehow possible to eliminate privilege and exploitation from within such an enterprise by distributing to its workers that elusive 'total value of the labour', still, outside its own four walls, the tentacles of the market and exchange would continue to exist. And they would continue to exist in their worst form at that, with the plague of capitalistic economic anarchy infecting everything in its path. But this party-less and State-less system of councils prompts the question – who, before the elimination of classes is accomplished, is going to manage the functions which are not strictly concerned with the technical side of production? And, to consider only one point, who is going to take care of those who are not enrolled in one of these enterprises – what about the unemployed? In such a system, and much more so than in any other cell-based commune or trade union system, it would be possible for the cycle of accumulation to start all over again (supposing it had ever been stopped) in the form of accumulation of money or of huge stocks of raw materials or finished products. Within this hypothetical system, conditions are particularly fertile for shrewdly accumulated savings to grow into dominating capital.

The real danger lies in the individual enterprise itself, not in the fact it has a boss. How are you going to calculate economic equivalents between one enterprise and another, especially when the bigger ones will be stifling the smaller, when some will have more productive equipment than others, when some will be using 'conventional' instruments of production and others nuclear powered ones? This system, whose starting point is a fetishism about equality and justice amongst individuals, as well as a comical dread of privilege, exploitation and oppression, would be an even worse breeding ground for all these horrors than the present society.

In fact, is it so difficult to believe that those big words, 'Privilege' and 'exploitation', are excluded from the Marxist lexicon? Let's look at Critique of the Gotha Programme again. The passage which really makes Marx spit blood, containing as it does some Lassallean rubbish about the "Free State" and the "iron law of wages", ends with what Marx (and Engels in another passage) call "the indefinite concluding phrase of the paragraph"; here it is: "The party strives for the abolition of exploitation in every form and for the removal of all social and political equality".

Here, according to Marx and Engels, is what they should have said instead: "With the abolition of class distinctions, all forms of social and political inequality arising from them will disappear of their own accord".

This scientific way of talking – not to mention the long critical note on the equal distribution formula, which is compared to the bourgeois insinuation that socialism cannot abolish poverty but only generalize it to everybody – is enough in itself to dispose of a whole gamut of reviews and articles which – alas! – are being written, in the years 1956-7, about the content of socialism as a philosophy of exploitation.

In the same passage Marx also deals with the limitations of Lassalle's vision – which, significantly, he links to Malthusian theories, today restored to life by the American, anti-Marxist "welfarist" schools – according to which socialism is roused to action only inasmuch as the workers' wages are frozen at too low a level; whereas in fact it is a matter of abolishing wage-labour because "it is a system of slavery – a slavery which becomes more severe in proportion as the social forces of labour productivity develop, whether or not the worker is paid well, or badly".

Here Marx develops a historical parallel with the slave-economy (one we touched on earlier when discussing the idiotic demand for wage-earners' autonomy): "it is as if, among slaves who have finally got behind the secret of slavery and broken out in rebellion, one slave, still in thrall to obsolete notions, were to inscribe on the programme of rebellion [an immediatist, Ordinovist, non-Marxist slave we should say]: slavery must be abolished because the feeding of slaves in the system of slavery cannot exceed a certain low maximum!".

To the "welfarist" gentlement we say: even if capitalism could increase average living standards to the umpteenth degree, we reiterate to you our historic prediction: capitalism's death!

The standards offered by the great FIAT industrial plants appeared to Gramsci as a noble order when compared to the sad and brutalised existence of the Sardinian shepherd, worse than the Fourth Estate even.

In the Five Year Plan – fashioned on the pattern of the economy of the Soviet Union – which we presented to the great FIAT, we forecast for 1956 a 15.7% increase in sales over 1955, up from 310

billion to 358 billion lira. Although only 340 billions have been announced, the nominal capital has been raised from 76 to 100 billions, which is to say, by 32% in two years.

Can it be that the new order, in Turin and Moscow, is already beginning to display less brilliant curves?

A FEW CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have concentrated on comparing the socialist and Marxist vision of future society with the "vision" of the immediatists (i.e. those who distrust the State-form and the Party-form seen by Marx, Lenin and ourselves as the essential prerequisites of revolution), but we haven't yet stopped, although we've flicked through the 'Marginal Notes' part of the Critique of the Gotha programme, to examine the fundamental difference between the lower and higher stages of socialism, classically reinstated by Lenin.

The obvious superiority of the economic system in which production and distribution is not performed by "autonomous units" on the pattern of the present capitalist "concentration camps" (based around jobs, enterprises, and various jurisdictions including the nation – whose barbed wire fences we will forcibly remove one of these days) but by society, for society, and on a social scale, is already apparent in the lower of the two stages theorised by Marx.

In the lower stage of socialism class differences have still not been eliminated; the State can't be abolished yet; still the pathological traditions of a society divided into Orders, up to the third and last, survive; the city and country are still separate; the social division of duties and tasks, the separation of hand and brain, of technical and manual labour, has not been abolished.

However on the economic level, the sectors of society which hitherto had a closeted, independent existence are thrown into the unitary, social melting pot. The small communes, trade confederations, and individual enterprises, which are not even allowed a transitory existence, are already done for.

From the moment a "communist society appears, emerging from the womb of capitalist society", there is no longer a place for markets, for trading between the barbed-wire surrounded "autonomous sectors". "Within the cooperative society based on common ownership of the means of production, the producers do not exchange their products anymore; similarly the labour spent on the products no longer appears as the value [underlined by Marx] of these products, as a material quality possessed by them, as a material characteristic, for now, in contrast to capitalist society, individual pieces of labour are no longer merely indirectly [as would be the case in the commune, trade union and factory council schemes] but directly, a component part of the total labour".

In the concluding pages of our study of Russia's political and economic structure, we developed the point that even during the first, lower stage the mercantile limitations of commodity-production are overstepped. No longer can anything be acquired by an individual and bound to his person, or family, through money: instead he is entitled to a non-permanent, non-cumulative coupon which allows him a time-limited consumption, and which is awarded to him within still restricted, socially calculated limits.

Our conception of a dictatorship over consumption (i.e. the first stage, which will be followed by a social, species rationality) entails this: on each coupon there will not be written so many currency units, which can be converted into anything, say, just tobacco and alcohol and no bread and milk, but names of specific wares as in the famous wartime "ration cards".

Bourgeois law will survive, however, insofar as the amount of consumption will correspond to the amount of labour given to society – after the well-known deductions to the common fund have been made – and this calculation will have to be based on availability, as well as on utility and need.

Instead of the products of human labour being bought and sold and subject to the law of equivalent value (as would be the case if they were to be exchanged between "autonomous" communes, trade unions or enterprises) they will instead form one, social mass. Finally only one commodity-exchange like connection will remain: that which exists between quantity of labour supplied and individual daily consumption.

A colossal blunder we chanced to hear offers us a wonderful opportunity to explain this concept. Somebody – an outstanding immediatist, no doubt about it! – has been going around saying that "in a socialist economy the market will remain, but it will of course be restricted to products. Labour will no longer be a commodity".

Such people can sometimes help us express an idea correctly – as long we turn what they say upside-down. This is what they ought to have said: "In the socialist economy there will no longer be a market" or better still: "an economy is socialist when the market no longer exists". In the first stage, however, "one economic quantity will still be measured as a commodity: human labour". In the higher stage, human labour will be nothing other than a way of life, it will become a pleasure. Marx puts it like this "Labour will be the first of man's vital needs".

In order to free man's work from being a commodity it is necessary to destroy the whole market system! Wasn't this the first of Marx's objections to Proudhon?

We've mentioned one blunder that is doing the rounds, and here is another one which we will dismantle as soon as possible in a future study: "the productive forces need to be greatly increased before the market can be eliminated". This is not true at all: according to Marxist theory, the productive forces are already too developed to be contained within the capitalist mode of production. Marx considers the development of the productive forces as the basis for the higher stage of socialism – that in which consumption is not socially limited by insufficient production – but not as a condition for the collapse of the commodity-producing society and of capitalist anarchy.

In the 1891 programme, in a passage which must have been dictated by Engels, it says: "Productive forces have already grown to such an extent that the regime of private property is no more compatible with the wise employment of them".

The time is ripe for the monstrous productive forces of capitalism to be prostrated before the dictatorial control of production and consumption. It is merely a question of revolutionary force for that class which, even when its living standards are rising (which Marx, as we have shown above, never denied) is constantly weighed down by insecurity and uncertainty about the future. It is an uncertainty which looms over the whole of society as well, and a few decades from now it will manifest as an alternative between global crisis and war – or international communist revolution.

The proletarian class will need to equip itself with the necessary force to carry out their historic task. First, it will involve a reconstruction – a reinstating – of revolutionary theory, then it will be a matter of rebuilding a Communist Party on an international basis; a party without frontiers.

The Legend of the Piave (1963)

The patriotic saga of Italy raised the Piave to the position of the national river, and designated it as such, in 1917. In the war which was to have been the Fourth War of Independence, leading the country in a leap beyond the Venetian frontiers (won by no means by armed might) already gained from the Third. After two years of an immobile front on the Isonzo, streaming blood from a dozen battles, the direction then changed with the famous defeat at, and flight from, Caporetto, the Austrians flooding onto the plain through this breach. After a few days of fearing for the worst when it was believed that they would have been stopped only on the Adige or Mincio, on the 1859-66 frontiers, the tide was stemmed on the Piave, something that was foreseen by the not altogether stupid titch of a Ring who organised the defence (1). We all then learnt that the Piave was to be declined as masculine, not as a feminine substantive, laying to rest our schoolboy doubts (2).

The river's name entered popular poetry and legend. The old Neapolitan versifier E.A. Mario, recently passed on, wrote verses and music which lost only by a short head to Mameli's hymn in the competition for the national anthem. Can you recall the ingenuous phraseology? "Together with the infantry, battled the waves". Once again a river was personified in literature, like in classical literature, as defending the motherland, carrying to the sea piles of enemy corpses. "The Piave whispered: the foreigner shall not pass".

But now the Piave has carried out to sea thousands of Italian corpses struck down by the apocalyptic flood from the Vajont during the dark night of October 9-10th, and has lost its title to nobility. Its legend was and is one of death, and there is no more glory in carrying away the bodies of soldiers than of pacific citizens caught in their sleep. Then they were immolated to the never satiated with blood numina of war, now to those of modern bourgeois and patriotic capitalist civilization and above all to the adorers of its science and technology.

It is not just today that we suddenly desire to dishonour, along with those of wars between peoples, the no less infamous killer deities of a civilisation which rusts and rots year by year.

In Prometeo 2nd series no. 4, July-September 1952 we dedicated the article Politics and Construction to this theme which, among the various examples of deadly disasters which constitute real bankruptcies of scientific technique, recalled several cases of floods and cited historical cases of mountain reservoir dams, recalling the history of this skill from the Moors in Spain and Leonardo to the organizational inadequacies of the modern hydraulic services in the period of great capital and monstrous construction enterprises.

In France in 1959 there was the terrible Frejus catastrophe which, nevertheless, despite the collapse of the dam which did not happen in the case of the Vajont basin, caused fewer victims than the recent Italian catastrophe.

Then we found the person responsible, the accused to be stood in the dock, but not in the manner of the reckless pettifogging political prick of demagogic opportunism: it was Progress, the lying myth which

makes the poor in spirit and the starved wretches bend their backs to it, ready to swear loyalty to this Moloch which every so often and a little bit each day crushes them under the wheels of its obscene carriage.

In the inhuman system of capital, every technical problem boils down to an economic one, one of the prize won by cutting costs and boosting returns. The old pre-bourgeois societies had some residual time to think about safety and general interests. As we recalled in the case of the Frejus dam, that too was a masterpiece of brand new technology, it was light, slim and agile and so with a very modest concrete and steel tonnage held back an enormous volume of water. But already past-builders had realized that dams work by gravity, that is, they resisted the incredible thrust of the liquid in that they were extremely heavy and did not collapse. We recalled that after several disasters in Spain and at Gleno in Italy (1923) the theory was modified to take account of the hydraulic thrust below, at the base of the dam and these were broadened and made more stable. But the recent dams have obeyed (a mercenary science has obeyed) the sacrosanct need for low costs, so they are built, as with the Frejus and Vajont, in an arch, that is, with a curve that points out into the water pressure and spreads the load onto the shoulders wedged into the valley sides. The dam thus becomes less voluminous, less heavy and less costly and is made of highly resistant materials. But then the pressure of the thrust on the two shoulders of the construction grows massively because this depends on the water pressure borne on its back, which is all the more massive the higher the dam is. Allowing for superlative materials permitting the slimming of the dam and therefore of its shoulders, the pressure on the natural rock is immense and the problem ceases to be the, controllable, one of adjusting the arch of reinforced concrete to take the thrust (this cannot be reduced), but of seeing if the rocky sides will crumble, ruining the arch shaped dam. This was the error made at Frejus, then too it was not the mechanical and hydraulic engineers who were wrong, but – it is said – the geologists called on to evaluate the strength of the rock.

The first problem can best be tackled by mathematical calculations, performed either by a good theoretician or by a computer, while the great theoretician sitting at it goes through a few packets of cigarettes. It can be tested on a suitable scale model in the laboratory.

The geological problem is not one for the smoking saloon or the test tank. It is one of lengthy human experience based on the proofs of historical building. Human and social experience. For all modern engineering, in so far as it makes things which are not pocket sized or cars, constructing things fixed to the Earth's crust, the key problem is the land/building relationship (for a simple house, the foundations). There are no perennially valid formulae but instead many skillful applications to choose from after gaining hard-learnt experience. Taking a big salary and smoking in front of the computer is not sufficient.

This experience ripens over the centuries: whoever believes in progress and in the jest that last season's latest discovery contains the wisdom of all time, may get a big salary, but causes disasters, statistics for which, and they alone, show progress.

The very folk traditions among the uneducated masses, the place names themselves can help the geological expert (if it really was his fault) or, rather, the good engineer. Why ever was the Frejus narrows called Mal Passet: a bad step indeed (3). The mountain overlooking the reservoir and which slid into it causing the terrible overflowing, why was it called Monte Toc? Toc, in Venetian, means piece: it was a rock that split off in pieces and all the inhabitants of the valley expected the landslide. Vajont, the name of the reservoir, but previously of the pass, the gorge in which the dam was wedged. all 263 meters (world-beating historical record!) in Ladino Friulian dialect equals the Venetian va zo, goes down,

which collapses into the valley. In fact past landslides have been mentioned, by the poor inhabitants living on them.

Uortami, the geologist, in denying indignantly that he would ever have consented to the selection made for the dam site, stated that the choice fell to the engineers. Quite so. The philosophy of the two tragedies of Malpasset and Vajont (among the many others) is identical. At the bottom of these reckless projects, dictated and imposed by the hunger for profit, by an economic law to which all the navvies, the surveyor and chief engineer must all bow, for which reason it is a foolish remedy to uncover the guilty party at an inquest, lies the most idiotic of modern cults, the cult ofspecialization. Not only is it inhuman to hunt down the scapegoat, but also vain, since one has allowed this stupid productive society to arise, made of separate sections. No one is guilty because, if someone takes off the blindfold for a moment, he can say that he gave advice requested by the next section, that he was the expert, the specialist, the competent person.

The science and skill of producing, and especially of building, will, in the future society which will kill the monster of economic return, of surplus-value production, be unitary and indivisible. Not a man's head, but a social brain above ridiculous separated sections will see without those useful blindfolds the immensity of each problem.

We read the report of the engineer who for thirty years had dreamt of building the Vajont dam. The good man is dead and does not need our defence. He was interested by the purelymorphological fact that with a little dam one could hold back a lot of water and nowhere else would the return be so great at so little cost. A victim of inexorable determinism.

Engineer Semenza, in his comment, is surprised by the fact that one could have foreseen taking thirty years to develop his basic idea now that the dam is complete. He did not think that the long time required could be due to doubts over the correctness of the choice made. He thought that the work had been well divided into sections protected by the right of not knowing nor wanting to check one another's conclusions. In this illusion, which is not blameworthy nor even a crime of "commission" or of "omission", lies the omnipotence, stronger than all and even the best engineer, of the modern capitalist superstition of the division of labour, which Marx first condemned and only the revolution will kill. The innocence of the designer is found in these words: "Hundreds, thousands of people, scientists, engineers, workers of all trades, worked to complete this dam which should have closed the deep and narrow ravine of the Vajont stream. Vajont gorge (4) as some guides call it, since by nature it is so inaccessible and inhospitable". No one today would think that the tour guide was right because he made money taking people up to see the narrow gorge, not by working on the dam. "Among the first were the hydrologists" who take rainfall and stream regime measurements, allowing one "to find the volume of water that would be held in the dam's reservoir". "Higher up the geologist examines the rock characteristics in detail, helped by the most modern (oh come on now!) geophysical research." "Meanwhile, the topographer measures with microscopic precision (fashionable jargon!) the valley's configuration so as to draw in the contour lines perfectly."

Let us leave out the details of the design work or works, the ninety hours of computer time that saved years of work by a team of mathematicians, the tales of the experiments on wood then concrete models ... Only one passage interests us, the reference to the ineluctable economic determinism. "The design selected from among many others, dating from 1956, fully exploits thevalley's character-ics which seem to have been made for this purpose of building an exceptionally large dam".

The valley was made to be exploited, and if that had not been the case ... one would have had to have invented it.

With science, technology and labour, does man exploit nature? No, not at all, and the intelligent relationship between man and nature will arise when one stops making cost and design calculations inmoney, but in physical and human quantities.

One can say exploiting when a human group exploits another. The exploited collaborated with the exploiting enterprise in the grandiose constructions of the mercantile period. Many people were employed at Longarone and money was thrown around. The engineer has to answer: did it rain gold? It is true that a skilled worker struck over the evident danger of landslides, but it is also a bitter lesson that the worker who was kicked out by the cursed surveyor because he was lame and would not have been been able to escape in case of danger reacted in a violent manner. When the pay is good, risks to human life are normal fare for the society of money and wages.

The whole valley ran the risk, and now it is dead. The solution to this problem will never be found by the "democratic" method used by the currently available communists.

They are silly solutions to these tragedies – which only show that bourgeois, money, private initiative, market society has lived out its historical span and has by now become an even more putrescent corpse than the ones it flung into the Piave – the ones bandied about by newspapers fed on a gutless petty-bourgeois ideology, which perhaps a hundred years ago could get by, and which claims justice, honesty and sentences for those who get it wrong or cheat.

Socially and politically we stand apart from those who ask, in the name of the dead who risked their lives so that this iniquitous society could give them the only civilization it could, for three laughable enquiries:

The Ministerial Enquiry, called for by the ministers who have their fingers in the pie and delegated to university professors loyal to the system of sectorial responsability with which one has the right not to know "others' subjects" in this bureaucratic, scholastic and career-ridden system which is drowning us.

The Parliamentary Enquiry in which a group of people with no knowledge and of contrasting ideologies (save that of the greed for political success and ambition, which is the same from the extreme right to the extreme left) study what they do not understand and then have a vote on it in the assembly of "politicians", that is, those who should be the first to be tipped into the dustbin so as to liberate human society.

The judiciary, which knows that its job is to apply a code rooted in tradition and the latest constitution, useful for the petty thief and for the civil servant who in this case was the only one to be banged up for making public a "stolen" document which showed that the technical doubt over the dam was founded and long standing.

Three degrees of tricking, not the dead, but the living that look to the horrible parties and newspapers of all persuasions and drown in the unconsciousness of their destinies.

What is to be done with the dam? Another problem that the bureaucratic, democratic administrative mechanism will be unable to solve.

The dam was not flattened so Engineer Semenza, if he were still alive, would be innocent, looking at it from his sector's point of view.

But the problem was the stability of the valley sides after they suddenly received a hydraulic pressure of 26 atmospheres.

There was no alluvium at the bottom? What kind of excuse is that? The liquid flowed fast through the gap and thus did not deposit but eroded, creating over the centuries the conditions the topographers described to poor Semenza. Thus the side was friable, certainly permeable, and underneath the massive pressure on the strata that could yield caused Toc to slide.

The following reservoirs, which could have provided an empirical test result, took place without being tested and without the order of the omnipotent state.

The dam was too High. The law on this matter must be amended to state a legal maximum, let us say under 100 metres. But then the return on the operation would fall below the costs. Horror!
The monopoly would not lose out, but only the consumption pattern of those who depend on it, the same being the case if the state were to act directly.

Reformism, not only in Italy, flies this flag: the law passed, find the loophole.

An old engineer who could understand geology, topography and building mechanics since he had an old fashioned degree said that the dam could collapse now. Behind it there is no longer water, but a mixed deposit of water and earth (mud and slime) which, with its higher specific weight, could exercise a greater thrust. Here there are no models that hold good! The case is tooindeterminate and even the computers come up with nothing.

The Vajont basin was cut in two by the huge landslide with a volume higher than that of the water that it contained, a hill standing 100 metres above the water level.

But the smaller lake remaining next to the dam can generate the pressure indicated by the aforementioned engineer. It all depends on the height, that is the total, and the density of the mud which will be decanted.

The basin must be emptied, but not by blasting the dam with cannon-fire, but instead by installing syphons over it to replace the devices destroyed by the disaster and abandoning the potential energy which the turbine, if working. could have exploited.

We cannot believe that the Ministry of Public Works could have thought that the wall would remain in place to support (?) an Alpine lake.

That sewer of death is no Alpine lake. The lakes formed during the glaciation between very deep indestructible rock walls and with a modest dam of natural morainic hills. They have been tested by Mother Nature over millions of years, not by a Technical Commission!

Man certainly will win against nature. And will do so thanks to a science, a technology, an administration that will not be rented out to anyone.

Before bending nature to our ends, we will have had to have bent the sinister social forces which enslave us more than millions of cubic meters of grave stones and which condemn the replies of today's

experts to great rewards and grasping profits. We must dam the floods not of water and earth, but of filthy lucre.

Theses on the Chinese Question (1964)

After 1960, the year in which the 81 so-called Communist Parties (including Mao's) demonstrated their unanimity on the programme of Krushevite opportunism, a de facto break occurred between Peking and Moscow. We have analysed various documents in which China outlines its own national variant of Stalinism, but unlike the other "national socialisms" of Arab, Cuban or Yugoslav stamp, Chinese "socialism" insists on calling bourgeois Russia to account, on setting itself up as defender of Marxism and reconstructing under its aegis the ranks of the world proletariat. It is this claim, more than the inevitable antagonisms between the Russian and Chinese States, which requires our response, since neither the social practice nor the official political ideology of the Peking leaders is directed toward victory for the Communist programme.

The Revolutions of the East: Character and Perspectives

1. In China, as in the other backward countries of Africa and Asia, the two world wars brought to breaking point the contradiction between the development of the productive forces and the old relations of production inherited from the patriarchal regime. Here, over a long period of time, national revolts and agrarian rebellions have followed each other in quick succession, validating the prognostications already formulated by Marxism at the start of the century. Thus, despite the repeated defeats of the proletariat in the European industrial metropolises, the upsurge of national movements in the East has demonstrated the revolutionary strength of the antagonisms accumulated within the capitalist system. But, as has been proved today by the increasing retardation of the backward countries in relation to the economic development of their old industrialized metropolises, these contradictions cannot be solved within a national framework or by means of bourgeois "progress": they are the product of world capitalism, of its uneven development, of the accumulation of all wealth by a handful of super-industrialized States. It was exactly in those terms that the Communist International raised the question of the colonies in its 1919 Manifesto:

"The last war, which was by and large a war for colonies, was at the same time a war conducted with the help of the colonies (…) At best, Wilson's programme ("Freedom of the seas", "League of Nations", "internationalisation of the colonies") has as its task to effect a change of labels with regard to colonial slavery. The emancipation of the colonies is only possible in conjunction with the emancipation of the working class in the metropolises".

The proletariat had been defeated and then enslaved by bourgeois, pacifist ideology. But contrary to all the prophets of "social peace" and "peaceful coexistence", the certain lesson which the working class must derive from the revolutions of the East is this: that violence is always the sole midwife of history.

2. Whatever the oppression wrought by foreign imperialism in China, the nature of the economic and social contradictions created there were not such as to render China's revolution an "anti-capitalist" revolution per se. Marxism has always denounced this illusion of petit-bourgeois "socialism", which was

adopted also by the Russian populists and is today exploited by Mao's "extremism". About the Russian populists Lenin had this to say:

"They all readily mouth "socialist" phrases, but it would be impermissible for a class-conscious worker to be deceived as to the real meaning of those phrases. Actually there is not a grain of socialism in the "right to land", "equalised division of the land" or "socialization of the land". This should be clear to anyone who knows that the abolition of private land-ownership, and a new, even the "fairest" possible, division of land, far from affecting commodity production and the power of the market, of money and capital, leads to their expansion" ("The Political Parties in Russia", 1912, Collected Works, Vol. 18, pp. 52-3).

The liberation of the peasant from the bonds of natural economy, the development of a "modern" industry, utilising the reserves of labour and capital supplied by a "modern" agriculture, the creation of a national market and, crowning it all, the glorification of "national unity", of "national culture", and of all the "modern" attributes of the State power: all this has always been, and always will be, the programme of capitalist accumulation.

3. And yet Marxism, far from restricting itself in a bourgeois revolutionary movement to issuing formal demands for a national State and political democracy, makes the most rigorous assessment of the role of the social classes in all revolutions. The appearance of an industrial proletariat in China, as in tsarist Russia or Europe in 1848, indicated to communists the necessity for a class organization which would utilise the crises of the pre-bourgeois regime for its own political purposes. This is the line of the Communist Manifesto and of the October Revolution; a line that Marx named "permanent revolution". In his Supplementary Theses on the colonial question presented at the 2nd Congress of the 3rd International, Roy stressed the importance of this perspective ofindependent and continuous struggle for the proletariat in the colonies:

"Foreign domination constantly obstructs the free development of social life; therefore the revolution's first step must be the removal of this foreign domination. The struggle to overthrow foreign domination in the colonies does not therefore mean underwriting the national aims of the national bourgeoisie but much rather smoothing the path to liberation for the proletariat of the colonies (...) In the first period the revolution in the colonies will not be communist; if however from the very start the communist vanguard emerges at its head the revolutionary masses will be brought on to the correct path along which, through the gradual gathering of revolutionary experience, they will reach the hidden goal".

By imprisoning the Chinese proletariat, from the very start of the revolution, in "the block of the four classes" – political formula of the present "people's democracy" – Mao's party has marked the break, by the whole of the backward East, of the tactics so gloriously expounded by Russian Bolshevism.

4. The permanence of the revolutionary process which was to bring the proletariat of the backward countries to power, would make sense, in terms of the final victory of Communism, only if the proletarian revolution succeeded in spreading to the metropolises of Capital. In the second foreword to the Russian edition of the Manifesto, Marx wrote that Russia could only escape the painful phase of capitalist accumulation: "if the Russian revolution becomes the signal to a proletarian revolution in the West, so that both complement each other".

Lenin's International not only took up this perspective again for Soviet Russia, but extended it to the whole of Asia. We quote here from the theses of the Baku Congress in 1920:

"Only the complete triumph of the social revolution and the establishing of the Communist world economy can liberate the peasants of the East from ruin, poverty and exploitation. Therefore, no other course is open to their liberation than allying themselves to the revolutionary workers of the West, to their Soviet republics and simultaneously fighting the foreign capitalists as well as their own despots (the landowners and the bourgeoisie) until the complete victory over the world bourgeoisie and until the final establishment of the Communist regime".

It is well known how Stalinism turned this thesis on its head by making Russia's economic and diplomatic success the universal criterion of Communism's progress. Peking goes even further in repudiating it: instead of seeing the victory of the Western proletariat as the only prospect for social liberation in the East, Peking makes the cause of the international proletariat dependent on the outcome of the bourgeois national revolts in Africa and Asia.

5. In opposition to the Stalinist theory of "building socialism in the USSR", and the tactical extensions that the degenerated International gave to this theory in China, Trotsky has the historical merit of defending the unabridged view of the revolutionary process which was triggered by the first World War and the October Revolution. Thus, in his "Theses" of 1929 on the permanent revolution he declared:

"The completion of the socialist revolution within national limits is unthinkable. One of the basic reasons for the crisis in bourgeois society is the fact that the productive forces created by it can no longer be reconciled with the framework of the national State. From this follow, on the one hand, imperialist wars, on the other, the Utopia of a bourgeois United States of Europe. The socialist revolution begins on the national arena, it unfolds in the international arena, and is completed on the world arena".

Thus the theory of the permanent revolution is applied to each isolated proletarian dictatorship, both those whose economic structures are ripe for certain socialist changes and those in which they are still very backward. No more than Hitler's Germany, Stalinist Russia couldn't arrogate to itself the national privilege of "building socialism" within its borders. But on the other hand, Trotsky insisted:

"the development of the world revolution eliminates the question of countries that are 'mature' or 'immature' for socialism, in the spirit of that pedantic, lifeless classification given by the present programme of the Comintern. Insofar as capitalism has created a world market, a world division of labour and world productive forces, it has also prepared world economy as a whole for socialist transformation".

Democracy and the Proletariat: The National Question

6. By installing the dictatorship of the proletariat in a petty-bourgeois country which had experienced neither parliamentary regimes nor developed capitalism, the Russian Bolsheviks dealt a death-blow to the reformism of the 2nd International which had made bourgeois democracy, and its "progress", an absolute condition for the "transition" to socialism.

Half a century later, not content with considering constitutional reforms and democratic methods as the royal road to socialism, the renegades define socialism itself with bourgeois terms like "people's democracy" or "State of the entire people". Those who destroyed Lenin's International have but one

slogan and one creed: independence of the various "Communist" parties, non-intervention in the internal affairs of the "national" parties.

In explaining the collapse of the 2nd International, the 1919 Manifesto declared:

"But the centre of gravity of the workers' movement during that period remained wholly on national soil, wholly within the framework of national States, upon the foundation of national industry, within the sphere of national parliamentarianism".

We deny that the way the 3rd International ended up was inevitable. World capitalism and the imperialist wars had just shifted this "centre of gravity" onto the international arena, not just for the advanced capitalist countries, but also for the oppressed countries where the national colonial question arose to its fullest extent.

7. The national question arises as a specific question for the proletarian movement only in the revolutionary phase of capitalism when the bourgeoisie storms the bastions of power in order to complete its social and economic transformation. During the mature phase of capitalism, on the other hand, if any workers' party puts out a "national programme" demanding the perfecting of the representative or economic system of the bourgeois State, it constitutes a programme for class collaboration and for "defence of the homeland". That is why Marxism has always strictly defined with reference to geographical areas these two successive phases of capitalism.

"The epoch of bourgeois democratic revolutions in Western continental Europe embraces a fairly definite period: approximately between 1789 to 1871" wrote Lenin. "This was precisely the period of national movements and the creation of national States. When this period drew to a close, Western Europe had been transformed into a settled system of bourgeois States, which as a general rule, were nationally uniform states. Therefore to seek the right to self-determination in the programme of the West-Europe socialists at this time of day is to betray one's ignorance of the ABC of Marxism. In Eastern Europe and Asia the epoch of the bourgeois democratic revolutions did not start until 1905. The revolutions in Russia, Persia, Turkey and China, the Balkan wars – such is the chain of world events of OUR period in our "Orient"" (Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-determination", 1914, Coll. Works, Vol. 20, pp. 405-6).

Today, this phase is also concluded as far as the entire Afro-Asian area is concerned. Everywhere more or less "independent", and more or less "popular", national States have arisen since the end of the Second World War which, in a more or less "radical" way, have promoted the accumulation of capital. For this reason alone, Chinese "extremism" can no longer be depicted as the theory of a national revolutionary movement. Instead it is the official ideology of an established bourgeois State, a programme for class collaboration with all that that implies in terms of "socialist" phraseology.

8. Even during the period of bourgeois democratic revolutions, communists mustn't make a fetish of the "national question", and should never place resolving it above the interests of the class and their own struggle. The revolutionary proletariat must never forget that its historic task is to destroy the bourgeois State and its relations of production in order to build a society where classes will disappear, along with distinctions between States and even between nations.

As it capitalism develops it tears down national boundaries with its commodities and its armies. As destroyer of property relations, capitalism breaks down national entities and imposes its forms of world

domination upon the most advanced countries as upon the oppressed peoples. Therefore communists should not expect capitalism to create a harmonious "society of nations" where relations between States are regulated in conformity with "people's rights". They were however entitled to hope that the overthrow of world capitalism might mean that the East would be able to escape the phase of capitalist accumulation and constitution of bourgeois national States.

Lenin also said:

"We cannot say whether Asia will have had time to develop into a system of independent national States, like Europe, before the collapse of capitalism, but it remains an undisputed fact, that capitalism, having awakened Asia, has called forth national movements everywhere in that continent, too; that the tendency of these movements is towards the creation of national States in Asia; thatit is such states that ensure the best conditions for the development of capitalism" (ibid., p.399).

9. The Third International had foreseen the different ways in which the world revolution might develop:

- Simultaneous victory of the proletariat in the West and the East

- Victory of the proletariat in the industrial centres and independence for the colonies under the national bourgeoisie

- Victory of the proletariat in the colonies and delay of the communist revolution in Europe.

But it never considered the victory of a block of classes to be a lasting revolutionary perspective to which the proletariat in the backward countries should link its destiny. The theses of the 2nd Congress, which Roy dedicated especially to China and India, in any case stressed how necessary it was for the proletariat to detach itself from the "national" bourgeoisie:

"Two movements can be discerned [in the oppressed countries] which are growing further and further apart with every day which passes. One of them is the bourgeois-democratic nationalist movement, which pursues the programme of political liberation with the conservation of the capitalist order; the other is the struggle of the propertyless peasants and workers for their liberation from every kind of exploitation. The first movement attempts, often with success, to control the second; the Communist International must however fight against any such control, and promote the development of the class consciousness of the working masses of the colonies".

10. The history of the Chinese workers' movement and of the political tradition of the Communist Party of China is one of rejection of this demand made by the International. Already having entered the Kuomintang in 1924, the young Chinese Communist Party (CCP) gave its support to the "people's three principles", Asiatic variant of the formulas advocated by Lincoln ("Government of the people, for the people and by the people") and the bourgeois French revolution ("Liberty, Equality, Fraternity). As Trotsky pointed out, the fusion of the Communist Party of China with the nationalist party had nothing to do with the tactics of temporary alliances which Marx considered acceptable during a bourgeois democratic revolution and which had been used by the Bolsheviks in Russia. It was a case of a merger on principle, renewed by Mao Tse-tung at every "stage" of the Chinese revolution even after the defeat and destruction of the Kuomintang. Indeed in 1945, in his report "On Coalition Government" he would declare:

"These views of ours are completely in accord with the revolutionary views of Dr. Sun Yat-sen... struggle against foreign feudal oppression to deliver the Chinese people from their miserable colonial, semi-colonial and semi-feudal plight and establish a proletarian-led, new-democratic China, whose main task is the liberation of the peasantry, a China of the revolutionary Three People's Principles of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, a China which is independent, free, democratic, united, prosperous and powerful. This is what we have actually been doing" (Sel. Works, Vol. III, pp. 230 and 232).

From the Russian Revolution to the Canton Commune: the Revenge of the Mensheviks

11. It is in the analysis of the events of 1905 that Bolshevism found its tactics confirmed and which separated it definitively from the Menshevist current. Lenin stated that in Russia "the bourgeois revolution is impossible as a revolution of the bourgeoisie". Thus the proletariat cannot be expected to wait until the bourgeoisie has carried out its political and social tasks (overthrowing tsarism and abolishing feudal property) before launching its own struggle. Leading the social movement without restricting it within bourgeois juridical forms (the constituent assembly) was the meaning of the slogan: "the democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants" and "All power to the soviets!". The result of these tactics was not the establishment of a bourgeois democracy but of the open dictatorship of the proletariat.

In combatting the theory of the "stages" of bourgeois revolution which Stalin already supported at this time, Lenin recalled in March 1917 the essence of the conflict between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks:

"Ours is a bourgeois revolution, therefore, the workers must support the bourgeoisie, say the incompetent politicians in the camp of the liquidators. Ours is a bourgeois revolution, we Marxists say,therefore, the workers must open the eyes of the people to the deception practiced by the bourgeois politicians, teach them to put no faith in words, to depend entirely on their own strength, theirown organisation, their own unity, and their own weapons" ("Letters From Afar", Coll. Works, Vol. 23, pp.297-308).

12. Stalinism has done its utmost to prevent the application to the colonial countries of the principles and lessons of the October Revolution, and to this end it has supported a typically Menshevik interpretation, according to which the imperialist yoke rendered the "national" bourgeoisie of the backward countries more revolutionary than the Russian anti-feudal bourgeoisie. In reply to this theory of Bukharin, Trotsky wrote:

"A policy that disregarded the powerful pressure of imperialism on the internal life of China would be radically false. But a policy that proceeded from an abstract conception of national oppressionwithout its class refraction and reflection would be no less false (...) Imperialism is a highly powerful force in the internal relationships of China. The main source of this force is not the warships in the waters of the Yangtze Kiang, but the economic and political bond between foreign capital and the native bourgeoisie" (The Chinese Revolution and Stalin's Theses, 1927).

Without an analysis of the class relations in China, or in the other colonial countries, it was impossible to understand either the essence of the agrarian question or the phenomenon of the comprador bourgeoisie, or finally the role of the "warlords" and the other nationalist generals such as Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Ching-wei, to whom the International looked for "allies" but found only hangmen.

13. "The Asiatic revolutions have again shown us the spinelessness and baseness of liberalism, the exceptional importance of the independence of the democratic masses, and the pronounced demarcation between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie of all kinds" (Lenin, "Historical Destiny of the Doctrine of Karl Marx", 1913, Coll. Works, Vol. 18, pp. 584-5).

Such are the lessons that Lenin drew after 1913 from the first wave of bourgeois national revolutions in the East: Russia (1905), Persia (1906), Turkey (1908), China (1911). And Trotsky, shortly before the ending of the second revolutionary with the massacre of the Canton proletariat in 1927, would sum up the bitter lessons of the International's tactics as follows:

"From the theses of Stalin it follows that the proletariat can separate itself from the bourgeoisie only after the latter has tossed it aside, disarmed it, beheaded it and crushed it under foot. But this is precisely the way the abortive revolution of 1848 developed, where the proletariat had no banner of its own, but followed at the heels of the petty-bourgeois democracy, which in turn trotted behind the liberal bourgeoisie and led the workers under the sabre of Cavaignac. Great though the real peculiarities of the Chinese situation may be, the fundamentals that characterized the development of the 1848 revolution have been repeated in the Chinese revolution with such deadly precision as though neither the lessons of 1848, 1871, 1905 and 1917 nor those of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Comintern had ever existed".

And during the great battles of the Chinese revolution between 1924 and 1927, it was not actually the future of an "independent, prosperous and powerful" China which was compromised for many years, but the future of the entire workers' movement in the colonies, for an infinitely longer, and much more painful, historical period.

14. By joining the Kuomintang, and dispatching its "ministers" to the nationalist government in Canton, the CCP wasn't making a smart tactical manoeuvre to increase its influence as the International in Moscow would have had it believe. It was renouncing its principles and subordinating its action to the national strategy of the bourgeoisie. Stalin took this position to its extreme consequences, and the "theses" he published in April 1927, more than a year after Chiang Kai-shek's first blow against the Communists, were given a "classical" form.

Indeed adhesion to "the people's three principles" did not imply just the simple recognition of abstract principles, the "common belief of the workers and the bourgeoisie in the national movement". According to the doctrine of Sun Yat-sen to the "three principles" corresponded "three stages" in the development of the bourgeois revolution:

- the first, "military", stage was to translate the principle of nationalism into practice through the unification of China;

- the second, "educative", stage was to prepare the people for political democracy;

- the third, and final, stage was to realise this democracy and introduce "the welfare of the people".

Stalin adopted these same "stages" in his "theses" renaming them anti-imperialist, agrarian and soviet, only for him the massacre of the Chinese proletariat signified the ending of the "first stage", during which Communists were neither to broach the agrarian question nor consider leaving the Kuomintang. All the Stalinist parties would take up this policy again in the colonial countries. In China, where it was

used for the first time, it revealed itself as open class betrayal, abandoning the insurgent proletarians in the main industrial centres to the blood-thirsty repression of Chiang Kai-shek.

15. Stalinism never wished to consider the defeat in 1927 as anything other than a "stage" of the bourgeois revolution in China and a "temporary" setback in the workers' movement. We reject this interpretation. The class struggles of this period were anything but "partial", so much so that they were transformed into a struggle for power between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and defeat was accompanied by the physical and long-lasting elimination of the entire Communist vanguard. By then, as Trotsky said, the "democratic revolution" in China had taken on the character not of bourgeois revolution, but of bourgeois counter-revolution. Finally, the failure in 1927 marked the complete rejection on the part of the Moscow International of the Bolshevik tradition in all countries in the East. The April Theses of 1917, in which Lenin announced the approaching victory of the Russian revolution, are contradicted word for word by the theses of April 1927 in which Stalin justifies Chiang Kai-shek's coup d'etat by the theory of revolutionary "stages".

In opposition to bourgeois and national historiography, Marxism must re-establish its proletarian and international concept of the historical course of the bourgeois revolutionary movements:

1789 - 1871: bourgeois democratic movements in Western Europe (as well as in North America and Japan);

1905 - 1950 (roughly): national revolutionary movements in Eastern Europe and in the entire Afro-Asian area; just one proletarian victory: in Russia;

1917 - 1927: world strategy of the permanent revolution, with defeat in Europe (1918-1923) and in Asia (1924-1927) as the conditions for the Stalinist counter-revolution in Russia and in the rest of the world.

Peasant "Socialism" and the "New" Democracy

16. Marxism has not only denounced the theory of the "democratic stage", it has also rejected, during the "agrarian stage", the use by Stalin of the slogan "democratic dictatorship of workers and peasants" to cover up the governmental alliance with the left of the Kuomintang. In its completed form this theory has become the theory of the "new" democracy, signaling the complete abandonment of those Marxist conceptions on the class nature of each and every State.

"Thus the numerous forms of State systems in the world can be reduced to these three basic types: 1) republics under bourgeois dictatorship; 2) republics under the dictatorship of the proletariat; 3) republics under the joint dictatorship of several revolutionary classes(...). During a specific historical period, the only applicable form of State organisation is the third, the one which we call the new-democratic republic". (Mao Tse-tung, On New Democracy, 1940).

Lenin's International never called upon the proletarians of the colonies to establish such "intermediary" States between the dictatorship of the proletariat and that of the bourgeoisie, and we also deny that there exists, or ever has existed, a single example of such a State after over 40 years of "anti-imperialist fronts". The experience of duality of power during the Russian revolution showed that the "democratic dictatorship of workers and peasants" is inevitably transformed, in a short period, into either the dictatorship of the proletariat or the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Trotsky extended this lesson to the

Chinese revolution, and we can see its confirmation today in the bourgeois outcome of every anti-colonial movement.

"While the Russian Narodniks, together with the Mensheviks, lent to their short-lived "dictatorship" the form of an open dual power, the Chinese "revolutionary democracy" did not even attain that stage. And inasmuch as history in general does not work to order, there only remains for us to understand that there is not and will not be any other "democratic dictatorship" except the dictatorship exercised by the Kuomintang since 1925" (Trotsky, The Communist International After Lenin).

17. After having long ignored the agrarian movement and the arming of the peasants, the Stalinists became so infatuated with it that they came to consider it the "defining trait of the Chinese revolution and the basis of the new democracy".

"In essence, the national question is a peasant question", Stalin declared. And Mao commented:

"This means that the Chinese revolution is essentially a peasant revolution, and that the resistance to Japan now going on is essentially peasant resistance. Essentially, the politics of New Democracy means giving power to peasants" (Mao Tse-tung, On New Democracy, 1940)

It is not in this, as far as we are concerned, that the originality of the bourgeois revolutions in the imperialist epoch lies. In the past, all of them have all used the peasants in different ways, including the armed organization, and they have all, to varying degrees, brought along profound changes in agriculture. Yet Marxism has always stressed the incapacity of the peasant class to define a policy of its own. It has shown that agrarian insurrections, which are an integral part of bourgeois revolutions, have only succeeded under the leadership of the cities and by ceding power to them. TheCommunist Manifesto already insisted back in 1848 on the dual character of the peasantry and why it cannot act as an independent class. The peasant is nothing but the social representative of bourgeois relations; he always leaves his political representation to others.

To all those champions of peasant "socialism" who, both in Russia and China, have reproached us for "underestimating" the peasantry, we answer that we have always stressed the lessons of Marxism and that the originality of the Eastern revolutions lies not in the armed intervention of the peasant masses, but in the prospect of a proletariat course towards not inevitably bourgeois goals.

18. The defeat of the Chinese proletariat explains why the revolution had had to recede to the countryside. But it does not provide justification for communists to exchange their class conceptions for the theories of peasant "socialism". In 1848-9 the failure of the German revolution had left the proletariat in the same politically disorganised situation; it had put it in the same danger of being submerged by petit-bourgeois democracy. This was the danger confronted by Marx and Engels in their famous Address to the Communist League.

Against the petit-bourgeois radicals, who "seek to ensnare the workers in a party organization in which general social-democratic phrases prevail, while their particular interests are kept hidden", theAddress stresses the necessity of an independent class party.

Against every type of petit-bourgeois democratic power, this is how the Address introduced the slogan of the proletarian revolution:

"Alongside the new official governments the workers must simultaneously establish their own revolutionary workers' governments, either in the form of local executive committees and councils or through workers' clubs or committees, so that the bourgeois-democratic governments not only immediately lose the support of the workers but find themselves from the very beginning supervised and threatened by authorities behind which stand the whole mass of the workers". (Marx, The Revolutions of 1848).

This is the classical answer of Marxism to the reactionary formulas of "workers' and peasants' parties", "workers' and peasants' governments" and of the "new" democracy. The Address of 1850 is directed entirely against them. If Marx and Engels do not speak of "democratic dictatorship" here, it is because they didn't consider it a fitting slogan for the proletariat to use against the agitation of the petit-bourgeois democrats. The opinions of Stalin and Mao cannot even be based on the absence in Germany of the "original" particularity they claimed to have discovered in China, and indeed even in Russia: the agrarian revolution. On the contrary, Marx and Engels more than once discounted a 're-run' of the peasant war of the 16th century under the political guidance of the proletariat.

19. The Russian revolution, no more than the German bourgeois revolution, doesn't reveal the secret of a stable "popular" power representing a block of classes. Long before 1917 Lenin explained the formula of the "revolutionary and democratic dictatorship of workers and peasants" as a power of the proletariat "relying upon the peasants" or "drawing the peasants along behind it"; a formula which was neither frontist nor "democratic". This is how, in perfect continuity with Marx and Engels, he interprets the slogan in April 1917:

"The revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry has already become a reality in the Russian revolution, for this "formula" envisages only a class correlation and not a concrete political institution implementing this correlation, this cooperation. "The Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies" – there you have the "revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry' already accomplished in reality" (Lenin, "Letters On Tactics", Coll. Works, Vol. 24, 44-5).

"We have side by side, existing together, simultaneously, both the rule of the bourgeoisie (the government of Lvov and Guchov) and a revolutionary-dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, which is voluntarily ceding power to the bourgeoisie, voluntarily making itself an appendage of the bourgeoisie" (ibid., p.46).

"A new and different task now faces us: to effect a split within this dictatorship between the proletarian elements (the anti-defencist, internationalist, 'communist' elements, who stand for a transition to the commune) and the small-proprietor or petit-bourgeois elements" (ibid., p. 45).

Between February and October the populists and Mensheviks were rabid supporters of the "democratic dictatorship", reproaching Lenin for "underestimating" the peasantry and for wanting to "jump over" the stage of bourgeois social reforms. The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, pointed out that it was not a question of "introducing socialism" into Russia, but of seizing political power; after which they would show how the proletarian dictatorship would realise the economic reforms of the petit-bourgeois democracy.

20. After the capitulation before the Chinese liberal bourgeoisie, the "struggle against Trotskyism" aimed to ensure the triumph, within the defeated proletariat, of positions which had previously been

defended by the bloc of populists and Mensheviks at the time of the Russian revolution. And it was Mao Tse-tung, one time member of the Central Committee of the Kuomintang and recent agitator of the peasantry, who executed this task.

In our view he neither "saved" nor "reconstructed" the party of the proletariat by leading it "into the mountains" and pushing it into peasant guerrilla warfare: he simply drowned it in the confused petit-bourgeois mass. In contrast, Lenin in April 1917, and Marx in March 1850, were able to prevent Communists from getting bogged down in this way. And as regards the question of power in the Chinese revolution, Mao tse-tung has not even shaken off the petit-bourgeois illusions which allowed Chiang Kai-shek's repression to go unchecked in 1927. The theory of the "new democracy" is nothing but the development of these same illusions in a period and in a country in which the weakness of the "national" bourgeoisie left no other prospect for constituting the bourgeois power than by the action of the "popular" and peasant masses, so inept and slow to get themselves organised.

The petty-bourgeois democrats love to blame 'reaction' for the difficulties they have in achieving 'effective' unity, for their lack of character and their innate instability. Marxism, on the other hand, sees it as a reflection of their unstable economic situation. To appeal to the political initiative of these masses in order to found a national State, to combat imperialism or to realise the socialist programme, this not only repudiates Marx and Lenin, but compromises the entire revolutionary movement. Proof enough is provided, in our view, by the interminable fluctuations of the Chinese revolution and, today, by the blood-stained anarchy contorting the major part of black Africa.

This is why in 1917 Lenin set aside the "old formula" of the "revolutionary and democratic dictatorship", which the populists and Mensheviks wanted to "realise" by means of... the constituent assembly. In the same way the Bolsheviks consigned the name "social-democratic party" to the archives of the 2nd International.

Because, and this also goes for the "new democracy":

""Democracy" expresses in reality one moment the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, next the impotent reformism of the petit-bourgeoisie that submits to this dictatorship" (Lenin, The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky).

"Impotent Petit-Bourgeois Reformism"

21. In their 1850 Address, Marx and Engels warned German proletarians that the petit-bourgeois democracy would play the same treacherous role as the liberal bourgeoisie in the revolutionary transformation of the old social and political structures. The confirmation of these predictions in Russia would be the social-revolutionaries. The Chinese example gives us absolute confirmation on the scale of an entire historical period and of an entire country.

"The democratic petty bourgeois, far from wanting to transform the whole of society in the interests of the revolutionary proletarians, only aspire to a change in social conditions which will make the existing society as tolerable and comfortable for themselves as possible. They therefore demand above all else a reduction in government spending through a restriction of the bureaucracy and the transference of the major tax burden onto the large landowners and bourgeoisie. They further demand the removal of the pressure exerted by big capital on small capital through the establishment of public credit institutions and the passing of laws against usury, whereby it would be possible for themselves and the peasants to

receive advances on favourable terms from the State instead of from capitalists; also, the introduction of bourgeois property relationships on the land through the complete abolition of feudalism...

"As far as the workers are concerned one thing, above all, is definite: they are to remain as before. However, the democratic petty bourgeois want better wages and security for the workers, and hope to achieve this by an extension of State employment and by welfare measures... But these demands can in no way satisfy the party of the proletariat. While the democratic petty bourgeois want to bring the revolution to an end as quickly as possible, achieving at most the aims already mentioned, it is our interest and our task to make the revolution permanent until all the more propertied classes have been driven from their ruling positions, until the proletariat has conquered State power and until the association of the proletarians has progressed sufficiently far – not only in one country but in all leading countries of the world – that competition between the proletarians of these countries ceases and at least the decisive forces of production are concentrated in the hands of the workers. Our concern cannot simply be to modify private property, but to abolish it, not to hush up class antagonisms but to abolish classes, not to improve the existing society but to found a new one" (Address..., ibid. pp. 323-4).

22. With regard to the agrarian question, Mao's party had done nothing to combat the petit-bourgeois tendencies which were anxious to emphasise the break with the old relations with a juridical consecration of the sacred rights of peasant property. And none of the reforms so noisily proclaimed since the creation of the People's Republic have contemplated a greater concentration of agriculture than that based on the development of small production, the "interests" of the small-holding peasant and State "aid" for the latter. When they wished to overcome these limitations, which are those of bourgeois relations of production, the social catastrophe which occurred was no less serious than that which followed the false Stalinist collectivisation in Russia.

In brief, the famous "agrarian revolution" is reduced to a harsh accumulation of capital in the Chinese rural areas in accordance with the two classical phases of the development of capitalist agriculture: firstly the establishment of peasant property, then a slow process of expropriation and concentration under the impulse of the bourgeois productive forces and a growing market economy.

"If no special obstacle arises, we are prepared to continue this policy after the war, first extending rent and interest reduction to the whole country and then taking proper measures for the gradual achievement of "land of the tiller"" (Mao Tse-tung, On Coalition Government, 1945, op.cit., p. 248).

"Then, as the peasants are helped to organize farming and other production co-operatives step by step on a voluntary basis, the productive forces will grow" (ibid., p.251).

It has taken a quarter of a century (1927-1952) to achieve the first phase: confiscation and division. But before China has a "modern", concentrated, i.e., fully capitalist agriculture, we can only hope that the Communist proletariat of the world will have got the better of national, peasant and petit-bourgeois "socialism".

23. In the weary historical development of Chinese agriculture we can see one fact confirmed: its bourgeois character. But our criticism of the agrarian policy of the CCP is to do with a matter of principle: all it has done is mirror the molecular processes of this development without trying to anticipate its social consequences, particularly as regards the overthrow of bourgeois property relations. Let us quote again from the 1850 Address:

"The first point over which the bourgeois democrats will come into conflict with the workers will be the abolition of feudalism; as in the first French revolution, the petty bourgeoisie will want to give the feudal lands to the peasants as free property; that is, they will try to perpetuate the existence of the rural proletariat, and to form a petty-bourgeois peasant class which will be subject to the same cycle of impoverishment and debt which still afflicts the French peasant. The workers must oppose this plan both in the interest of the rural proletariat and in their own interest. They must demand the confiscated feudal property remain State property and be used for workers' colonies, cultivated collectively by the rural proletariat with all the advantages of large-scale farming and where the principle of common property will immediately achieve a sound basis in the midst of the shaky system of bourgeois property relations" (op. cit., pp. 327-8).

For Communists, it was not a matter of determining whether China or petit-bourgeois Russia was "ripe" for this transformation: the overthrow of bourgeois domination is conceivable only on an international scale. Neither was it a matter of inventing, in a given country, "collectivist" recipes in order to accelerate its economic development. "We write a decree and not a programme", Lenin said commenting on the "Decree on the Land", which some reproached for being the programme of the social-revolutionaries. And yet on one point this "decree" differed from their "programme": it did not include the aspirations of the peasantry in fixed juridical forms (division of land, nationalization). In this resides the whole of the difference between the programmes of national "socialism" and internationalist Communism.

24. The petit-bourgeois policy of Mao's party appears in a still clearer light in the "question of the workers". Far from writing "abolition of the wages system" on its banner, the CCP proclaims the association of capital and labour and does not neglect any "measure of charity" in the tradition of the "socialists" ˆ la Louis Blanc:

"The task of the Chinese working class is to struggle not only for the establishment of a new-democratic State but also for China's industrialization and modernization of her agriculture. "The policy of adjusting the interests of labour and capital will be adopted under the new-democratic State system. On the one hand, it will protect the interests of the workers, institute an eight to ten hour working day according to circumstance, provide suitable unemployment relief and social insurance and safeguard trade union rights; on the other hand, it will guarantee legitimate profits to properly managed State, private and co-operative enterprises – so that both the public and private sectors and both labour and capital will work together to develop industrial production" (Mao Tse-tung, On Coalition Government, 1945, op. cit., p. 254).

Such a programme, such a practice, does not differ at all from the old reformism of the advanced capitalist countries, from the election speeches of any "progressive" deputy or any "reactionary" minister of the West. By calling this "socialism" and vindicating its exclusivity as compared with Moscow, Mao has elevated himself to the "ideological" level of the bourgeois conservative forces of the world. He has lost his halo as a peasant agitator.

In China the petit-bourgeois democracy ceased to be revolutionary in 1927; even before it took State power it had become reformist; today it has become reactionary, presenting its illusions, and especially its economico-social practice, under the label of "socialist construction". That is the only political significance that we attach to its conflict with Moscow.

25. Thus the historical destiny of Chinese "populism" has been brought to a close. Since the first bourgeois revolution in 1911 Lenin stressed the double aspect of Sun Yat-sen's ideology. Utopianwas the idea of realising "socialism" through a nationalisation of the land, the "limitation" of big capital and the "honest" application of a plan for industrial development agreed upon by the Great Powers. But this programme had a bourgeois revolutionary substance that the Bolsheviks could recognise in China, as in Russia. In adopting it, and realising it, Mao's party conferred on it the only "original development" that was reserved for it: the Utopian idea of peasant "socialism" has become the reactionary ideology of the "socialist construction" in China; and its revolutionary substance has been squandered in the ocean of petty-bourgeois reforms.

Thus did the political ideology of a class degenerate long after history had condemned it to death. At the other extreme, as early as 1894, as the Russian proletariat was taking its first faltering steps, Lenin could announce the ideological bankruptcy of the "Friends of the People" several decades before their "popular" power saw the light of day:

"The rural countryside is indeed splitting up. Nay more, the countryside long ago split up completely. And the old Russian peasant socialism split up with it, making for workers' socialism, on the one hand, and degenerating into vulgar petit-bourgeois radicalism, on the other hand. This change cannot be described as anything but degeneration. From the doctrine that peasant life is a special order and that our country has taken an exceptional path of development, there has emerged a sort of diluted eclecticism, which can no more deny that commodity economy has become the basis of economic development and has grown into capitalism, but which refuses to see the necessity of the class struggle under this system. From a political programme, calculated to arouse the peasantryfor the socialist revolution against the foundations of modern society, there has emerged a programme calculated to patch up, to "improve" the conditions of the peasantry while preserving the foundations of modern society" (Lenin, "What the Friends of the People Are", Part III, 1894 - Coll. Works, Vol. 1, pp. 264-5).

Rivalries in the Bourgeois East

26. Unlike India and other colonial countries, China entered modern history as "everybody's colony". Very soon the export of capital prevailed over the export of industrial products from the old English metropolis. To protect their investments the Great Powers "agreed" on the division of the country into spheres of influence. In Peking the diplomatic corps had the State finances at their disposal. This situation was a reflection, as Lenin pointed out, of the transition of capitalism to its highest stage: imperialism. Wilson's programme for "the internationalisation of the colonies", Kautsky's "ultra-imperialist" version of it, and the project, laid down by Sun Yat-sen, for the creation of a consortium of the Great Powers for the development of an "independent" China had no other objective basis.

"Let us assume – said Lenin – that all the imperialist countries conclude an alliance for the "peaceful" division of those parts of Asia; this alliance would be an alliance of "internationally united finance capital". There are actual examples of alliance of this kind in the history of the 20th century – the attitude of the powers to China for instance. We ask, is it "conceivable", assuming that the capitalist system remains intact - and this is the assumption that Kautsky does make – that such alliance would be more than temporary, that they would eliminate friction, conflicts and struggle in every possible form?" (Lenin, Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism, 1916).

The example of China has shown that it was inconceivable. The country which at the beginning of the century seemed to offer the greatest promise of a capitalist development and the surest guarantees of profits has become the closed battlefield of civil wars and imperialist rivalry. Or rather, faced with the outbreak of these antagonisms world imperialism had to renounce all its economic "plans" in China, transferring the unbridled competition between Capitals to the old colonies or semi-colonies: India, Africa, South America. Here "overseas development" and the stale pacifisms of the Russo-American Wilsons and Kautskys reappeared: but the groundwork was also laid for future revolutionary explosions on an even larger scale.

27. Mao's party did all it could to ensure its victory wasn't characterised by a violent rupture of the imperialist chain in Asia. The CCP, adhering even more completely to the world war than Sun Yat-sen, acquired the illusions of the liberal Chinese bourgeoisie about a "society of nations", and an "international co-operation", which would benefit China.

"The CCP agrees with the Atlantic Charter and with the decisions of the international conferences of Moscow, Teheran and Yalta (...). The fundamental principles of the CCP's foreign policy are as follows: to establish and develop diplomatic relations with all countries, to resolve all questions of mutual relations (...) setting out from the need to crush the fascist aggressors, to maintain international peace, to mutually respect independence and equality in the rights of States, to cooperate with each other in the interests of States and peoples" (Mao Tse-tung, On the Coalition Government, 1945).

Sun Yat-sen recognised the bankruptcy of this programme back in 1924! Mao not only remained faithful to it but passed it off as "socialism":

"The socialist countries, great and small, whether economically developed or not, must establish their relations on the basis of the principles of complete equality, of respect for territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence, of non-interference in internal affairs, as well as reciprocal support and assistance" (Letter in 25 points, 14/6/63).

In opposition to the petty-bourgeois utopia of a 'socialism' of the countries realising a 'harmonious' development towards 'equal' trade, we call for the destruction of the bourgeois countries and the establishment of non-mercantile, not merely 'equal', relations between countries in which tomorrow the dictatorship of the proletariat will be established!

28. Far from reflecting 'ideological differences', the Sino-Soviet conflict exists on the same terrain as bourgeois national interests. It is incontestable that the compromises which the USSR made with the indigenous bourgeoisie and with foreign imperialism delayed the constitution of national bourgeois States in the East until after the 2nd World War. Just as the Russian Revolution was re-awakening the anti-colonial movements in Asia, the Stalinist counter-revolution halted their development. But Mao's party taking its stand against Moscow today never denounced this betrayal: neither in 1937, when the CPP timidly executed the turn towards "popular fronts" by renewing the alliance with Chiang Kai-shek, nor in 1945, when Stalin signed a treaty of peace and friendship, again with Chiang, which was supposed to last... thirty years.

It isn't therefore consciousness of the interests of the anti-colonial movement, less still a critique of Russian 'socialism', which lies behind the Sino-soviet conflict. Rather it is the contradictions between the interests of Chinese capitalism and Russian imperialism:

"It is yet more absurd to transpose into relations between the socialist countries the praxis consistent with realising profits at the expense of others – a praxis which characterises relations between capitalist countries – and arrive at stating that the "economic integration" and "common market" introduced by monopolist groups in order to corner markets and divide up profits could serve as an example to the socialist countries in their mutual assistance and economic collaboration" (Letter in 25 points).

29. The 'programme' which Stalin pushed through at the 6th Comintern Congress excluded China and the other backward countries from 'building socialism' within their national borders: a privilege which Russia had so recently arrogated to itself. Just at the moment when the interests of Russian capitalism became integrated into those of the world market, China took up this old Stalinist slogan to use on its own behalf. And about it we will repeat what Trotsky said about "Russian socialism":

"The world division of labour, the dependence of soviet industry upon foreign technology, the dependence of the productive forces of the advanced countries of Europe upon Asiatic raw materials, etc., etc., make the construction of an independent socialist society in any single country in the world impossible" (Theses on the Permanent Revolution).

The "construction of Socialism" in China can signify only the accumulation of capital and the extension of a market economy. But this theory hasn't managed to mask much more acute antagonisms. The Sino-soviet conflict, the entire history of the national bourgeois movements in Asia and Africa, and every conference on world trade has anxiously underlined the growing backwardness of the 'under-developed' countries, be they 'independent' or 'socialist', compared to the handful of great imperial powers which detain all military, economic and political power in today's world.

30. To avert the destiny awaiting it, the bourgeoisie of the backward countries strives by all means to pass off its political and national emancipation as social and human emancipation of the exploited masses. The proletarians of the ex-colonies, who are victims both of their own bourgeoisies and the contradictions accumulated within world imperialism, will find ever more reason to break with democratic and reformist ideology. They will then recall that Marxism, and Lenin's International, never expected political democracy and national independence to free the colonial peoples from exploitation:

"Finance capital, in its drive to expand, can 'freely' buy or bribe the freest democratic or republican government and the elective officials of any, even an 'independent', country. The domination of finance capital and of capital in general is not to be abolished by any reforms in the sphere of political democracy; and self-determination belongs wholly and exclusively to this sphere. This domination of finance capital, however, does not in the least nullify the significance of political democracy as a freer, wider and clearer form of class oppression and class struggle" (The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-determination, Lenin, 1916).

It is against this more open, broader, and freer form of class oppression that the proletariat of 'popular' China, and of Russo-American India, will have to conduct their struggle.

Considerations on the Party’s General Activity When the General Situation is Historically Unfavorable (1965)

1. The so-called question of the party's internal organisation has always been a subject in the positions of traditional Marxists and of the present Communist Left, born as opposition to the errors of the Moscow International. Naturally, such a topic is not to be isolated in a watertight compartment, but it is instead inseparable from the general framework of our positions.

2. What is part of the doctrine, of the party's general theory, can be found in the classical texts; it is also exhaustively summarised in more recent works, in Italian texts such as the Rome and Lyon theses, and in many others with which the Left made known its prediction on the Third International' s ruin; as the phenomena the latter showed, were not smaller in gravity in respect to those of the Second. Such literature is partly being used still now, in the study on organisation (meant in its narrow sense as party organisation and not in the broad sense of proletarian organisation, in its varying historical and social forms) and we are not trying to summarise it here, referring the reader to the abovementioned texts and to the vast work in progress of the "Storia della Sinistra", of which the second volume is being prepared.

3. Anything concerning the party' s ideology and nature, being common to us all and beyond dispute, is left to the pure theory; and the same is for the relations between the party and its own proletarian class, that can be condensed in the obvious inference that only with the party and with the party action the proletariat becomes class for itself and for the revolution.

4. We are used to call questions of tactics - though we repeat that autonomous chapters or sections do not exist - those historically arising and going on in the relations between proletariat and other classes; between proletarian party and other proletarian organisations; and be tween the party and other bourgeois and non-proletarian parties.

5. The relation existing between the tactical solutions, such as not to be condemned by the doctrinal and theoretical principles, and the varied development of situations, objective and - in a sense - external to the party, is undoubtedly very changeable; but the Left has asserted that the party must dominate and foresee such relation, as developed in the Rome theses on tactics meant as a project of theses for international tactics.
There are, synthesising to the extreme, periods of objective favourable conditions, together with unfavourable conditions of the party as subject; there may be the opposite case; and there have been rare but suggestive examples of a well prepared party and of a social situation with the masses thrown towards the revolution; and towards the party which foresaw and described it in advance, as Lenin vindicated for Russia's Bolsheviks.

6. By avoiding pedantic distinctions, we may wonder in which objective situation is today's society. Certainly the answer is that it is the worst possible situation, and that a large part of proletariat is controlled by parties - hired by bourgeoisie - that prevent the proletariat itself from any classist revolutionary movement; which is even worse than the crushing directly operated by bourgeoisie. It is not therefore possible to foresee how long it will take before - in this dead and shapeless situation - what we already termed as "polarisation" or "ionisation" of social molecules, takes place, preceding the outburst of the great class antagonism.

7. What are, in this unfavourable period, the consequences on the party ' s internal organic dynamics? We always said, in all abovementioned texts, that the party cannot avoid being influenced by the characters of the real situation surrounding it. Therefore the big existing proletarian parties are -

necessarily and avowedly - opportunist.
It is a fundamental thesis of the Left, that our party must not abstain from resisting - in such a situation - ; it must instead survive and hand down the flame, along the historical "thread of time". It will be a small party, not owing to our will or choice, but to ineluctable necessity. While thinking of the structure of this party, even in the IIIrd International 's epoch of decadence, and in countless polemics, we rejected - with arguments that is now unnecessary recalling - several accusations. We don't want a secret sect or élite party, refusing any contact with the outside, owing to a purity mania. We reject any formula of workerist or labourist party excluding all non-proletarians; as it is a formula belonging to all historical opportunists . We don' t want to reduce the party to an organisation of a cultural, intellectual and scholastic type, as from polemics more than half a century old; neither do we believe, as certain anarchists and blanquists do, being imaginable a party involved in conspirative armed action and in hatching plots.

8. Being the decline of the social complex concentrated on falsification and destruction of the theory and of the sound doctrine, it is evident that today's small party has, as an outstanding character, the duty of restoring the principles of a doctrinal value; but it is unfortunately deprived of the favourable setting that saw Lenin achieving such a work after the disaster of the First World War. But it does not imply that we have to erect a barrier between theory and practical action; because beyond a given limit we would destroy ourselves and all our basic principles. We thus claim all forms of activity peculiar to the favourable periods, insofar as the real force relations render it possible .

9. All this should be treated much more broadly, but it is still possible to achieve a conclusion about the party's organisational structure in a so difficult transition. It would be a fatal error to consider the party as dividable into two groups, of which one dedicated to the study and the other one to action; such a distinction is deadly for the body of the party, as well as for the individual militant. The meaning of unitarism and of organic centralism is that the party develops at its inside the organs suited to the various functions, which we call propaganda, proselytism, proletarian organisation, union work, etc. , up to tomorrow, the armed organisation; but nothing can be inferred from the number of comrades destined for such functions , as on principle no comrade must be out of any of them.
The fact that in this phase the comrades devoted to the theory and to the movement' s history may seem too many, and too few those yet ready to action, is an historical incident. But above all senseless would be an investigation on the number of those devoted to the one and to the other display of energy. We all know that, when the situation will radicalise, countless elements will side with us, in an immediate, instinctive way, and without the least training course aping scholastic qualifications.

10. We know very well that the opportunist danger, ever since Marx fought against Bakunin, Proudhon, Lassalle, and during all the further phases of the opportunist disease, has always been tied to the influence on the proletariat of petty-bourgeois false allies.
Our infinite diffidence towards the contribution of these social strata cannot, and must not, prevent us from utilising - according to history's mighty lessons - exceptional elements coming from them; the party will destine such elements to the work of setting the theory to order; the lack of such a work would only mean death, while in the future its plan of propagation will have to identify it with the immense extension of revolutionary masses.

11. The violent sparks that flashed between the reophores of our dialectics instructed us that is a comrade, communist and revolutionary militant, that who has been able to forget, to renegade, to tear away from his mind and from his heart the classification in which he was enrolled by the Register of this

putrescent society; that who sees and mingles himself in the whole of the millenary space that binds the ancestral , tribal man, fighter against wild beasts, to the member of the future community, fraternal in the joyous harmony of social man.

12. Historical party and formal party.
This distinction is in Marx and Engels and they had the right to deduce from it that, being with their work on the line of the historical party, they disdained to be members of any formal party. But no one of today's militants can infer from it he has the right to a choice: that is of being in the clear with the "historical party", and to care nothing about the formal party. Thus it is, owing to the sound intelligence of that proposition of Marx and Engels, which has a dialectical and historical sense - and not because they were supermen of a very special type of race.
Marx says: party in its historical meaning, in the historical sense , and formal, or ephemeral, party. In the first concept lies the continuity, and from it we derived our characteristical thesis of the invariance of doctrine since its formulation made by Marx; not as invention of a genius, but as discovery of a result of human evolution. But the two concepts are not metaphysically opposite, and it would be silly to express them by the poor doctrine : I turn my back on the formal party, as I go towards the historical one.
When from the invariant doctrine we draw the conclusion that the revolutionary victory of the working class can be only achieved with the class party and its dictatorship; when, on the basis of Marx's words we maintain that without revolutionary and communist party, the proletariat may be a class for bourgeois science, but it is not for us and Marx himself; then the conclusion to be deduced is that, in order to achieve the victory, it will be necessary to have a party, worthy at the same time of both characteristics, those of historical party and formal party, i.e. to have solved in action's and history's reality the apparent contradiction - that dominated a long and difficult past - between historical party, then as far as the content (historical, invariant programme) is concerned, and contingent party, that is relating to the form, operating as force and physical praxis of a decisive part of struggling proletariat.
This synthetic clarification of the doctrinal question must also be quickly related to the historical transitions lying behind us.

13. The first transition from a body of small groups and leagues - through which the workers' struggle came out - to the International party foreseen by doctrine, takes place when the 1st International is founded in 1864. There is no point now in reconstructing the process leading to the crisis of such organisation, that under Marx's direction was defended to the last from infiltration of petty-bourgeois programmes such as those of libertarians.
In 1889 the IInd International is built, after Marx's death, but under Engels's control, though his directions are not followed. For a moment there is the tendency to have again in the formal party the continuation of the historical one, but all that is broken up in the following years by the federalist and non-centralist type of party; by the influences of parliamentary practice and by the cult of democracy; by the nationalist outlook on individual sections, no longer conceived as armies at war against their own state - as wanted by the 1848 Manifesto -; rises the open revisionism disparaging the historical end and exalting the contingent and formal movement.
The rising of IIIrd International, after the 1914 disastrous failure of almost all sections into pure democratism and nationalism, was seen by us - in the first years after 1919 - as the complete reconnection of historical party and formal party. The new International rose declaredly centralist and anti-democratic, but the historical praxis of the entrance into it of the sections federate to the failed International was particularly difficult, and made too hurried by the expectation that the transition,

from the seizure of power in Russia to that in other European countries, would be immediate.
If the section that in Italy rose from the ruins of the old party of IInd International, was particularly inclined - not certainly by virtue of persons, but for the historical origins - to feel the necessity of welding together the historical movement and its present form, that was due to the hard struggles it waged against the degenerated forms, and to the refusal of infiltrations; which were not only attempted by those forces dominated by nationalist, parliamentary and democratic type positions, but also by those (in Italy, maximalism) influenced by anarcho-syndicalist, petty-bourgeois revolutionarism. Such left-wing current fought particularly in order to have more rigid conditions of admissions (construction of the new formal structure), completely put them into effect in Italy, and it was the first to realise the danger for the whole International, when they gave faulty results in France, Germany, etc.
The historical situation, for which the proletarian State got formed in only one country, while in the others the conquest of power had not been achieved, made difficult the clear organic solution of leaving in the hands of the Russian section the helm of the world organisation.
The Left was the first to realise that, whenever the behaviour of the Russian State would start bearing signs of deviations - both in internal economy and in international relations -, a discrepancy would take place between the politics of the historical party, i.e. of all revolutionary communists of the world, and that of a formal party defending the interests of the contingent Russian State.

14. Such an abyss has since then gone into so deeply that the "apparent" sections, depending on the Russian leader-party, are doing, in the ephemeral sense, a vulgar policy of collaboration with bourgeoisie, not better than that, traditional, of the corrupted parties of the IInd International.
The above enables, and entitles, the groups that come of the struggle of the Italian Left against Moscow's degeneration, to understand better than anyone else on which path the true, active (and therefore formal) party can keep itself faithful to the characters of the revolutionary, historical party; that potentially exists at least since 1847, while, from a practical point of view, proved itself in great historical events, through the tragical series of revolution's defeats.
The transmission of this undeformed tradition, to the efforts made to create, without historical pauses, - a new international party organisation cannot be organisationally based on the choice of men, though very qualified or well informed of the historical doctrine; organically speaking, such transmission can only utilise, in the most faithful way, the line linking the action of the group through which the abovementioned tradition revealed itself 40 years ago, to the present line. The new movement cannot wait for supermen, nor have Messiahs, it must be founded on the revival of what could be preserved for a long time; but preservation cannot be restricted to the teaching of theses and to the search for documents, it uses living instruments in order to form an old guard and to hand over - uncorruptedly and potently - to a young guard. The latter rushes off towards new revolutions , that might have to wait not more than a decade from now the action on the foreground of historical scene; the party and the revolution having no concern at all for the names of the former and the latter.
The correct transmission of that tradition beyond generations - and also for this beyond names of dead or living men - cannot be restricted to that of critical texts, nor only to the method of utilising the communist party's doctrine by being close and faithful to classical texts; it must be related to the class battle that the Marxist Left - we don't want to limit the revival only to the Italian region - set out and carried out in the most inflamed real struggle during the years after 1919, and that was broken, more than by the force relations with respect to the enemy class, by the dependence on the centre, degenerating from centre of the historical world party to that of an ephemeral party, destroyed by opportunist pathology, until such dependence was, historically and de facto, broken.

The Left historically tried, without breaking off with the principle of world centralised discipline, to give revolutionary battle - although defensive - while keeping the vanguard proletariat intact from any collusion with middle classes, their parties and their doomed to defeat ideologies. Having even that historical chance of saving, if not the revolution, at least the core of its historical party, being missed, it has today began all over again, in a torpid and indifferent objective situation, within a proletariat infected to the bone of petty-bourgeois democratism; but the dawning organism, by utilising the whole of doctrinal and praxis tradition - as confirmed by the historical verification of timely expectations -, puts it into effect also with its everyday action; it pursues the aim of re-establishing an always wider contact with the exploited masses, and it eliminates from its structure one of the starting errors of Moscow International, by getting rid of democratic centralism and of any votation mechanism, as well as even the last member eliminated from his ideology any concession to democratoid, pacifist, autonomist or libertarian trends.