

Militants of Revolutions

This Letter is taken from two meetings recorded on 5 and 12 June 1992 in Turin. It was integrated with topics arising from an exchange of correspondence among comrades and from subsequent meetings held in Rome and Torre Annunziata from 17th to June 23, 1996. The original discussion started from a suggested starting point from the article "Flourishing Capital Spring" by Amadeo Bordiga.

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WHERE IT IS SHOWN HOW IN ALL EPOCHS REVOLUTION FINDS ITS INSTRUMENTS IN ALL CLASSES AND EXPRESSES ITSELF NOT ONLY THROUGH SOCIAL WARFARE BUT ALSO THROUGH THE ACCUMULATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND THEORETICAL RESULTS THAT REMAIN THE HERITAGE OF ALL MANKIND

Let's go by Lenin

Among the scattered militants, groups and small parties resisting the vindication of Marxism, there is a recurring false question: "What is to be done?" Now, while it is true that the question was asked by Lenin, it is also true that he did not pose it to himself at all as if he were short of answers. Lenin knew very well what a Bolshevik revolutionary militant was and from this he drew unequivocally what he should do. It was the other tendencies of Russian social democracy that did not know what to do, and they did not know because they did not know what to be. Hence the struggle for influence over the militants, hence Lenin's need to explain what these were. What they should or could do was a consequence of their place in the history of those years of revolution.

This is why the question is silly if it is addressed to oneself, if one interprets it as a question to which one must seek an answer and not as a mere instrument of revolutionary didactics towards potential comrades temporarily attracted by environments where the revolutionary programme does not exist.

It is therefore necessary to define what a militant of the revolution is in order to know with certainty what he will do when he becomes one, that is, when he is conquered by the revolution. Because if this step takes place, then we are sure that he will do what the revolution demands, but it is like saying that at this point 'what he does' no longer matters, the definition of 'what he is' is enough. What about the mistakes of men and parties? And the betrayals? And the counter-revolution? And the militants who must act in the current situation? Just a moment, let's proceed calmly, because to understand things it is not necessary to start from the bottom, from the ultimate result blurted out by the infected chronicle of the moment dear to journalism and dearer still to live television, as demonstrated by countless debates and countless articles and journals entitled, in past and recent history, with Lenin's question. The militant communist acts on the basis of a history behind him and first of all he must tune into this instead of fretting in an attempt to rediscover hot water on his own:

'Everyone [...] has thrown themselves on the point of arrival, instead of the point of departure. This, however, is the fundamental thing: there is a whole host of half-wits who want to rush in to pontificate the later, and who must be powerfully stemmed and thrown back to understand the earlier, which is certainly an easier task, and which they nevertheless can't even manage. Everyone who has not understood

*the page before him cannot resist the temptation to turn it over to find enlightenment in the next one, and that is how the beast becomes more beastly than before.'*¹

We are at the understanding of the before. We are still not talking about the militant individual, but about the abstract generic militant, the one, to put it bluntly, who the overwhelming majority of activists do not like at all, the one who does not attend group x, does not write in newspaper y and does not give flyers at factory z, thus avoiding endless discussions about what he thinks he is. We will do even worse, relying on our well-known masters: we will dare to claim that there can be militants of the revolution everywhere, not just in the proletarian camp. Of the individual, the one who always says 'I' and whom the Left has already settled once and for all we will speak later and lastly we will talk about the militant in the flesh, the one who adheres not only to the ephemeral party but also to the historical party and vice versa, what he is and what he does.

Definition

Our current has a history of sixty years and could not fail to record the defeats that have befallen the workers' movement over this time and learn from them. Let us therefore begin by establishing what a revolutionary militant is not.

The revolutionary militant is not characterised by his activity in a contingent party or in an immediate organism (Marx, Manifesto), even though he is obviously more likely to be found acting in that sphere than elsewhere; too many times the Leninist professional revolutionary has been turned into a vulgar party activist, the latter understood as an apparatus. The experience of the International and of the parties that adhered to it has shown that activism functional to the apparatus becomes an end in itself: one is active in order to be even more active, to make membership cards, to be in the crowd, to fill the party coffers, to take more votes, to make more demonstrations. The strikes themselves have been instrumentalised for apparatus purposes, to 'count' more in society. Communists cannot 'count' for anything in a society they want to destroy. But the lesson of the International and its degeneration goes beyond the example set by the parties that made it up. Even in the reactions to the degeneration of the International, in the oppositions to it, other types of pathologies were produced that were no less deleterious when they demanded a return to alleged 'freedom' or 'democratic' forms, categories for whose 'loss' true communists have never shed a tear.

The revolutionary militant is not a banal claimant. If Baffo Stalin crushes democracy while extolling it, the communist does not claim democracy betrayed. If fascism wins against parliamentarism, the communist does not retreat to the Aventine to claim the free parliament. If a certain electoral mechanism is a deception for the proletariat, the communist does not claim a more democratic mechanism that is not a deception, because it cannot exist. If capitalism removes labour-power from factories through automation, the

¹ *Dialogue with Stalin*, Day before, paragraph "Tomorrow and yesterday".

communist does not claim the right to employment but declares: *'It's about time! Now we think of a society where machines can be introduced wherever possible, where maximum automation goes hand in hand with maximum freedom from working time'*.

The revolutionary militant is not one who has a special card or label to show off to others. It is not he who contends for space with others on the same terrain. It is not he who belongs to an organisation that is better than others to compete with. It is not one who does missionary work to win bodies and spirits to the cause (because the communist has no 'mission' to fulfil). It is not one who possesses truths that are not available to all. Nor does he necessarily know that he is a revolutionary militant in the Marxist sense of the term.

The individual who struggles confused in the mass of his comrades for a goal that everyone considers limited to the satisfaction of contingent interests, may not be aware that he is participating in a movement with absolutely subversive possibilities. Even the scientist who makes a discovery and performs a verification according to laws in absolute contrast to bourgeois ideology, in a certain sense, militates in the ranks of the revolution. This is one of the most fascinating themes of our theoretical heritage: when the bourgeoisie, in the course of its investigations into the physical world, is forced into real ideological capitulations in the face of Marxism, for us the old mole has dug another hole in the foundations of bourgeois society.

But let us come to the definition of what a militant of the revolution is. Since we already have a precise definition, let us read it directly from our Theses:

*'The violent sparks that flew between the rheophytes of our dialectic have taught us that a militant communist and revolutionary comrade is he who has been able to forget, to disown, to tear from his mind and heart the classification in which the registry of this rotting society enrolled him, and sees and confuses himself in the whole millenary arc that links the ancestral tribal man wrestling with beasts to the member of the future community, fraternal in the joyful harmony of social man.'*²

This is a phrase that is often quoted because it is beautiful, it contains the kind of charge that touches comrades in their most sensitive nerve centres, it has an apparent rhetoric that elevates it to the rank of a timeless maxim, and then it speaks of harmony and joy, rather rare commodities in today's capitalist market. Amadeo seems to have indulged his emotions a bit, in the context of a piece of writing in which the problem of the unity of theory and action is rigorously, as usual, posed.

This phrase is not a sentimental caveat, it is a weapon. Imagine, between '64 and '65, a situation in which one of the recurring waves of influence of the counter-revolutionary situation manifests itself in the party. An activity is claimed that is incompatible with the real

² "Considerations on the organic activity of party when the general situation is historically unfavorable" , point 11, published in *Il Programma Comunista* n. 2 of 1965.

power relations; a discussion is claimed that goes beyond the limits imposed by the rejection of the principles and mechanisms of democracy. Discussion groups are formed that begin to have an existence aimed at supporting the discussion itself. Conflicts even form between different characters who have understood nothing about a party that cannot offer political careers. In short, not to put too fine a point on it, a bit of democratic crap is produced with all the consequences of the case: it will end up with some divisions, not to call them by the pompous name of splits.

Faced with the meanness of subhuman behaviour induced by bourgeois society, Amadeo fires the kill shot: the meaner you are, the more I will throw the entire universe, the entire path of the human species, in your face.

The Art of Communication and Science

Let's try to put the passage in the light of some things we should already know about Amadeo's condensates. The rheophore is, generically speaking, a metal wire carrying an electric current. If the wire is interrupted, the two ends turn into electrodes and, if the potential difference is high enough relative to the gap, the atoms in the air release their electrons (ionisation) and the air itself loses its insulating properties, allowing the current to pass between one electrode and the other. A spark (or lightning) then erupts with luminous, acoustic, chemical and thermal consequences. This is a beautiful image to define the leaps in knowledge made possible by potential differences due to the movement of opposing classes. Now, the catastrophic phenomenon (violent sparks) is the only one that makes us realise how necessary it is for the communist and revolutionary militant to get the categories that this society has instilled in him out of his head. It's not study that can do this, it's not party school, it's not attending the community of comrades, it's not individual will and it's not intelligence: it's the violent sparks. Even the bourgeois know the millenary arc, but they are proud of having lost the sense of life as a species, whereas man has lived it for millions of years and will return to it, after the minimal parenthesis of the productive leap and the process of liberation from the realm of necessity to that of freedom. Freedom from forced labour, not democratic freedom. Freedom of life, work understood as pure time for the reproduction of the species. Enjoyment of life, not vulgar clockwork 'free time', to be devoted to the consumption of food and commodified objects.

Only those who have known and been able to get in line with the whole arc of human existence will no longer be able to fall into the petty, ridiculous struggles that involve the immature individual and that take place on a daily basis even in the party that, at the very least, should be exempt from them. But the quoted text does not only refer to the millenary arc, it also refers to a time span closer to us. Amadeo's slap in the face becomes more direct, less esoteric. Only those who know how to fit into a historical continuity with the battles consistent with the revolution will be able to pick up the thread broken by the opportunistic plague that ruined the movement by plunging it into counterrevolution without even being able to save 'at least the backbone of its historic party'. One must claim the whole physical battle, not just the critical texts. One must claim the whole path, not just the

final result or some part of the overall results. The transmission of the revolutionary programme above the generations is not just about books, but neither is it just about method or the faithful and pedestrian application of doctrine:

*'The new movement cannot wait for superhumans nor have Messiahs, but must be based on the revival of what may have been preserved through long time, and the preservation cannot be limited to the teaching of theses and the research of documents, but also makes use of living tools that form an old guard and trust to give an incorrupt and mighty delivery to a young guard.'*³

The Revolution Needs Living Tools

The old comrades of the origins are all dead. The heirs have not behaved according to the teachings and have now shown that they were not able and could not pick up the baton of the historical relay. The young guard (young of today) is still not here, and this shows a gap in time. The thread is almost really broken, we have to make do, rely on our own strength. After all, no one thought that consistently resuming work would be a no-brainer. Fortunately today we have got rid of what the text we have just used, right in the first few lines, calls the 'so-called question of the internal organisation of the party'. Partly because we have not founded a party, and partly because we no longer need formalisms borrowed from the old and habitual reference to the parties of the International. The Theses failed to 'convince' the comrades at the time (in fact they left), time and facts have taken care of clearing the field of the last shackles of democracy, even in disguise, such as the more or less formalised internal hierarchies. When the party is formed with the resumption of the class struggle, it is to be hoped that it will be easier, at this point, not to repeat past mistakes; even disasters, indeed, especially those, can be masters.

No one will ever be a militant of the revolution if he continues to make disasters through the defence of his ego; no one will be able to perform what Amadeo, speaking on Lenin's death, calls the function of the leader. In societies that still resembled the harmony of primitive communism even though they were already state-run and hierarchised, such as ancient Egypt, the leader had no power, even though he had the ability to enforce a will without limits. The pharaoh was designated by the same word meaning 'servant' (there was no slavery yet), as his function was to safeguard the application of a programme that was intended to be immutable for eternity. Nowadays, any little man who feels he is being rubbed out by something on a glandular level wants to change history with his own hands, starting with the individual straightening out of other people's ideas. The poor man has probably read and enjoyed reading the following passage, but it has passed over his skin without in the least touching his inviolable person:

'History is made by men, only they know very little why they make it and how they make it. But in general, all the 'sufferers' of human action, and the mockers of an alleged fatalistic automatism, on the one hand are those who cherish - in their

³ Ibid., point 14.

*own inner hole - the idea of having that predestined Man in their little body, and on the other are precisely those who have understood nothing and can do nothing; not even understanding that history does not gain or lose a tenth of a second, whether they sleep like dormice or realise their generous dream of wriggling like obsessives. With frosty cynicism and without the slightest remorse to every more or less self-confessed super-activist specimen of serious function, and to every syndicate of innovators and pilots of tomorrow we repeat: 'jateve a cuccà!' You are powerless even to wind the alarm clock.'*⁴

History, the one that its devotees write with a capital letter, does not give a damn about the wiggling of human molecules which, as in a heated gas, will press on the future with a force resulting from the totality of their movement. With a 'computer' analogy, we will say that only a quid of information can generate order in molecules, and this order will not depend on a thinking molecule but on the determined history of molecules, on the physical representation of their movement towards the future. This physical representation is the party. The party is made up of individuals who collectively derive from it the consciousness of the future of their class and of humanity as a whole. The revolution and the party therefore need men of flesh and blood, living tools who realise the task they take on. But who prepares them, if the old guard is no longer there? The books? There is no book that cannot be filtered by the person reading it. What about the transmission of experience, collective work, verification with the past, projection into the future? Where will future militants come from, if there is no visible point of reference leading to the unmystified path of the Left as we have just said?

Fortunately, the violent sparks that ionise matter between the electrodes of our brains also act on a social level. It is not reason or intelligence that leads tools to revolution, but something very earthy that we call physiological drive and, a step just a little higher, economic interest linked to class membership. When feet and stomachs move, brains will move too. Some sooner, some later. It is fatal: even in the history of human evolution, the brain evolves last. When they discovered the first well-preserved hominid skeleton (the female *Australopithecus afarensis* known as Lucy), the discoverer was quite perplexed when confronted with a skeleton absolutely similar to ours with an absolutely archaic skull planted on top. The skeleton was three and a half million years old: the contradiction stemmed from the fact that so far only skulls had been seen, and the researchers, with their skulls stuffed with bourgeois metaphysics, were sure that archaic skulls must correspond to other archaic bones. But this was not true. Our ancestors were like us three and a half million years ago, except for the container of the brain and therefore obviously also its contents, which evolved only a very short time ago. Man did not become what he is because of a superior brain, as idealism teaches, but his brain power only grew because first there was the evolution of his feet and hands that allowed him to free his head.

⁴ "Straighten the legs of dogs", published in *Battaglia Comunista* n. 11 of 1952.

Idealists privilege intelligence over 'inferior' characteristics such as the senses, intuition, and instinct. Yet no revolution, neither scientific nor social, has ever taken place because of intelligence. The Left has said much on the subject and it is useful to return to it.

In Memory of an Artist

We were all shocked by Aldo Ratti's passing and would like to remember him with some thoughts on instinct and rationality, knowledge and militancy. Aldo was a true 'misfit' of capitalism. He was a painter but not an artist, since art has been combined with trade ever since the Muses went from the indistinct function of cheering men to presiding over specific paid activities. He was light years away from any practical problems and technique was something that might not have existed for him. He loved cinema, but certainly did not relate it to film and projection machines. He didn't own a car in the sense of a car, he didn't have any other machines, a television set, a washing machine or a record player at home. In fact, he did not even have a house, unless he called the place where he slept and painted that. His rejection of capitalism was so visceral that no one could ever exploit it. Certainly he was not a communist in the scientific sense of the word and yet....

This is neither the time nor the place to make grand speeches, they would be out of place among us, but Aldo was, at almost eighty years of age, the most alive person we had ever met. He was guided exclusively by intuition and instinct, this is the only way to explain his - let's say - survival in a world absolutely hostile to those who do not allow themselves to be exploited. Aldo never worked for a capitalist, but neither did he work for an art dealer, even though he was a painter. Small masterpieces came out of his hands because he had a spontaneous drawing and painting style, even though they reflected a deep, unschooled knowledge. Sometimes he would take a painting and insist on rationalising the composition according to some canon he put in his head, then invariably he would ruin everything, freeze the forms, make the colours childish. He had a knowledge of art that many historians and critics do not have, yet it came to him almost exclusively from studying images and not critical texts. He saw and felt history without studying it because he created instinctive relationships between forms, content and epochs.

He saw and felt Marxism in the same way, and sometimes came up with statements of cosmic naivety in relation to the common canons of politics. On closer inspection, however, they were processes of extreme abstraction and thus a vision of reality cleared of too much chatter. For example, he considered the world divided in two: on one side the comrades, on the other side everything else. Only he called anyone who was not, in his opinion, a 'comrade' a 'fascist'. Of course, anyone who was comfortable in this society that he just could not digest was a fascist. The term 'fascist' was thus not a borrowing from the Resistance lexicon, but a poetic contraction that included everything that was capitalist. As can be seen, this is a philologically correct way of looking at it: fascism is not a throwback to history, but the modern way of being of capitalist society. *'If you want to be progressive have the courage to be fascist'*, says one of our texts, because the sequence in time is not

fascism-democracy-communism, but democracy-fascism-communism. Fascism is more 'modern' and therefore more 'progressive' than democracy.

Aldo had surpassed progressivism, which is why he would have annoyed many of those who *'would be powerless even to wind the alarm clock'*; that is why we claim him as a comrade on the path of the party and revolution. Because of our attitude, every now and then some fool pops up to say we are good-mouthed. Oh, sure, these clever scientists of the obvious measure the rate of 'comradeship' by 'objective' parameters, such as one's knowledge of the sacred texts, one's trade, one's discipline as a corporal or one's ability to sell some product of Marxology. Some thirty years ago there were people intent on laying the foundations of the infamous '68 by asking: is the employee a proletarian? Can an exploiting capitalist be a communist? What really is the productive worker? Some are still asking the same questions, others have found it more productive to make a career in the world as it is. Bah, we prefer militants like Aldo to all the brainiacs or smartasses, what can you do.

Intuition and instinct are aspects of individual nature that cannot be separated from the other aspect, the rational capacity, intelligence (not the one measured by IQ tests, but the one that means knowing, distinguishing, analysing). These are not two incompatible extremes, on the one hand animality, on the other the rationality of the thinking man, perhaps with a capital letter. After all, originally, the term intelligence meant 'to understand before reading'; originally, therefore, instinct and rationality were the same thing, as the transition in language shows.

Obvious Intuition and Necessary Deduction

It is clearly not possible here to retrace the importance of the identity of intuition and reasoning, especially through that early science that was religion. We cite Descartes as one of the exponents of the necessary transition from the unitary conception to the separation of intuition and knowledge, but still in dialectical relation:

*'There are no other roads open to men to a certain knowledge of truth than self-evident intuition and necessary deduction; It is also seen in what (the) simple natures consist (...) It is clear, by this, that intuition extends on the one hand to all these, on the other hand to the knowledge of the necessary links which they have between them, finally to all other things of which the intellect accurately ascertains that they are either in itself or in the imagination.'*⁵

Evident intuition and necessary deduction. Descartes is for self-evidence that presents itself to the intellect as a dazzling clarity that does not admit of inference, i.e. a logical process whereby consequent conclusions can be derived from premises. The logical process fools the observer because it leads him to conclusions that cannot be proved

⁵ Reported by A. Lalande, *Dictionary of philosophy*, "Intuition" item.

except by observation itself, whereas intuition sets in motion and is set in motion by relations between things and between them and the intellect. Induction and deduction come after intuition. It seems that Kant and his disciples disagreed and understood intuition as a concrete presentation of reality 'presently given', on which one can reason, because things contain principles and one must discuss the manner of their application. We do not take sides with one or the other, because we take both and incorporate them into the foundation on which we base our present knowledge, but we certainly like Descartes better because his conception is closer to the dialectic. To the soul of the progenitor of mechanistic rationalism.

Science as it is understood today comes after instinct and intuition already have a history of millions and millions of years. Instinct is a material component of the struggle for the reproduction of the species: it has been and remains a fundamental component of the class struggle. First come instinct and intuition, then comes science, not the science of today, which is inferior to instinct itself, but the science of tomorrow, which will unite all the 'categories' that bourgeois knowledge divides today. As long as there is no new science, intuition and instinct will still underpin human actions as something separate, mainly in terms of social movement.

Instinct, in the definition that appears in the text *Property and Capital*⁶, is nothing other than the programme for the preservation of the species as such, it is the genetic record of what the species itself has experienced, and it reaches its maximum manifestation when it comes to preserving its future possibility of reproduction from dangers that have been recorded as acquired knowledge. The individual preserves the instinct recorded through thousands of other individuals. Not even in purely biological reproduction is the individual such: let us recall that passage where it is stated that a rabbit cannot be a rabbit except in the static conception of the observer who stops at the archaic classification of 'objects'; the rabbit observed in its history can only be two rabbits, male and female (and perhaps add offspring). The species must be understood as biological reproduction before production, so it includes the individual and its instinctive code, never the other way round, because the individual without the species is nothing⁷.

Rejection of the Principles Given A Priori

To say intuition is like saying instinct. When Amadeo speaks of Galileo, Leibnitz, Newton, i.e. the great scientists who anticipated the bourgeois revolution, precisely when the individual was not yet the boorish schizophrenic individual of today, he uses them as a triad exemplifying ideas that suddenly sprang up at a certain point in human history. In the same way he speaks of Marx. The intuition from which their discoveries develop is not seen simply as the result of genius thinking but as the result of social work and therefore the social brain. It is this, and not the individual, that expresses both the relations between things and thought, a phenomenon that Descartes already saw with the power dispensed

⁶ Chapter XVII, *Utopia, science, action*.

⁷ A. Bordiga, *Factors of race and nation*, chap. "Individual and species", Ed. Quad. Int.

by a pre-revolutionary period. No one can say that Galileo 'invented' the telescope. But not only because for two or three centuries ground glass had been circulating in various ways, as a curiosity or as a useful magnifying object. Not just because the Dutch had experimented with ground glass arranged in a certain way. Nor because it may be that the telescope was actually invented by some unknown person in Italy towards the end of the 16th century. Galileo realised that he could use the lens and tube not only to play games or to show the orbs, or to sell them to the Serenissima to watch the Turks from afar. Galileo did not invent a tube with lenses, an object that already existed: he invented the telescope that became the symbol of a revolution. He invented it because he was the first to realise that he would get something great out of it by pointing it at the forbidden sky, a place where humans could not expect to find objects but pre-established harmonies, divine orders opposed to terrestrial disorder, immanent principles designed to govern souls. And, in an unthinkable, blasphemous act, he made a formidable leap forward in humanity's subsequent knowledge. We know the date: it was 1609. Galileo's pamphlets, in spite of the Jesuits and the Church as a whole, would influence the science of the time throughout the 17th century, which would find in them not so much brilliant discoveries, but a revolutionary new method.

Galileo does not proceed according to established principles. The immutable principle is contrary to science insofar as a historical dynamic is introduced into science that makes it liable to transformation towards greater precision, towards new steps of knowledge. This dynamic before Galileo did not exist. And it is useless to lash out at the priests who forced him to abjure: they were defending an acquired knowledge, they were not ignorant boorish people, they were the flower of astronomy at the time. There was no other authority at the time except Kepler. What can break the established principle if, precisely, our knowledge is based on the fact that it is established? Galileo, unlike Kepler, had little knowledge of optics at the time of the telescope. Kepler had designed very efficient lenses that remained on paper as theoretical demonstrations; it never occurred to him to build them, let alone point them directly at God. Who broke the old science, Kepler's intelligence or Galileo's intuition?

We are tempted to answer in favour of Galileo, but that would be wrong. The old science was shattered by Copernicus, by Galileo, by Kepler, by all those who were not satisfied with a single aspect of the problems being examined. Galileo broke the static nature of immutable principles, but he did not try to imaginatively imagine ways that flowed only from his brain. He was the first to understand the difference between fidelity to the theoretical principle itself and fidelity to the physics that that theoretical principle was intended to teach. Listen to this passage:

'I am sure that if Aristotle were to see the newly discovered novelties in the heavens, where he affirmed the heavens to be unchangeable and immutable, because no alteration had been seen there until then, he would undoubtedly now say the opposite; for it is well gathered that while he said the heavens were

*unchangeable because no alteration had been seen there, he would now say they were alterable because alterations were seen there.*⁸

If science has the characteristics dictated by Galileo, i.e. it is not unalterable but proceeds dynamically through the acceptance and overcoming of previous truths, it follows that the scientific result of a given epoch cannot be given by a single intellect, however immense it may be, it can only be given by a quantity of scientists who take turns on the problems, renewing the subject of research by accepting the results regarding the object, overcoming them or projecting into the future. The same concept will be taken up by the Enlightenment and Laplace will repeat that

*'sciences grow infinitely through the works of successive generations: the most perfect work generates new discoveries and thus prepares works that will eclipse it.'*⁹

In this way the classical scientist becomes something else, because if what is to result from collective work is sought, a programme is needed for the working collectivity. But is any programme that tends to demolish an existing state of affairs not revolutionary in itself? A friend of Galileo's enthusiastically writes to him: *'We must extend our philosophical militia without limits'*. And Galileo replies:

*'I have written [the work] in the vernacular because I need every person to be able to read it (...) I want them to see that nature, just as it has given them eyes to see its works, has given them brains to be able to understand and comprehend them.'*¹⁰

Written science can be transmitted. No one will need to repeat the praxis-intuition-science route already taken, at least until the next leap.

Need of Revolution

Let us pause for a moment. Let us keep in mind the connection between the discourse we are giving on Galileo and what a militant of the revolution is. The fact that a group like ours is having a discourse like this, holding meetings with other comrades in other locations, striving to broaden the scope of research and discussion, even proposing to contribute to the development of the revolutionary party, without anyone in any way forcing its members to leave other activities, family commitments or work, etc., means only two things: either we are crazy or we are driven to this by something beyond the individual choices of each of us. We have few connections and therefore know little about what is happening elsewhere, in other cities: however, it is deterministically certain that something similar is happening everywhere and we have the signs of it. The most diverse

⁸ L. Geymonat, *Galileo Galilei*, Einaudi, p. 277.

⁹ Ibid. pag. 278.

¹⁰ Ibid

representations of Marxism survive, but we are witnessing the rise of a critique of them. There are young people who are seeking satisfaction in their need for a return to Marxism, but they cannot find where to lean to realise this aspiration. Of course they 'militate' in the groups and parties they find, but you can see a mile away that they are there because there is nothing else. Everything seems false, repetitive, polluted to them. It is impossible that the work to which some comrades have been led is only due to ultra-specific local, temporal or attitudinal causes; it is equally impossible that sooner or later a school, a current will not form that is capable of responding to the expectations of other comrades, of young people, of people who can no longer stand the capitalist routine, as has been rightly pointed out in recent meetings. Because these expectations are beginning to be no longer personal drives but symptoms of the polarisation of social molecules. Perhaps we are mistaken in our optimism, but then let us explain the facts: the social disintegration involving half a billion people in the East, the African tabula rasa, the South American rot, social disintegration everywhere, the Balkan abscess, the capitalist West that has lost its normality and lives by economic decrees, but above all the growing awareness of the bourgeoisie itself of the limits of capitalism. These disasters cannot be compared to the Korean or Vietnam wars, the tensions over Suez or the Congolese war. Do we really think that all this is without effect and that the future material critique of the existing can only be born in the head of Titius or Caius? The path of the militants of the revolution towards the party of the revolution cannot be an individual affair, just as the path of science cannot pass through a single brain.

Then the revolution will find its tools, its living tools through molecular agitation in which, we have no doubt, there will be a red thread around which polarisation will take place. Militants will be thrown into the fray regardless, as in all revolutions. There will be unions and splits, storms in glasses of water like those we have already seen, and then real storms that we may not even be able to imagine, hurricanes that will unceremoniously raise or sweep away individuals who then for a long time to come will think they are 'victorious' or 'defeated', in one way or another having been individual factors in history. And it will take generations to undo this pernicious effect of class societies.

Fruits of the Social Brain

Let us return to Galileo. We know that he never tried to build a philosophical structure around his research. Nor did he attempt to philosophically define what a scientific theory is, unlike his contemporaries, such as Kepler, who drew the guarantee of truth from Renaissance Platonism in a still mystical way (hence his lenses, which would have been more perfect than Galileo's, were not pointed to the heavens).

The great difference Galileo observes between philosophy and science is that science deals with limited phenomena that can only be extended to other branches of knowledge, to other phenomena, to the extent that they can be verified. In science, every statement must be confirmed before it can be accepted and extended. This is not the case with philosophy. It is universal by nature and its utterances do not need specific proof. Galileo does not reject philosophy, but in practice he feels no need to resort to it. The

mistake of the Aristotelians was not so much that of referring to Aristotle for two thousand years as if they had not passed. It was that of demanding that every new discovery be adapted to Aristotelian canons, forcing every rational attempt at explanation into monstrous contortions. Galileo did not feel himself an adversary of Aristotle, but the true continuer of his teachings in the light of the new discoveries. He thus demonstrated that science is a collective fact, whereas philosophy tends to be individual, even though it gives rise to schools and can ultimately only undergo the course of history.

We can therefore affirm that the militant revolutionary Galileo was the first to lay all the elements of the epistemological revolution that would lead to the new steps of knowledge. But we can also say that he was able to do this because he broke once and for all the barrier that divided the actual historical process from the process of knowledge itself.

After all, Galileo reconstructed the continuity that had been lost for two thousand years; he related the science of the ancient Greeks to modern science, not by denying the former, but by incorporating it into a higher achievement. Continuity, relationship and union across a two-thousand-year span of time between dynamically conceived scientific conceptions, means recognising that the physical world responds to the laws of dialectics and that human beings, not being strangers to the physical world, to nature, are also subject to it.

In Galileo, we can clearly perceive the conception of continuity, the dialectic of a science that, by breaking the constraints in which it had been constrained, reveals itself as a living thing, capable of developing beyond the individual carrying out its research, beyond time and beyond generations. Today, we say quite naturally that the discoverers of non-Euclidean geometry are the continuators of Euclid and not his adversaries, just as we say that the discoverers of relativistic mechanics do not deny Newton but are the continuators of him as well. In Galileo's time, these would have been heresies, not least because the materialism he introduced into the processes of knowledge of the facts of nature detracted from the mysticism of the Church. When the revolutionary militant, conscious or not, is projected onto the historical stage, he cannot help but upset existing ideas even if he does not want to. It is proven, in fact, that the secret accusation sustained by the Jesuits of the counter-reformation against the scientist was based not so much on his cosmological conception as on his materialistic neo-atomism, capable of undermining the dogma of the Eucharist¹¹.

Truly, Galileo was able to peel from his mind and heart the classification in the society in which he lived. No matter the abjuration, the hesitations, the misplaced hopes. His work has come down to us, saved by his disciples, just as the works of those whose skins were not saved and were burnt have come down to us. It is a sign that there is something stronger than inquisitions to act upon history, let us call it a party. Within this party, all of Galileo's achievements follow paths that are not at all linear, they are not part of

¹¹ See P. Redondi, *Galileo eretico*, Einaudi, p.428-29.

gradual processes, they come suddenly as revelations. Today's materialist is not at all surprised at the accumulation of knowledge that mankind at some point finds itself having to make explicit through a living tool, be it Siddhartha, Christ or Mohammed, or Aristotle, Galileo or Einstein. At important historical junctures when mankind is ready for change, ideas (so far called ideas but we prefer to call them programmes) present themselves immediately, suddenly as if they were illuminations due to gods or individual genius. Instead, they are the product of intuition, of instinct, they are the collective record of facts that make use of individuals because there is no other way to expand their knowledge, or perhaps there hasn't been so far; the revolution will be truly anonymous and tremendous, finally victorious, if it can do without passing through geniuses or messiahs.

Instinct and intuition are not linked to the number of circumvolutions in the brain or particular neurons, the number of cells or the specific weight of grey matter. They are the fruit of all that is previously matured and which the individual absorbs around him, when it is not even imprinted on him on a genetic level, a hypothesis that is so far only confirmed for primordial instincts. When there is a change taking place, the social brain suddenly condenses all this historical, religious, technical or scientific experience (we do not differentiate between the terms) and makes it available to the species through one of its components, which has become receptive through its individual brain, that instrument that evolution and revolutions send forward from the last place. This applies to Aristotle, to Galileo, to Newton, to Napoleon, and to all those who appear in encyclopaedias as great men, benefactors of mankind or evil geniuses, with all their great wisdom, intelligence or leadership.

Sometimes it is fashionable to play the sport of posing as 'alternatives' and engage in the desecration of myths. But such sport is but the other side of the coin of the myth itself. One does not replace the Baptist conception¹² of history with the equally Baptist conception of the personalised belittling of the character. Anyone can draw, from the great Galileo's personal history, episodes that are not at all edifying with which to demolish the man and 'prove' that he lived in a manner inconsistent with his genius. Brecht, for example, does not shy away from the habit of presenting us with a 'minimalist' Galileo. And who has not grappled with the oddities of Newton, father of modern science, but compiler of more works of alchemy and theology than science?

And Fruits of the Rotten Brain

Our (the Communist Left's) battilocchio theory applies both positively and negatively. Here we enter a field that is peculiar to the Communist Left. "Peculiar?" But haven't we always said that the Communist Left represents continuity with Marxism? What can be peculiar, which then means proprietary, i.e. distinct, different, in those who want to

¹² Our readers should already know what the Battilocchio or the 'beater' is; we refer any new readers to Bordiga text *battilocchio in history*, where there is the definition: in Naples "It's a type that attracts attention and at the same time reveals its absoluteness emptiness" etc.

represent continuity, identity? Apart from the fact that we have just spoken of continuity in a certain historical-scientific sense, let us see how one can be peculiar and at the same time a continuator: do we not want to be like that too? Don't we want new generations of militants to be formed to match the Left's achievements? We know a typical character of the university landscape, a lecturer and essayist in his spare time, who calls himself a 'Marxist philosopher' and tries to smear the Communist Left every time he speaks. He does this, see how original he is, bowing to certain aspects of his theory and criticising it for its practice. Old story. One of the things that seems not to go down well with him, even from a doctrinal point of view, is the battilocchio theory. It is not actually a 'theory', but what can you do, he calls it that. He says that there is nothing like it in Marx, therefore in the doctrinal body of the Communist Left there would be non-Marxist elements, those same elements that would determine the political defeat of the current and the party. In this specific case the 'theory' of the battaloccio would be proof that in Bordiga the question of the will, i.e. the theory-praxis relationship, is not resolved.

That there is no such thing in Marx is simply a painful lie. That the issue is not developed in Marx as it may be in the Communist Left, but even if it were, it would be of no importance. What matters is that in Marx the individual is knocked off his mystical pedestal no less than in the works of Bordiga. Here is an example:

*'How does it come about that, in spite of individuals, personal interests always evolve to become class interests, collective interests, which make themselves independent of individual persons, and in making themselves independent take on the form of general interests, as such come into opposition with actual individuals? [...] How is it that in the context of this transformation of personal interests into independent class interests the personal conduct of the individual [...] is transformed into social relations, into a series of powers that determine him, subordinate him and thus appear in representation as 'holy' powers? If Sancho had once and for all understood the fact that in the sphere of certain modes of production, which naturally do not depend on the will, practical powers are placed above man that are always extraneous, independent not only of the isolated individual but of the totality of men themselves, then [...] he would have descended from the realm of speculation into that of reality, from what men imagine themselves to what they are, from what they represent themselves to the way they act and must act in given circumstances. What appears to him as a product of thought, he would understand as a product of life.'*¹³

The close link between this materialistic approach to how the individual fits into society and the so-called battaloccio theory may not be felt by the 'Marxist philosopher', but it is there and we claim it. There is no one else who has taken this approach to the problem and developed it thoroughly. We can find other passages, of course, in Marx and Engels, we can find references in Lenin for example in his Materialism and Empiriocriticism,

¹³ K. Marx, F. Engels, *The German ideology*

but only the Communist Left has had the opportunity to take this issue to extremes. Why? Because only in our century has individualism pushed itself to the limits of aberration, a true social pathology.

While the cult of the individual is an ancient phenomenon, it has only recently degenerated. Max Stirner drew the thunderbolts of Marx and Engels by saying that '*The species is nothing and if the individual rises above the barriers of his individuality, he does so precisely as an individual; he exists only by rising, he exists only by not remaining what he is, otherwise he would be finished, dead*'¹⁴. The species is nothing and the individual is everything: we seem to be examining not the German ideology but the universal modern ideology, the ideology of television advertising that relies on selfishness and the cult of the person. But what is the modern person if not the target of the universal rip-off of commodity consumption? The species could do without the ninety-nine per cent of consumption induced by the capitalist production volcano. In its production and reproduction the species has been frugal for millions of years and will again shun the useless, the artificial need, when it has subdued the productive forces by using the highest technology for itself and not for Capital. And on the subject of reproduction Marx responds to Stirner:

*'Since in Stirner men are no longer determined by the external world, nor driven to produce by the mechanical shock of need, and in general the mechanical shock, thus including the sexual act, has lost its efficacy, they can only have continued to exist by a miracle.'*¹⁵

The paroxysmal cult of the ego reached its zenith at the turn of the century, when the great bourgeoisie, preoccupied with sensational accumulation, left it to the middle classes to express the philosophical, political, sociological and literary forms specific to this veritable infection. And individualism gradually turns from heroic to negative. The poetic superman of a D'Annunzio precedes the fear of a civilisation of the man-mass denying individual freedom prophesied by Ortega y Gasset¹⁶; the search for solitary enclosure in a 'nest' far from the ravages of the modern world idealised by Pascoli becomes in Proust an exhausting struggle between an omniscient Ego that writes and its anguished and fragmented counterpart that appears in the writing. Even the late offshoots of a Sartre-like existentialism are but different re-propositions of the same myth: the possibility of full realisation of the single, unique individual above or outside history. As capitalism brings to fruition the socialisation of labour and the worldwide distribution of local industrial products, exposing the hollowness of the individual's claims and rights in the meat-grinder trenches of the First World War, the poetic power of the Stirnerian One is sung¹⁷; while more and

¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶ Writer-philosopher. He wrote *The Rebellion of the Masses* (1930), an attempt to hybridize socialism and liberalism to give back priority to the individual over growing massification.

¹⁷ It would have been rather difficult to recount the delights of the Ego to the million and two hundred thousand men killed en masse in the battle alone of the Somme.

more centralised, authoritarian and powerful state organisations come into being, while the individual becomes a mere atomised instrument at the service of an economy too big for the nation states themselves, the liberal and anarchoid bickering digs deep into the feelings of the sacred person, not realising that contradiction makes his body and brain burst, as it did for Proust, who self-enclosed himself in rooms lined with cork panels to isolate himself from the outside world.

It is only natural that the Left should have been particularly concerned with this intoxication of grey matter. Not even a Lenin, the revolutionary interpreter of a historical arc straddling two centuries including three modes of production¹⁸, while fighting against forces that sent the best brains boiling like nothing else, knew and fought individualist neuronal degeneration like the present. He was not yet compelled to collect special material to combat the disease. Only in the West, and later, would this be necessary. If so, the determinants must be emphasised.

Lenin and the Soldiers of Bourgeois Revolution

And by the way, Lenin is no joke either. While he does not write articles or books specifically against the disease of the battaloccio (remember that this disease can manifest itself directly or be attributed to heroes and monsters) he does treat it in the context of his work. Individualism is a social attitude of the individual brain, but it is the result of material facts, of relations between people, of necessary codifications of behaviour in an ideological superstructure. So Lenin does not invent either: he changes the form of the exposition (but the fundamental fact is present, as in Marx, as in Amadeo), he organises the material of others, partly criticising it and partly adducing it in support of materialism. By lumping the 'modern positivists' with Bishop Berkeley, he also criticises for us the existentialist postmodernists he did not yet know. He fiercely criticises all of them by calling the revolutionary materialist Diderot a witness:

*'Idealists are called the philosophers who, being aware only of their own existence and of the existence of the sensations that succeed them, admit nothing else. An extravagant system which, in my opinion, can only have originated in a blind man; a system which, to the shame of human intellect and philosophy, is the most difficult to refute, even though it is the most absurd.'*¹⁹

It is 1769. Diderot launches an atomic bomb against dualism between matter and spirit, an argument that has not convinced the vast majority of the population of the present planet, including almost all self-styled communists. The issue is the most difficult to explain because the individual carries it within himself and is unwilling and unable to give it up. Unless we fall into an extreme tension between self-defence as an individual fighting for his own existence and self-defence as a molecule of the species that submits to its interest. It

¹⁸ If desired, even four: remains were present in Russia of primitive communities, remains of Asian despotism, feudal and modern forms capitalism.

¹⁹ Lenin, Materialism and empiriocriticism

is revolutions that kill the individual and launch the defence of the species into the limelight. Diderot chooses D'Alembert, another encyclopaedist, as a problematic interlocutor. He asks him if he doesn't think that a harpsichord, endowed with sensitivity and memory, can record for itself the arias that are played on its keys. D'Alembert ironically asks whether such a harpsichord might not also have the power to feed itself and reproduce itself in many harpsichords. Diderot, in a memorable lunge, brings up the egg:

*'It is with it that all the schools of theology and all the temples of the earth are brought down. What is this egg? An insensible mass before the germ is introduced into it. And after the germ is introduced into it, what is it? An insensible mass, because this germ is, in turn, nothing but an inert, rudimentary fluid. How will this mass pass to another organisation, to sensibility, to life? By means of heat. Who will produce the heat? Movement.'*²⁰

Diderot could not have known that the fertilising 'fluid' and the egg are living cells, but the argument is still valid simply by shifting the observation of the elements that make up the cells upstream. Either one assumes, he says, that at some moment in the life process a hidden element is inserted, of which one does not know whether it is material, whether it occupies space, whether it is created on purpose (but then one must prove it with comprehensible elements, say where it comes from) or there is no saint who cares,

*'one must make a simple hypothesis that explains everything, namely that sentience is a general property of matter or a product of its organisation.'*²¹

And, immediately afterwards, Lenin reports the crucial passage in which Diderot shows that the historical conditions for the existence of historical and dialectical materialism were ready. Does not the harpsichord playing itself always repeat the same music? How can it vary it? How is a correspondence established between two harpsichords playing, if they repeat what we have strummed on the keyboard?

*'The sensitive instrument, or the animal, experienced that by emitting this or that sound, a given effect was produced outside of him, that other sensitive instruments similar to him, or other animals, approached, moved away, asked, offered, wounded, caressed, and all these effects, in his memory and in that of others, were linked to the formation of these sounds; and notice that in the relations between men there are only noises and actions. And to give my system its full force, note also that it is subject to the same insurmountable difficulty as Berkeley's for denying the existence of bodies. In a moment of delirium, the sensitive harpsichord believed that it was the only harpsichord existing in the world and that all the harmony of the Universe was produced in it.'*²²

²⁰ *ibid*

²¹ *ibid*

²² *ibid*

As can be seen, everything is there. The organisation of matter produces other organisation by means of the relations that are established. The effect is achieved on the level of language with the union in pairs of opposites (approach-remove, hurt-attack). The system in itself leads to the emergence of 'delirium' whereby the naturalness and automatism of relationships are removed in favour of individual thinking that leads the individual harpsichord to believe it is the factor in the harmony of the universe instead of being its product.

Diderot was certainly a militant of the coming revolution. Was he consistent and conscious? Was he acting specifically to overthrow the feudal power? What about D'Alembert, who retired from working for the Encyclopaedia because it was unprofitable? And all the others? The new revolution needed its manifesto, but no one had even dreamed of writing it. It wrote itself, drawing suitable militants into its orbit. Among the editors, in addition to the two mentioned above, there were characters who were by no means homogenous, there were Quesnay, Turgot, d'Holbach, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, but the end result of their writings was not a review of individual thoughts but a mighty body on the technique and labour of the time, to which ideology bent. The Encyclopedie began as a simple translation from English of an existing two-volume encyclopaedia. In the space of a few years, amidst various impediments (Diderot was imprisoned and the publication suspended for impiety, resumed and finally banned while being put on the index by Pope Clement XIII), it saw the light of day in a clandestine manner tolerated only because it had become a commercial enterprise, the failure of which would have harmed many bourgeoisie, and effectively became, as someone called it, 'a war machine against the old regime'.

The militants working for the revolution today cannot yet produce their Encyclopaedia, but only semi-finished products that other militants will complete or use for further elaboration. The times for great arrangements are those of historical leaps and bounds, of the maturity of even social revolutionary conditions, not the leaden times in which we live. So let no one let it go to their heads that today it is possible to discover some genius that will lead the movement to brighter shores. Today, it is only permitted to anonymously produce more or less raw material that serves to 'pull ahead' and prepare the necessarily small forces for better times²³.

Encyclopaedias will come, but producing the semi-finished products that serve to temper ourselves and forge new militants does not mean producing amateurish approximations. The militant is formed to the extent that he also learns not to be approximate, not to speak from hearsay or even, as too many do, just to air his teeth. Amadeo, at the opening of a meeting, announced that 'movements similar to ours are being organised in some European countries' and that the problem of language, added to the problem of language in the broadest sense, could become serious. Comrades do not

²³ See on *Il Programma Comunista* n. 8 of 1960 la introduction to *Historical revolutions of the species that lives, works and knows* .

understand each other if they are in the same party, let alone if they are geographically, politically and linguistically distant. In a world no longer accustomed to rigour but to TV sketch improvisations, it was necessary to bring the discussion back to a definitive body of theses that would represent an 'inescapable basis for party membership and external agitation'; but this body of theses had to be published simultaneously in at least four languages with the support of a 'dictionary of Marxist language', because 'the linguistic part is fundamental to achieving unanimous clarity'²⁴.

Our encyclopaedia is for now in the Manifesto and Capital, but we are sure that a great one will be written when the revolution imposes, with its pressure on history, the unification of all sciences envisaged by Marx. Who will write it? Proletarians projected onto the scene or transfuges of the now dominant classes? It does not matter. After all, even the revolutionaries who wrote the manifesto of the bourgeois revolution were not all bourgeois. And very few bourgeois militated in the revolution itself. Were they therefore less revolutionary? This is another concept that the Left had to forcefully reiterate²⁵. Nobody buys a ticket to attend the spectacle of revolution. Participation in party work does not guarantee a front row seat. Revolution is like science: individuals are related to each other through the historical party and through what they pass on to each other, not through their individual actions. Revolution, therefore, as we observed when discussing Galileo, is a collective process, and its will is manifested not through leaders who have understood but through the collective organism that will be the party, the repository of the entire process.

All revolutions record the system of relationships that forms a dense network through and beyond individuals. Christians become a single body through faith, through the bond with a single god that is no longer an object of opinion but an invariant programmatic datum, i.e. one that no longer gives rise over time to filiations and kinships as in previous pantheons. Christians become an organic party through their church, which also unites them physically in a network of relationships supported by a precise and unchanging liturgy. The barbarians who form the basis of feudalism in Europe establish a network of kinship relations between human groups, giving rise to dynasties, while the memory of a more properly biological network of relations survives when the feudal lord sows children through the atavistic rule of the right of first night. It seems that the bourgeoisie establish nothing more than a network of venal interests, but Marx shows that they unwittingly bring about the greatest revolution in past history: the socialisation of labour and its product. Commodities are not just commodities because they contain a given amount of labour time and raw materials. Value, and specifically exchange value, is not an absolute property of the things produced, but their way of presenting themselves as a network of relations in a

²⁴ *Il Programma Comunista* no. 23 of 1960, "Teachings of the past etc." Introduction to the themes, *Marxism and knowledge Human*. In the text the work on the dictionary is given as "good point", but it never saw the light. The theses instead were elaborated and today they are collected together with those from the pre-war period in the volume *In Difesa of the continuity of the communist program*

²⁵ See "Flourishing springs of Capital", in *Il Communist program* no. 4 of 1953. Now in *Dialogue with Stalin*

certain social order. Objects become commodities not by virtue of a name they receive or the fact that they are exchanged, but by virtue of a given system of relations between the men who produce and consume them.

Thank You Vladimir: and Now Let's Read the Rest Too

We must insist, because many who call themselves militant revolutionaries today are further back than the philosophers of classical antiquity and the bourgeois revolutionaries of the 18th century.

Let us put down Materialism and Empiriocriticism from which we have taken the quoted passages and take Diderot's original. We see that the bourgeoisie not only carries out a political revolution on the wave of erupting productive forces, but also a revolution in the field of knowledge. Diderot wrote *The Dream of d'Alembert* more for himself and a few friends than for circulation. When it came into his hands and he read it, D'Alembert was furious and ordered his former collaborator and friend to burn it, which he did. A copy was saved that came to Catherine of Russia who had bought the great materialist's library. Evidently D'Alembert could not handle the enormity of the contents. In addition to the passage quoted by Lenin, Diderot writes that man is but an organisation of matter and that thought is but a vibration of the matter of which man is composed. The spider secretes the thread of its web and it is matter of the spider and vice versa, it serves to nourish it, it vibrates when an insect entangles itself in it, it forms a whole with it, with the spider that rushes in and with the surrounding nature. Thus a swarm of bees. So man. He is formed with organs that are *'developments of a web that forms, grows, extends, casts a multitude of imperceptible threads'* whose sensitivity extends to the boundaries of the universe.

Can we help but equate the sensibility of the revolutionary militant with that of his network of invisible threads that feel the universe? Can we be more backward than these revolutionary precursors of ours? We must be more forward, lose the naivety of materialism's infancy and introduce the science of its maturity. It is achieved as soon as the critique of philosophy allows materialism to be combined with history in the making and dialectics, but the cornerstone of the function of the individual in history and revolutions is laid in Diderot's time once and for all.

The relationship between individuals, as in the example of the spider combined with that of the swarm of bees, means that there is no solution of continuity between the atoms or cells that make up man, who is in turn a cell of a larger whole. The individual is always the same and yet his cells change, like a convent into which monks enter and leave, but each one finds a hundred to receive him and so the convent remains the same over time. The individual is ephemeral, while the species is eternal through the turnover of individuals, until it too undergoes some change 'over millions of centuries'. But if we understand time in these terms, even the whole world is nothing but continuous change, and the Earth itself is but an atom in the universe, and the atoms that flutter about on a larger atom make a laughing stock of their petty selves:

*'O vanity of our thoughts! O poverty of the glory of our works! O misery! O meanness of our views!.... Who knows at what instant we stand in the succession of these animal generations? Who knows if this deformed biped, measuring only four feet in height, which even near the pole they call man, and which would not be slow to lose this name if only it were deformed a little more, is not the image of a species that is disappearing? The prodigy is life, it is sentience; and this prodigy is no longer a prodigy... Since I have seen inert matter pass into the sensitive state, nothing should astonish me any more... You have before you two great phenomena: the passage from the state of inertia to the state of sensibility and the spontaneous generations; they must be enough for you; draw the right conclusions from them... beware of the sophistry of the ephemeral.'*²⁶

What is the sophistry of the ephemeral? Asks one of the dialoguers, feeling delirium. The other dialogist, the wise Dr Bordeu, replies categorically: *"It is that of a transient being who believes in the immutability of things."* If you do not run a shiver along the nervous pathways of your organism, you have something wrong. Not only does the transient being believe in the immutability of things even today, but the class that carried out the great revolution, as ephemeral as the individuals that make it up, firmly believes in the immutability, in the eternity of its own economic and social formation. The proletarian revolution began to give itself instruments before the existence of the proletariat as a class was discovered. And let us deal the final blow to the individual with the words of the great forerunner of the Marxist theory of the battaloccio:

*'There is no quality of which every being is not a participant.... and it is the greater or lesser proportion of this quality that makes us attribute it to one being and exclude it from another... And you speak of individuals, poor philosophers! Never mind your individuals; answer me. Does an atom exist in nature strictly equal to another?... No... Do you not admit that everything in nature is chained, and that it is impossible for there to be a gap in the chain? What do you mean, then, by your individuals? They do not exist at all, no, they do not exist at all.... And you speak of essences, poor philosophers! Leave your essences alone... What is a being?... the sum of a number of tendencies... Can I be anything but a tendency? No, I'm moving towards a term... And species? Species are only tendencies going towards a common term that is proper to them... And life? Life, a sequence of actions and reactions... When alive I act and react in mass... when dead, I act and react in molecules... So I don't die at all?... No, without a doubt, I don't die at all, in that sense, neither I nor anything else.... To be born, to live, to pass away, means to change form...'*²⁷

²⁶ D. Diderot, *The dream of d'Alembert*, Sellerio, page 42-43. The ellipses provide the syntax of the delirium and are almost all in the original text.

²⁷ Ibid

If we were not obliged to take dates and social conditions into account, we would think that not only do revolutions create their militants on the spot, but that they also manage to find them so far in advance that their thinking is valid for two historical passages. Diderot is closer to our materialism than to the positivism of the bourgeoisie.

Recognize the Texts of the Revolution

So, does the battaloccio theory exist or does it not exist, not in the Left, but in the collective consciousness of the species? It does exist, to the disdain of the hackneyed Marxologists. Does the organic concept of the party exist? It exists, to the scorn of democrats masquerading as Marxists. The good militant does not need the regulation dozen quotations from Marx, Engels and Lenin to appear in a piece of writing, or the expressions Marxism, revolution, masses, exploitation and, by golly, 'bourgeois attack on the oppressed masses' interspersed every three words, to know whether it is revolutionary writing. Bordiga writes about modern physics and the arbitrariness of conceptions that separate the world of the continuous from that of the discrete, the wave from the particle, energy and thought from matter. Diderot too, but two centuries earlier, urges the reader to overcome the ancient dualism. The separateness of bodies subsists even if our imagination unites them by bringing them closer together, but the solution to the problem does not consist in seeing continuity only by gluing separate bodies together; we must conceive of the entire universe as a seamless whole, even if the apparent separateness of bodies persists. We now know that the presence or absence of an insignificant electron at the edge of the universe has measurable effects on an equally insignificant electron at home, without them touching, billions of light years away.

We are made of atoms, electrons, energy, like what surrounds us, Diderot suggests without knowing about atoms and electrons. We are made of cells and we ourselves are cells of a species that inhabits a planet that is part of... etc. It is therefore that the criticism of the individuality of bodies, including human bodies, must be pushed as far as criticising the confusion between contiguous and continuous. The subjective eye sees contiguous objects, and the ordinary mind imagines contiguous molecules in the same matter that has a beautifully solid, continuous appearance of atoms attached to each other rather like grains of sand and pebbles cemented into concrete. But nature only possesses continuity between its parts, so they somehow always communicate, they are never separate. Continuity in matter therefore holds all things in the universe in perpetual relation.

Ten contiguous apples are nothing more than a pile of apples, individual objects that have meaning only in the context in which they exist, e.g. they are eaten, they rot, they leave a seed that will produce more apples, etc. An apple tree better represents the apple, but also continuity with the context, roots, earth, water, minerals, air, sun etc. Ten men are a heap and twenty only a larger heap. Twenty contiguous men in the heap would produce no more knowledge than one would produce, i.e. nothing. Or, if you like, twenty men can all repeat the same humbug in the same way twenty others can say twenty different humbugs. If, instead of saying nonsense, they said important and vital things, the result would not

change much, because important and vital things can be added to infinity without adding anything to what exists. True transformation occurs when human molecules are in a relationship of continuity, not proximity, i.e. when they are connected to each other and transmit and receive from each other. The network of relationships where each molecule (human and non-human) represents a communication node is the only way through which knowledge of the system increases in the sense that the whole is greater than the trivial sum of the parts. This self-organising capacity is a property of matter and therefore thought is also a property of matter.

These considerations that connect men with a bridge of two centuries are part of the human baggage and are not just the product of individual imagination. If proof is needed, let us immediately demonstrate with any example that they do not occur in isolation but sprout luxuriantly here and there in the expression of collective intelligence. In many pages of the *Zibaldone*, Giacomo Leopardi addresses the problem of matter and its relationship with 'spirit'. Here is a significant example:

*'We cannot otherwise justify our many chimerical opinions, systems, reasonings, fabrications in the air about the spirit and the soul, except by reducing ourselves to this: that the impossibility of thinking and feeling in matter is an axiom, an innate principle of reason, which needs no proof. We have indeed started from the absolute and gratuitous supposition of this impossibility in order to prove the existence of the spirit.... Here indeed that poor human intellect has brought itself as a child into anything. And yet the truth was before his eyes. The fact told him: matter thinks and feels; because you see in the world things that think and feel and you do not know things that are not matter; you do not know in the world, indeed by any effort you cannot conceive, anything but matter.'*²⁸

Leopardi notes that not knowing a phenomenon does not give us the justification to deny it. In his essay on the Interpretation of Nature, Diderot emphasises the difference between an opinion and a scientifically proven fact by calling instinct, which is not mediated by the intellect, as a witness. He also states that in order to make knowledge effective, freeing it from the fetters of subjectivity, it is necessary for the subject to relate to the outside world:

*'As long as things remain exclusively in our intellect, they are our opinions, they are notions that can be true or false, accepted or contradicted. They only acquire consistency by binding themselves to external beings. This bonding takes place through an unbroken chain of experiences.... Unfortunately, it is easier and simpler to consult oneself than to consult nature. Therefore reason is inclined to remain within itself, while instinct spreads outwards... One could learn more experimental physics by studying animals than by taking a professor's course.'*²⁹

²⁸ G. Leopardi, *Zibaldone of thoughts*

²⁹ D. Diderot, *Interpretation of Nature*

All these observations represent the record of knowledge that mankind has attained once and for all. They have long remained fragmentary and scattered in the work of people who have dealt with many things, and not even Marx and Engels have been able to collect them and arrange them in a unified text. Our revolution has not yet been able to produce such a text. The wise Dr Bordeu, after listening to d'Alembert's aforementioned delirium, comments: *'You have made a very beautiful digression. This is very high philosophy; systematic, for the moment; I believe that the more human knowledge advances, the more it will be verified'*. The theory of the unity of energy and matter is now verified. The theory of the unity of matter and thought still needs a revolution to be universally accepted. The theory of treating human relations as one treats relations of energy and matter is the work of Marx, but, so far, only the Left has taken it to the terrain of the relations that underlie the party, the individuals that form it, the classes that, by clashing, release revolutionary energy.

Compass and Sextant, so as to Not Get Lost in History

In the field of revolutionary theory, the Left has invented nothing, but only the Left has specified the relations of the individual with the species, of the individual with the organised collectivity, of individual physiological motion with the motion of classes, of individual molecules with the material mass that sweeps away the old societies. Only the Left has been able to wrest such relations from 'systematics' and bring them into the field of experimental verification from which theoretical conclusions can be drawn whose value can be likened to that of a law.

It may be objected that a lot of people have done this, that there are theoretical works of clarification with respect to the materialism of our ancestors, etc. Of course. But the fundamental difference lies in the fact that none of these works gives us satisfaction on a theoretical level because they remain the product of men who find it *'easier to consult themselves than nature'*. Let us ask ourselves why only the Left was able to spell this out explicitly and we will see that the answer is: the Left did not consult itself, but elaborated the theory of the function of the individual and the organicity necessary for its action projected towards new forms in a real battle against forces that were denying the revolution itself.

Where did this elaboration come from? Why were others left out of it? Questions that certainly require complex answers and which, as usual, would need to be reformulated. The Left was ahead of the other European parties and more in tune with the Bolshevism of the revolutionary moment, which is why it was isolated and not understood. This is not whining, it was a fact. And the isolation became even heavier later on, when Bolshevism withdrew on Russian issues involving the other parties.

Perhaps the Left, as we have said so many times, in its isolation following defeat and in its very existence in the heart of advanced capitalism managed to stay (or forcibly stayed) away from the great international currents involving the most numerous and important parties. In its isolation and forced lack of active energetic expression towards the

'masses' it had sufficient tranquillity to develop theoretically all that it had experienced in the lost struggle on the physical battlefield.

The Left did not have to deal with the problem of the peasantry, that of the material struggle against the backwardness of society, it did not have to put in place practical attempts that possessed in themselves all the potential sufficient to bring about the failure of the proletarian revolution when it retreated into the West. Fascism itself gave the Left the opportunity to fully realise how necessary it was to counter the bourgeoisie with theoretical and practical instruments more powerful than those of the past. Everyone believed that fascism was a throwback to democracy, while the Left clearly saw that it represented the modern and more powerful than ever answer to controlling social life. Fascist corporatism was the sanction of the real domination of anonymous capital over the whole of society. One could not counterpose the ultra-modern form of bourgeois rule with a proletarian form of organisation that still relied on the democratic tools and function of individuals and leaders, their thoughts and 'their' theses. At the same time, the Left came up against the impossibility of realising an organic party. It had to be based on relations between revolutionary militants based on the demands of revolution in the ultra-evolved capitalist environment, but in this environment the revolution did not take off.

The Left therefore had the great historical opportunity of a special situation that saved it from 'practical experiments' related to the fate of the degenerating International. This does not mean that 'it went well'. Certainly the Left itself fought to the bitter end so that the International would not degenerate, even when it was clear to it (and it has been since at least 1924) that the battle was lost. But history turned out differently than expected. As Lenin rightly reminds us, every situation is special when the historical conditions are put in place to stop and take stock of the facts. This happened in Russia after 1905 and was repeated after the disaster of the Second International. It was still a 'special' situation that allowed the young Russian proletariat, and not the more seasoned western proletariat, to seize power.

It is in these moments that the possibility of stopping something from a theoretical point of view actually arises, because it is possible not to get carried away by the bloody current affairs. It sounds like a contradiction, as far as Russia is concerned, but it is not. Current events in Russia dictated a path established in facts: democratic revolution, parliamentarism, support for and participation in the provisional government, peace. We know how it turned out: Lenin's arrival at Finland Station, delegation of the provisional government, Lenin awkwardly handling the bouquet of flowers and listening indifferently to the greeting speech, then turning to the workers beyond the barriers and shouting: you are the vanguard of the world revolution! The democratic representatives look on at the April fool, ironic smiles from the old Menshevik foxes, one of whom wrote in his memoirs:

*'This was very curious! This voice breaking into the revolution did not at all contradict the 'context' of the latter, it did not appear discordant at all, but introduced a new note, a sense as if of stunnedness.'*¹³⁰

Years of exile took stock, selection thinned the numbers drastically: in July one had to go into hiding and all seemed finished, lost, in September the breakthrough in the Soviets, in October the revolution.

The Left experienced its period of silence. This allowed it to sharpen its critical weapons, as it had allowed Marx and Engels, as it had allowed Lenin. The balance passed through the experience of the struggle conducted as far as it was possible: away with the democratic trappings, away with the aping of bourgeois mechanisms, away with the cult of the individual and his supposed interference in history. The impersonality of party action must be put first, seen and experienced as the personal action of individuals, each of whom believed that he was the only sensitive harpsichord in the world and that all the harmony of the universe was produced in him; which immediately produced the effect of fighting for the places where they could manifest their power, supported with circulars and with resolutions of CC and CE, of Directorates and Sections, Federations and Congresses, of Heads and Secretariats, of Parliamentary Groups and restricted or enlarged Executives.

Certainly the Left has peculiarly set the problem of the individual, of the ego, of intuition against the culture that prepares more pundits than scientists, of the revolutionary instinct against the presumed revolutionary will, of organic centralism against the presumed function of leaders who would be engines of revolutions or counter-revolutions. This argument permeates all the work of the Left from Theses to Time Threads, from general meetings to scattered articles in the party periodical.

The Revolution, Physical Laws, and Isolation

But it is a fixation! says the uninformed observer. No, it is not a fixation, it is a nail that has to be hammered home, and therefore must never be allowed to get cold, because, to recall Diderot again, idealistic personalism stems from the real fact that the individual exists, absorbs and makes the external world his own by reflecting it as his own specific work. The issues of intuition, instinct, and the myth of the individual square perfectly with historical and dialectical materialism; it is not true that they are not part of the Marxist baggage prior to the Communist Left. Marx and Engels separately came to the same conclusions from completely different premises. The former wrote flashes of the new world view to his father when he was still a boy studying in Berlin: *'A curtain had fallen, my shrine was broken, and new gods were to be installed.... I wanted to dive into the sea once more, but with the firm intention of finding the spiritual nature just as necessary, concrete and firmly entrenched as the physical one'*. He was nineteen years old. The second was convinced, working for the first time in his father's factory, that the solution lay in the

³⁰ NN Suchanov, *The Russian Revolution - 1917*

working class. He was eighteen. A few years later they wrote the manifesto of the Party of the Proletarian Revolution together, and after another three or four they were unattached to the ephemeral party, destroyed by revolutionary ebb and human quarrels. No power could alleviate the unemployment of the 'geniuses' of the new social doctrine and no one listened to them. A decade later they were the feared leaders of an international revolutionary organisation.

They were in no hurry, one could not rape spiritual (read: political) nature once it was established that its laws were like physical ones. In short, they were not vulgar activists and did not count on their august people to get the revolution moving. Listen to what Engels says in a letter to Marx on 13 February 1851:

*'At last we have another time - for the first time in a long time - the opportunity to show that we have no need of any popularity, of any support from any party in any country, and that our position is totally independent of such miseries. From now on we are only responsible for ourselves, and when the time comes when the gentlemen need us, we will be able to dictate our conditions.'*³¹

The isolation (which was then a relative isolation) would last until 1864, when Marx and Engels were called upon to take charge of the nascent International. The phrase sounds really arrogant for the democrats. But how, what about the debate? The time will come when the gentlemen will need us and then we will dictate our terms. Of course, the time will come when the revolution needs those who have not allowed themselves to be drawn into the chatter of current politics and have established the theoretical basis on which to move, the tactics, the programme. The letter continues:

*'What does it do to us, who spit on popularity, who doubt ourselves when we begin to become popular, a 'party', that is, a band of donkeys who swear by our words, because they think we are their equals? Truly, it is no loss if we no longer pass for the 'exact and adequate expression' of these stupid beasts with whom we have been mingled in recent years.'*³²

It had not been long since the Communist League had been formed and the uprisings of 1848 had already decreed it outdated. Revolution does not stop at first results, it always tends to get to the bottom of things. After the royal movement had expressed its instruments, the royal movement itself decreed their decay. Men who could have been good for the democratic revolution had proved inferior to the events themselves and could no longer call themselves revolutionaries. Certainly the cowardice of the German bourgeoisie had material roots and it was Bismark who was to carry out the aborted revolution from above, but the inconsistency of the self-appointed representatives of the

³¹ K. Marx, F. Engels, *Opere complete*, Ed. Riuniti vol. XXXVIII pag. 208-9.

³² *ibid*

revolution had no excuse. Why then allow yourself to be dragged into the vortex of a party that you recognise was never the proper instrument of revolution?

*'A revolution is a purely natural phenomenon that is guided rather by physical laws than by the rules that determine the evolution of society in normal times. Or rather, in revolution these rules take on a much more physical character, the material force of necessity is revealed with greater violence. And insofar as one acts as a representative of a party, one is caught up in this vortex of incoercible natural necessity. Only by the fact of remaining independent by actually being more revolutionary than others can one at least for a time retain one's independence in the face of this vortex.'*³³

The consignment therefore is: resist activity at all costs, preserve your independence in the face of the formal party while remaining loyal to the historical party. As the above-mentioned Considerations say, he who turns his back on the formal party by feeling in line with the historical party alone is wrong. He who, even with independence in the face of men's nonsense, is not, however, independent of the need to work in an organised manner, will still end up being 'dragged into' the questions of organisation, as Engels says in the letter itself. The important thing is that he is dragged into it with the necessary coolness that enables him not to take up other people's positions. It is one thing to be dragged into a process consciously, as one who knows and masters it; it is quite another to simply allow oneself to be dragged along, taking up others' positions for lack of positions.

*'No accountability on behalf of dummies, ruthless criticism for all, and moreover that serenity that all the conspiracies of these sheep's heads will not really take away from us. And this we can do. We can in reality always be more revolutionary than all the phrasers, because we have learnt something and they have not, because we know what we want and they do not, and because, after what we have seen in the last three years, we will take it much more coolly than anyone else who is interested in the matter.'*³⁴

This is followed, as it happens, by indications of the only things that can be done when the historical situation is unfavourable to revolutionaries, theoretical investigation, the development of analysis, the dissemination of results in the press:

'The main thing for the moment is the possibility of getting our stuff printed; either in a quarterly journal, where we attack directly and consolidate our position in front of people; or in large volumes, where we do the same thing without even having the need to even mention one of these spiders. For me both are fine [...].'

³³ *ibid*

³⁴ *ibid*

*What will become of all the stupid talk that all the rabble of emigrants can make about you, when you answer with Economics?*³⁵

The Militant Knows What Communism Is

As we can see, Marx and Engels were not soft on the 'donkey band' that wanted to be on the crest of the wave at all costs; they sought isolation by throwing themselves into the only job to be done when the situation is historically unfavourable: preserving the future of the party's class line. Yet it will not be denied that they were militant revolutionary communists. The fact is that the militant of the revolution eludes a description that, as a horrible phrase is used nowadays, *'wants to get into the thick of things'*. It is true that the definition of militant quoted at the beginning does not answer 'practical' questions, but in the end one cannot even answer the question of what a militant of the revolution is without looking at it from the point of view of the overall process that prepares a revolution.

The only way to answer it is to retrace, in addition to the steps we have already taken by necessity, the history of the party's development. A militant communist is one who acts in tune with the historical party and behaves accordingly towards the formal party. All the hogwash that is usually said in self-styled revolutionary circles about the dedication of the individual, the number of meetings attended, the extent of the work done, or the degree of understanding of the sacred texts is rubbish. We have heard some tasty anecdotes about the conception of the party as a political marketing environment³⁶. It is obvious that there must be a natural relationship between what one intends to be and what one does, but it must also be obvious that there can be no communistometer to be applied to comrades in order to measure their degree of revolutionary spirit. Communism captures its militants just as the physical laws of nature capture the men of science who make them explicit and use them. First of all, then, we need to take up Marx and Engels' classic definition of communism, which overturns the idealistic-utopian conception that makes the militant an activist with ambitions as a history-maker:

*'Communism for us is not a state of affairs that must be established, an ideal to which reality must conform. We call communism the real movement that abolishes the present state of affairs. The conditions of this movement result from the presupposition that now exists.'*³⁷

If communism is not an ideal of men to which reality should conform, it is ruled out that men 'make' the revolution according to their conscience, thus it is ruled out that men 'choose' to become communists, i.e. instruments of the revolution. Men are 'chosen' by the

³⁵ *ibid*

³⁶ The reference, not understandable to those who were not there during our battle within the old party before its liquidation, it is due to the ambitions of certain "militants" who theorized practices from traveling salesmen to sponsor the product of the Communist Left among groups of proletarians who were already well supplied with products available on the market.

³⁷ K. Marx, F. Engels, *The German Ideology*

revolution and thrown into the struggle according to criteria determined only by the actual facts, which happen independently of their will. Engels reiterates this concept in the paper we put at the opening of our presentation pamphlet³⁸. Nowhere do we find the individual will as the explanation of revolutionary events as they unfold, much less do we find at the basis of the revolution a school of militants who, united in a group or party, represent by their will the trigger of the revolutionary process, the possibility of growing to encompass the masses, the pre-constituted ability to 'create' a well-oiled and disciplined organisational mechanism:

*'Communism is not a doctrine but a movement; it does not move from principles but from facts. Communists do not presuppose this or that philosophy, but all of past history and especially its actual results in civilised countries. Communism was born out of big industry and its consequences, the establishment of the world market, the unfettered competition that this entails, the increasingly violent and general trade crises, which have already become complete crises of the world market, the creation of the proletariat and the concentration of capital, the class struggle - arising from this - between proletariat and bourgeoisie. Communism, as far as it is theoretical, is the theoretical expression of the proletariat's position in this struggle and the theoretical compendium of the conditions for the proletariat's liberation.'*³⁹

Here, to be militant communists one must be attuned to the content of this conception of the world in the making. If one has any other conception of the historical movement that makes men act towards a different society, one is not a revolutionary communist. One is an anarchist, a syndicalist, a utopian of some hue, a Stalinist, but not a communist. There can be no other materialist definition of the revolutionary path and the steps that mark it. This does not sound like an exaggeration. These things are available to everyone. There are mountains of living material that the militant can draw on with both hands. The vast majority of those who have called themselves communists for years have not digested the great lesson that has been written in the relentless revolutionary process. This is clearly not a matter of political illiteracy, it is a matter of material forces imposing deforming glasses, when not lenses impermeable to light. Theoretical blindness is derived in a direct way from a praxis that has distanced the proletarian class from its historical tasks and reduced the continuers of the Marxist tradition to a trickle. For communism is the theoretical expression of the attitude of the proletariat as a class, and if the proletariat does not act as a class for its own sake, its theoretical expression remains unaffected, but its practical expression is necessarily what we experience.

Communists, therefore, do not presuppose this or that philosophy. Why? Because ever since mankind surpassed the ancient cosmologies that made religion, science and philosophy one, all philosophy has become the prerogative of individual thought, which

³⁸ *What is the Communist Left*, ed. Quad. Int.

³⁹ F. Engels, *The Communists and Karl Heinzen*

takes the liberty of providing an explanation where religion and science do not reach. Philosophy is no longer research and explanation, but ideal construction, interpretation, and this does not interest us, it is a thousand miles away from our path. One can no longer say, today, materialist philosopher. He who is a modern materialist (historical and dialectical) is no longer a philosopher but a revolutionary. But why rage against philosophy? Is it not a harmless product of individual thought? What harm does it do? If we want to talk about the impotence of current philosophy, that is where the discourse ends. The fact is that it remains the deterrent product of a conception that sees the individual as the engine of history conceived in the brain, and this produces immense damage even in our ranks, because in the end the damned circumvolved organ is transformed not into the purported engine of history, but into the engine of unbalanced relations between men, unleashing all the miserable matters that concern the tormented path of the formal party.

Men exist and have real brains that work the way they do, so there is no getting away from the trouble it makes. But revolutions teach and the lessons must remain. For millions of years, the individual was confused with the social group, with the species; for ten thousand years he needed myths and personalised gods; for two or three thousand years he needed heroes.

Reformism, Conformism, Anti-Formism

The new revolution will reconnect with the cycle of species through the liberation from the bond with nature due to technical and social progress, it will no longer need myths and heroes. A comrade once wrote to Amadeo:

*'You say well that a Marxist must look at principles and not men... we say men do not count and leave them out, but to what extent can this be done? If it is men who partly determine the facts? If men are in part the cause of the turmoil, we cannot forget them altogether.'*⁴⁰

The question is crystal clear and the answer does not need to be rephrased in Marxist terms. As militant revolutionaries, we are concerned with social facts operated by men and therefore without the human element our construction would not hold. Non-Marxists believe that man first thinks and then acts; hence all the effects that result in the visible relations of material life. Marxists say that first there are material relations, be they animal and physical or economic, determined by previous events, then there is theoretical or, more often, ideological rationalisation. There are in fact three ways of posing the question, and they can be schematised through language: facts are brought about by such-and-such a man; facts are operated by men; facts are brought about by men. This is the historical succession of how the question is posed once we pass the stage in which man is strictly bound to nature, a stage that produces the conceptions that are called animism and totemism. And Amadeo continues:

⁴⁰ A. Bordiga, *The battelocchio in histor*

*'Traditional religious or authoritarian systems say: a great Man or an Illuminated One from divinity thinks and speaks: others learn and act. The more recent bourgeois idealists say: the ideal part, albeit common to all civilised men, determines certain directives, according to which men are led to act [...]. The Marxists then say: the common action of men, or if we want to say what is common and not accidental and particular in the action of men, arises from material drives. Conscience and thought come later and determine the ideologies of each time. So what? For us, as for everyone, it is human acts that become historical and social factors: who makes a revolution? Men, it is clear [...] But the new fact is that we do not need, as in previous revolutions, even with the task of symbols, determined men with a determined individuality and name.'*⁴¹

It could be objected that this is a question that humanity carries with it and that it is not within our possibilities to eliminate it by simply decreeing its uselessness. This is correct. But then, why not turn this element in our favour, use it, given that the suggestion for the Leader, his function, can still be dragging elements, favouring sides, being decisive in battles? The answer is:

*'The gist of the hard lessons of so many decades is this: to renounce moving men and winning through men is not possible, and it is precisely we leftists who have argued that the collectivity of men who fight cannot be the whole mass or the majority of it, it must be the party not too big, and the vanguard circles in its organisation. But the dragging names have dragged forward by ten, and then ruined by a thousand. Let us therefore curb this tendency and as far as practically possible suppress, not the men but the Man with that given Name and that given Curriculum Vitae.'*⁴²

If form is the sediment, the encrustation that settles on substance, we must know that men subjectively tend to favour the visible and palpable form over substance, which is instead to be discovered for what it is through scientific procedures. Such procedures lead us to rule out that the traditional belief in the function of battiloccios can be more useful than harmful, and this applies even to the lowest levels of relations between people in a group or party.

The personalisation of mistakes, 'blame', trials, the search for the causes of victories or defeats in the actions of individuals must be banished. Linger on the traditional personalisation of events, even trivial ones, indeed, especially if trivial, means respecting form over substance in a totally reactionary manner. It is an index of deleterious conformism, which prevents the revolutionary militant from minding his own path, which distracts him from his tasks, plunging him into the quagmire of personalised political struggle, closer to barroom talk than to scientific research and consequential action. How

⁴¹ ibid

⁴² ibid

can one fail to see that minimal attitudes are directly linked to maximal conceptions? If the rejection of the capitalist economic and social form is total, the rejection of the derivative forms concerning behaviour should also be total. As much as we know that this is one of the most difficult things to achieve, nevertheless the problem must be present and at least give rise to a tendency in common work.

Induced conformism in the individual living immersed in the conformist reality cannot, of course, be eliminated by statutory decision, as is demanded in certain groups that dictate the rules of individual behaviour down to the smallest detail. It should be clear that when this happens it is because there is a practical inability to achieve the result and one tries to make up for it with ever more detailed formalisms. And it should also be clear that this is an endless road, on which there is no limit to detail, as the Left has well experienced with the International and centrism. The great result of the depersonalisation of problems is achieved by another route, that is, by making the effect of a general conception of social relations fall on everyday work. This will achieve that healthy distrust of forms and formalisms that allows one to avoid conformism to the habits inculcated by the bourgeois way of life.

The Communist Left has created the neologism anti-formist, contrasting it with the name of reformist currents, which tend to gradually change a form without changing its nature, and conformist currents, which tend to maintain the existing state of affairs without even attempting to change it. The militant communist is a soldier of anti-formism because he concedes nothing to the current form and not only looks forward to breaking it, but behaves accordingly, knowing full well that weapons, troops and organisation are needed to achieve this. If that were all there was to it, someone might object that then it is enough to get busy and recruit, prepare, organise, go where there is 'ferment', and so on, preaching revolutionary morality. Trotsky, who knew about both revolution and military matters, and not only because he had directed both the Soviets and the Red Army, but because he had assimilated very powerful theoretical weapons, said that no revolution can ever overthrow the existing order if it is not already undermined by itself⁴³.

The most powerful weapon at our disposal is on the side of the enemy and works against him, without his knowledge. Conversely, the most powerful weapon the bourgeoisie has against us we carry within ourselves.

Militants of Past Revolutions

Spartacus' fighters were defeated because they did not have the historical opportunity to defeat the two elements just mentioned: the opposing system was still too strong and the slaves had not yet been able to fully conceive of a world without slavery. The first disorganised bands had started their revolt in Capua and had learned from the enemy how to fight in the field during the battle itself. Within two years, after defeating three

⁴³ See L. Trotsky, *Lessons of October*

Roman armies, they had dominated the Po Valley and southern Italy. Some sources speak of a hundred thousand armed men. It seemed an invincible army, backed by the strength of those with nothing to lose and the military skill acquired by combining individual skill with the enemy's techniques. Yet Spartacus was defeated not so much by Crassus' legions as by the fact that Rome was at the height of its power and a slave leader, skilled as you like, was destined to remain a slave leader. Spartacus could not benefit socially after his victories because the demise of slavery was not yet on the horizon. This was the tragedy that ended in extermination. But Spartacus was a militant in the human revolution.

A situation in which the revolutionary peasants, at whose head stood Münzer, also found themselves in the 16th century in Germany. Münzer also failed, but he remains a militant of the human revolution. And what did he 'fail'? It was only under torture and before he was beheaded that he pronounced a communist programme, whereas in life and in battle he had no clear understanding of it. Premature revolution? Headshots of irresponsible leaders? And when is a revolution premature when communism is the real movement that abolishes the present state of affairs? Communism is not an intermittent movement, it is now there and now it is not: when the actual revolution is not working (the one that can be reproduced by the aesthetics of painters or other modern means, the photogenic and cinematic one, the one with swords and horses, flags and cannons), the other side of the revolution is working, the potential one, the one of the material development of society, which involves militia and soldiers as much and perhaps more than the one that is expressed in heroism, noise, dust and blood. When masses of men move, the heroes are not responsible for the movement of them, but are the product of it; they rest their deeds on a foundation far greater than themselves, made up of the energies and actions of militants who have found no salaried historians to name them.

Perhaps Spartacus never existed, perhaps not even Christ; perhaps they are a mnemonic symbol for anonymous revolutions, figures handed down by survivors for future battles. Revolution can be 'immature' all you want, but it never ceases and slows down in the face of nothing. The strength of the adversary does not prevent it from finding militants willing to fight to the last for a victory believed possible, even without a ticket to guaranteed glory in their pockets. Look at the Paris Communards, whose names cannot be remembered without straining the memory or going to the books.

Even the Christian revolution had no chance of asserting itself as long as Rome was able to keep a firm grip on the Empire. "*Anti-formist and revolutionary par excellence was the movement that bears the name of Christ*", it says in our Outline⁴⁴. And it points to the historical stages this movement went through and its own phases: revolutionary, reformist, conformist. The Christian revolution did not give us fighting characteristics like those of Spartacus or Münzer, but it possessed a disruptive theoretical force against the Jewish theocratic order and above all the Roman slave order. In fact, already in the first decades it

⁴⁴ On page 15. Ed. Quaderni Internazionalisti

lost its primitive characteristics and became an urban revolution, spreading throughout the network of the most important metropolises of the time as far as Rome.

The material strength of organisation and solidarity made up for the strength of arms, at a time when these were not available to the Christians and would in any case not have been sufficient against highly trained legions. Therefore Christianity developed for the first time in history a mass political party with its own precise doctrine and structure (Paul's letters, which are written around 50-70, are a treatise on the theory-practice relationship). It does not matter that it was not a party as most people understand it today, it was still a party before it was a religion. This is demonstrated not so much by its hierarchical structure and liturgy as by its ability to respond organically to the demands of the revolution for which it was the spokesman, with the ability and possibility to give itself a consequent programme, adopting a 'tactic' in line with the historical moment.

Christianity was one religion among many that existed in Rome, all imported from other peoples. Given its origins, it had an equal statistical opportunity to emerge over the official Greek religion than the cult of Mithras or Isis, of Mani or Zoroaster. But it had a higher power than the other religions with which it competed: it was not an end in itself. It was a militant religion that promised results and acted to obtain them; it was not based on reason but on faith; it did not ask the brain to accept its principles, but left adherence to the transport of the soul⁴⁵.

There is nothing to be done: if we throw that bridge of which we spoke earlier across the millennia, we have to reckon with the other parties in history, those organisations with which humanity itself has had to reckon in its development. We may smile, from the heights of our rationality, at a St Augustine fighting Manichean rationalism for a faith without adjectives, we may even find all that talk of his about his conversion, which he unassumingly wants to hand down to posterity and which must sound bogus even to a Catholic, cloying. But those words have been bricks in the historical and formal party of Christians, with those bricks their church has been built, regardless of the 'saints' who have spoken for all. Church means assembly; Catholic means universal. The party of God

⁴⁵ For example in St. Augustine, regarding his own conversion: *"I began to prefer Catholic doctrine, too because I found her more balanced and absolutely sincere in prescribing one faith without demonstrations, which sometimes exist, but are not for everyone, sometimes they aren't there at all. Manichaeism, on the other hand, recklessly promised one science, so much so as to mock faith, and then forced belief on a large number of completely absurd tales since they were unprovable"* (Confessions, ed. Einaudi page. 137). Augustine recounts his conversion as a resistance of the brain compared to the rest of the body: these he wanted to follow the new path but was prevented from doing so by his will, which he managed to do command every single movement of the limbs but he was powerless to command himself itself. In the culminating moment of the transition to the new belief, the brain of Augustine still persists in refusal and, "in the storm of hesitation", does not go towards the will of God and his alliance, *"towards which all my bones cried out that we must go"* (ibid. page 213, underlined in the text) which is the formula often used in the Bible when there is conflict between material determinations (faith) and ego resistance subjective.

founded its premises on solid arguments, not laughable ones. Arguments so solid that they made it possible to draw on all cults, welding into an organic whole what humanity still needed to preserve, albeit transformed: from the trinity to the goddess-mother, from fetishism to symbolic language⁴⁶.

The Revolution Captures Any Available Human

When mankind needs a new party for revolution, the militants of this party have the characteristic of placing themselves totally outside the dying society. They lash out against phenomenal forms, gods or men or institutions, but they are driven by deep-seated causes and end up undermining society from its very foundations. It does not matter which class they come from, they certainly act in the sense of the movement of that class that represents the future, the transition into a new society. The intelligence of facts comes after men have moved, and those who move first are those who do not know, who do not know, who do not understand. All that is needed for the real movement of revolution is the instinct that drives towards a new society with which the old one is already imbued. The history of the Party of God also teaches us this, when it focuses its forces on the dispossessed and the 'poor in spirit'. After the defections of the learned, the landlords, the nobles, Constantine will represent the last act with the proclamation of Christianity as the state religion.

Engels records the path of the Christians and their party and embroiders on it a little, comparing it to that of the socialists, but recalls that Diocletian's terrible 'persecution' was of no use against the irresistible development of that religion, especially in the army, and that Constantine's edict was issued just ten years later⁴⁷. Apart from what may happen to men as individuals, the advent of any new order is indeed 'irresistible'. The formal party may suffer reverses along with its militants, but the decisions of men can do nothing about the historical party. This is recorded by all revolutions.

Even Jack London, in his *Iron Heel*, evokes the defeat of the formal party and the ultimate victory by the historical party after centuries of domination by a super-bourgeoisie. Not too rosy a prospect, but effective in demonstrating the inevitability of revolution even in the case of an extreme force of reaction⁴⁸. Lenin on his deathbed asked to be read a few pages from London and Trotsky noted how the writer had been able to anticipate by some twenty years the nature 'of fascism, its economy, its technique of government and its political psychology' while inviting reflection 'before the powerful intuition of the revolutionary artist'. Revolutionary artist? And when he was writing about characters that would have appealed to Nietzsche and the Nazis, to the ego and race worshippers, how about that? The revolution engraves itself in the individual brain, but sometimes it does not make it, it leaves traces that the militant must discover at times, in a series of relationships

⁴⁶ See in the text *Passion and algebra* the concept of "invariant".

⁴⁷ F. Engels, *Introduction* to the first reprint of *The class struggles in France* (Marx), final part. By Engels, see also *Sulle origini di Christianity*

⁴⁸ J. London, *The Iron Heel*

that are by no means linear. However, it stops at nothing and carries its upheavals to the extreme.

Returning to the Christians, we can have all the sympathy we want for Julian the Apostate⁴⁹, whose hatred for the priests who had shown him the green mice and who by then, after a few years in power, had degenerated almost as we know them today. But the fact is that Julian was completely against history; he was against the tide not so much because he wanted to reintroduce paganism into a world in which everyone was now Christian, but because the society set up on slave-like relations of production could no longer exist and a religion suited to the old mode of production could no longer survive in it. Unlike Diocletian's reforms before Christianity was recognised, those introduced by Julian could only succeed: the reformists never realised that one could only reform after the revolution had won by destroying the old form, not before. With the introduction of a new distribution of taxes in favour of the poorer classes, accompanied by a monetary policy decoupled from gold, the emperor took into account the new economy that was breaking free from slavery. A return to the old religion could not succeed and, as soon as Julian died, Christians returned to schools and government posts.

We can regret the gigantic toll this transition took on ancient art, swept away by the Christians who made lime of mountains of carved marble for the new churches, while they made ashes of books, parchments, papyri and tablets. But revolutions do not take place according to the wishes of posterity and sweep everything in their path, including those militants themselves who prove indecisive in action.

The birth of the bourgeoisie is certainly not studded with edifying episodes. The maritime republics were societies of privateers and unscrupulous merchants, while the struggle of the Communes against the emperor, which anticipated the Enlightenment bourgeoisie of the French Revolution by centuries, rested on the Church and all the symbols that today represent the 'dark ages' (which in the end were not dark at all). The force of the new mode of production was not so subtle in its choice of instruments; perhaps revolutions just don't make it to the point of generating a calming aesthetic. In its early death, in Italy, the old feudal mode of production (if there ever was one here, especially in the south, as Bordiga states) generated flashes of classicism and universality as opposed to the heavy narrowness of the instruments of the new mode of production: empire against communes and the Church, global vision and secular universalism against local interests and ecclesiastical universalism. Yet the new ferment of commerce and production passed through the huddled armies huddled around the chariot rather than through the emperor's efficient and polished armies. The communes failed, but gave way to the lordships that were the bank of Europe, the germ of the original accumulation.

⁴⁹ Grandson of Constantine, acclaimed emperor of the army (360 AD); he reigned only three years attempting the restoration of paganism and one reform of the State inspired by the less decadent Rome of previous centuries.

What if the revolutions not only did not satisfy the aesthetics of historians who would like events from a film script, but also did not satisfy logic? Logic would have it that the great upheavals would see the direct protagonists of change. Not at all, material facts turn any available human being into an instrument of history, regardless of what he thinks he is.

The revolution due to the fresh barbarian energies that resulted in feudalism took a long time to take place and resulted in a clash between two conceptions of the universality of domination, the papal and the imperial, both of which were later defeated by the advent of mercantilism and capitalist production. It is possible then, during this process, that a feudal ruler (Frederick of Swabia) becomes a militant of the bourgeois revolution already in embryo. And that a great poet (Dante), a cantor of feudalism and its ideological structure, becomes a spokesman for this embryo. And that the material structure of the Church, the load-bearing pillar of mediaevality, should take it upon itself to supply the administration and weapons to the revolution in spite of the person of the pope (Knights Templar and Teutonic, the system of abbeys, especially the Cistercians). And that all this embryonic power is inherited by a clot of mercantile interests still ignored by great history (Maritime Republics and Communes). And that feudalism was defeated several centuries before it was officially swept away (merchant and agrarian capitalism of the first seignories in Italy). And that the result of all this shows definitively that the great leaders, jurists and thinkers are extras who are not allowed to do what they want, while they are led to perform actions that achieve an equally definitive victory over the old forms.

Of course, this is a scheme. Arbitrary if you like. But by now we already know all about the use of schemes, even the most reckless ones⁵⁰. Let us try to develop some elements of it.

Instruments of History, Not Its Factors

Frederick II of Swabia was almost as much sanctified by his romantic exegetes in the pantheon of the laity as he was demonised by the priests. But he also upheld the true sanctity of the Church by demonising the pope and sanctifying himself. He was undoubtedly a remarkable character, and even if we can study his moves with a materialist eye, we cannot help but be fascinated by the universality of his surroundings, his works, his attempt to unite the greatness of classical antiquity with the new productive forces, his war with the papacy. But he represented the contradictions of a dying epoch on which a new epoch is being superimposed.

⁵⁰ The Left has always maintained that the use of schemes facilitates the non-subjective formulation of problems, as long as it is schematised in a non-arbitrary, i.e. idealistic way: *"This is our central theorem [that Marxism contains everything that can be developed on capitalist society] contains the exposure of all lies revisionists circulating. It is easy to state it, always with the aim of not exhausting the endless theme, but to clarify and reinvigorate its hard-won achievement presentation. We will say it, to the anger of the 'subject' talkers, in this way schematic..."* (*The doctrine of modes of production* , ed. Quaderni Internationalists).

He dreamt of pagan classicism but, while eliminating feudalism in Sicily, he promised as a feud, to the knights of the Teutonic order (which he supported) the lands they had been able to wrest from the pagans in the north. In Italy he practised a courtly enlightenment by founding production communities with extensive use of wage labour, but the pagans of the Baltic were slaughtered and replaced with Germans governed by the iron feudal discipline of the powerful monasteries of 'his' order. He was pluriscommunicated by the pope by whom (as per his legendary history) he was presented as the Antichrist, but he was firmly resolved to rely on Church tradition to send the accusation back to sender. It is said that he was a non-believer, but feeling at the end of his days, he donned the monastic habit of the Cistercian order to which he had wanted to adhere since he was a boy⁵¹. In his war against the papacy, he had invaded the papal states welcomed by the population as a liberator 'wonder of the world' surrounded by legends, but at the same time he did not give up a ruthless war to subjugate the free communes that had been fighting against the empire since the time of Barbarossa (his grandfather). A heretic, he invented the public stake for heretics; exterminator of rebel Saracens in Sicily, he protected them and made them the loyal core of his army in Italy; enemy of the rising bourgeoisie, he applied its economy in a big way; universalist having inherited Europe, he acted in depth only locally in Sicily; he preached the poverty of the Church and hated the Franciscans by whom he was abundantly repaid; he restored Cicero's ancient Latin as an official language and spoke all the languages of the time, while the new vernacular language was born at his court; he proclaimed himself messiah and wanted to transform himself from an anvil into a mallet for official Christianity. A superficial would say that he was a screw-up or a psychological doublet, a schizophrenic, but the best definition he gave was himself, first denying his own function as the batiloccio of Good or Evil that others attributed to him: "*We are forced to want what we do not want and not to want what we want*"⁵².

In reality he was forced to be what he did not want. He wanted perhaps to 'make' a story that was not yet ready. He could not make it, with all his might. He could not make it because history is made by men and not by Such-and-Such a Man, and the victors eventually tried to erase even his memory by exterminating not only his family, but also the military and manufacturing communities where Italians, Arabs, Jews, etc. lived together. Dante was slapped into hell, but the Poet himself took upon himself a theoretical legacy dictated by facts and handed it down to the Renaissance of the lordships and to Machiavelli.

⁵¹ The emperor had a strange relationship with the orders monastic. He supported the Cistercian order from which he drew his administrators and the builders of hundreds of castles and fortifications. He argued with everyone means, in Northern Europe, the action of the Teutonic Order whose grand master he was first court counselor. The Cistercian order became a power with St. Bernard of Clairvaux who was also an inspiration, if not actually an editor, of the Rule of the Order of the Templars, powerful in Southern Europe and the Holy Land; the same rule of the Templars was granted by the Pope to the Teutonic knights.

⁵² E. Kantorowicz, *Emperor Frederick II*

As we can see, there was a terrible confusion of roles, of actions for or against the new order of the productive forces. Where were the militants of the revolution that was to remain in gestation for half a millennium? Certainly the Church was siding with the forces opposed to the emperor, but equally certainly not representing the advancing revolution. The revolution would eventually be atheistic and enlightened, but at that time it was maturing laboriously amid psalms and bells, priests and merchants, crusades and pogroms. Was the Swabian emperor a representative of feudalism? Certainly. But he certainly could not have created his own legend.

Around the year one thousand, the social productive force exploded, expressing itself for three hundred years with the construction of thousands of abbeys, convents, cathedrals and castles. Explosion is the right word, bearing in mind that our conception of time has shrunk somewhat. The Roman Mediterranean basin had some 60 million inhabitants distributed over four million square kilometres. But 'distributed' is a term that has nothing to do with today's metre. These were urban units located at the centre of larger agricultural units separated from each other by large deserts and forests, with a road connection that, however grandiose, represented unique ridges between the various centres. As one moved towards the limes of the empire, one found only uninhabited, militarily controlled grain production reservoirs.

By the 8th century, the population had dwindled to less than ten million and was spread over two million square kilometres, thus with minimal density. The communication ridges had practically disappeared, the immense African, Danubian and Germanic territories swallowed up by the advance of desert, forests and barbarian tribes. Before 1300, the inhabited area had already expanded to two and a half million square kilometres, but what is more important is that the population had risen to 80 million. The total area was smaller than it had been in antiquity, but the population was larger and more distributed. For the first time in its history, man filled the space at his disposal with thousands of towns and villages connected this time by roads that, although less perfect than the Roman ones, constituted a true communication network. There was no tower or bell tower from which others could not be seen, and the landscape, including the forests, was now completely under regulation. One understands that the process of universalisation had to be different from that of Roman civilisation⁵³. One understands that a conflict had to arise between two tendencies towards universality, the imperial and the Church. But material history plays tricks that men do not even imagine: empire and church lost their universality and gave way to local lordships. The politics of men became particular, while the network of bell towers and towers became universal, as did the economy, which for the first time held the

⁵³ "The *full world* is a single whole and is in this particular relationship of man with space, therefore in a density exceptional of interhuman communications which consists one of the qualities specifics of the *liberating Christianity of the enclaves* : in this relationship, exactly, and not in a superiority that does not resist study comparison of techniques and returns". Pierre Léon, *History economic and social economy of the world* , Laterza, vol. I pages. 45. Let's add that is found in the same area *the most concentrated* mass of capital and forces production of today's world.

foundations. At his death Frederick was erased from memory and all his heirs, including the children, erased from the world of the living; but the new revolution nevertheless treasured an anonymous legacy that would soon revive in other more or less important names, starting with Dante: the new economy, the new language and the new state⁵⁴.

Everyone would like it and it would be quite convenient to have a history where there are revolutionaries on one side and counter-revolutionaries on the other, in clear-cut alignments that even kindergarten children could understand. But unfortunately the militant communist must investigate all available material and discern through the Marxist method. This will teach him not to become indifferent to any episode and to assess how revolution is intertwined with counterrevolution.

Indifferentism, *bête noire* for True Marxists

Today we are faced with the same order of problems. Counterrevolution? And when would there ever be a need for counterrevolution if revolution was not on the agenda? Take the reins off capitalism and you have revolution. So capitalism bridles itself and uses the state to bring individual capitalists into line. Welfare state, if you will. Or social amortisation. We gain a very firm trust in our texts and our masters, but this does not entitle us to stop searching, to be so indifferent to the issues that today's capitalist world places before us as backward, inconspicuous facts, seemingly outside the great battle for the new society. Certain details are perhaps such to the superficial, not to the militant of the revolution. Nothing is so insignificant that it does not fall within the field of interest of the party and its militants.

Just as the revolutionary militant is not indifferent to movements that are not proletarian, be they anti-imperialist in manner, peasant (smallholders etc.) or why not, ruined shopkeepers, neither is he indifferent to the non-struggle of the classical urban proletariat. We read in *Factors of Race and Nation* that even in the developed West, there may exist social strata that are imbalanced by their very way of being within this society. Well, they can be one of the bullets that will help demolish it. It is not a question of making alliances with them, we would return to the questions of wrong tactics, single front and alliance systems against supposedly backward or reactionary parts of society. The question is what symptom they represent and whether they have the possibility of moving in the direction of destroying the existing state of affairs. We are not going to listen to what they say they want. We only need to know what they are currently demolishing or what they have the potential to demolish. It is a question of whether there are social strata that are objectively allied with the proletariat in the elimination of the bourgeoisie as the ruling class, not of launching open letters or proposals for action. When society moves towards the new, the caterpillar of revolution doesn't give a damn about investigating the class of the driver, as long as the job gets done.

⁵⁴ There are three biographies of Federico II in Italian: E. Kantorowicz, *Emperor Frederick II* cit. (passionate romantic-Hegelian); E. Horst, *Frederick II of Swabia*, Rizzoli (somewhat journalism); D. Abulafia, *Frederick II - A medieval emperor*, Einaudi (alternative-desecrating)

Much to the dismay of those who have already forgotten a couple of fundamental threads of time. Yet our current has written in abundance about the ways in which revolution is affirmed. It has written plainly and clearly what 'fascism' means for us, i.e. not a turnaround, but a step forward in capitalist domination; it has written plainly and squarely that the last social revolution did not see the bourgeois in the front row fighting for Liberté, égalité, fraternité, but proletarians, sans-culottes, commoners, peasants and ruined shopkeepers. Even feudals who had jumped the ditch and had gone with the revolution against their class⁵⁵.

As we have seen, the lives of the saints do not make us laugh, we do not laugh when the party of God speaks, with the unbearable language of mysticism and morality. Even if reading St Augustine is something awful, we know how to draw more than others from the chronicle and, why not, from mysticism. Even if we hear from a thousand miles away that the Confessions are intended to emphasise the importance the writer gives to his own conversion and deep down to himself (so much so that he speaks directly to God as if he were a fellow reveler who had come to his senses before him) we know how to go back to the top of the heap and dig with the mole of the time to draw lessons from the revolution of the time. Voltaire is worse than Augustine in taking the reverse attitude, when he mocks mysticism, priests and professes to be faithful to a personalised religion. How convenient, one would say, comrades; what an ingenious solution these great interpreters of the bourgeois revolution have found, who solve the problem of religion in their hearts, as if it were a personal matter; and mock the poor Egyptians who even worshipped mummified cats. Even Diderot, whom we like much better than the other Enlightenment thinkers, had 'his' religious conception (OK, it was a widespread mania even before, Leibnitz, Galileo, Newton etc. had their religions). And we mock these big wigs in turn.

Eeehhhh... no. We are talking about the revolutionary militant and his attitude in the face of indifferentism. So it doesn't make us laugh at all why Voltaire is forced to make irony of religion past and present, any more than it made us laugh at St. Augustine's sighs live with the father-in-law. Let alone the positivists (generally vulgar materialists) who, when they play the atheists, are worse than all the most whining saints, do not even make us smile. For it is not a question of mocking, but of studying the environment in which the living tools and their theoretical and organisational instruments have acted and will have to act. And there will be nothing to laugh at in the face of the immense energy that will be released by the death of bourgeois society in the face of the onslaught of the anonymous representatives of future society.

Engines of Revolutions

Revolutions in their development anticipate the characteristics of the future society. Christianity anticipates the abolition of slavery by practising solidarity and moral equality

⁵⁵ *Flowery springs of Capital*

among its adherents, and thus by recording the real situation in which slavery is already decreed useless by the facts; the claim to free slaves did not exist in its programme.

Even the slave Spartacus did not have the abolition of slavery on his agenda: his war was the expression of a mode of production that based its economy on the thirst for super-labour; the human mass assigned to production had become too high compared to the relative smallness of the free population, and this created a strident social contradiction.

In our era, not even Lincoln had the freeing of slaves in his programme. The clash between Unionists and secessionists was the expression of an industrial society already ripe for a large market, which had to sweep away the remnants of the backward society, an anti-historical hybrid because industrial society no longer knew what to do with the low yields of the latifundium and slaves: it needed free land for capital and free men for the labour-force market.

The same great heretical reaction to the degeneration of the Church, often with communist undertones, is not so much characterised by the aprioristic claim of organisational models, as by the generalised demand for the recognition of movements already formed on the basis of material determinations that were given theoretical accommodation a posteriori. The history of heresies is studded with bloody battles for the affirmation of these already achieved results, and the violence of repression is equal to the entrenchment of the material necessity of heresy. It is no coincidence that the history of heresies with a social background begins in Milan in the mid 11th century, at the same time as the phenomenon of the Communes develops and the Church becomes a true economic power.

The bourgeoisie anticipates the liberation of serfs not so much by claiming in a specific programme their juridical enfranchisement, but by hiring labour-power in the manufactures, triggering the need for men freed from the bond with the land and with the master, operating a rupture in the closed social fabric of the feud with the need for free circulation of goods.

In capitalism, the communist society is anticipated, not so much through the description of a model and the assertion of an end, but through the actual demolition of the ties that bind the productive forces, the extension of automated production, the exaggerated 'liberation' of labour power, the increasing distribution of surplus value in society; the real factory production, within whose walls a rational production plan is in force in antithesis to the external anarchy of the market, production without exchange of values is in force, where each piece produced serves an end without being a commodity and where even the final product is not a commodity until it passes through the external door of the warehouse.

Thus the proletarian anticipates in his own party the future community not so much by claiming a utopian model of human community, but by working in the factory system in symbiosis with the capitalist, experiencing the contradiction of the clash between production according to a pre-established plan in the factory and social anarchy outside it; carrying into the party his 'education' to an 'order' and living in it the condition of a member of the human species finally free from the constraints of class, trade, language; free from any classification in which the individual can be placed in bourgeois society, because in the party there are only revolutionary militants, without any other distinction.

These material anticipations may not be immediately obvious, which is precisely why it is the task of revolutionary militants to highlight them. Collective knowledge in the course of party work is a revolutionary weapon, as is at some point the possibility of making this knowledge general outside the party, through propaganda, proselytism, mobilisation. The identification of the mechanisms of revolution proceeds from the material basis, the economy, the production processes, but the apparently minimal and external manifestations cannot be neglected, the core politics, the daily life of men, the aesthetics, all manifestations that the militant will know how to evaluate by linking them into a coherent whole with the basis from which they spring.

In the article in the series *On the Thread of Time*⁵⁶ that we have already discussed, Amadeo devotes a few paragraphs to the Engines, Actors, and Styles of revolutions. The engine of every revolution is the material development of society's productive forces. It is not possible to define the characteristics of communist society without thoroughly investigating the preceding passages, from reproduction in primitive communism to the appearance of property, from ancient society to modern capitalism; this is why we have always given great importance to the study of the succession of economic and social forms.⁵⁷ In the progression of humanity towards higher forms, there have certainly been events that have not always been consistent due to the instability of mankind, but it must be emphasised that the development of the productive forces has never known a halt, in short, history has always walked forwards, never backwards. This also applies to the transition between capitalist society and communism, which has been mature for some time now, and therefore a communist militant is anyone who can identify what this forward movement is, or at least attempt to, with the means made available by past revolutions. As Marx and Engels themselves made clear, the material base is the engine of history, but this does not mean that we espouse an anti-dialectical mechanism. What then is the function of men with their will if we deny them a function as factors in history? All the more so, how can the revolutionary militant, working for now in an organised manner, but certainly without visible influence, accomplish this task by implementing a small application of the will, that

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ *The subsequent forms of production in Marxist Theory, and Doctrine of Modes of Production*, in whose *Preface* methodological issues are covered (see catalog of publications of Quad. Int.)

is, by implementing a reversal of local praxis⁵⁸, without falling into activist-villionaire attitudes, without taking anything away from the general concept that is instead linked to the fate of the party mainly in revolutionary phases? Amadeo wonders whether the will of the individual, sometimes generous, cannot be utilised and answers:

*'Within wise limits yes, in preferring to be disciples with sufficiency rather than operetta masters, in planning no longer the unleashing of the Apocalypse, but a sane plan of underproduction of nonsense.'*⁵⁹

Such a result, which seems rather minimalist, is instead fundamental. If economics is the engine of history, hence of revolution, there is no need to produce meticulous 'analyses of the situation', which change as the editor changes, but it is enough to bear in mind that the economic basis of the great upheavals has been defined in its various aspects by Marxism once and for all, hence also for the future. Every revolution is caused by the need to produce and distribute products in new forms, completely different from the past. The militant's plan of under-production consists first of all in identifying the process of change in the development of the productive forces and the resulting effects, i.e. the manifestation even at the superstructural, political, social level of the need for the new forms of production and distribution. The comrades who follow us know that we are constantly trying to establish, for example, what relationship there is between the phenomenal forms of domestic and foreign policy and the material needs of classes and states, between a [Umberto] Bossi and the automatic factory, between Maastricht and the different rate of accumulation in different countries, between the tasks of the militant and the dematerialisation of capital and commodities in the information age. With common sense, without inventing war horses just because one day we read, for example, that at Mazda there is a factory with 270 robots and no workers, a situation that in itself Marx already solves by talking about the frames of the automatic factory.

Actors of Revolutions

Going beyond the strict theatrical or cinematic meaning, we call anyone who takes an active part in the events an actor. Different characters move on the stage of the marching revolution. Each performs his or her task, and of course there are those who are caught up in the usual routine, those who direct the movements of others, those who record what happens, those who destroy, those who are parasites and those who simply make a mess. In all this bustle, men act, they make history, even if they do not make it as they wish, but are guided by the material forces of development. The quoted text says that, while we do not admit that history goes on because of the will of a few bickerers, we willingly admit the existence of men, thinkers, writers, agitators who, among all the actors, function not so much as advocates as revealers of the historical event and fix it in texts and programmes that are more or less faithful or distorted. The energy released by a revolution will clearly fix

⁵⁸ As mentioned other times, the *local* term is used in the scientific and non-topographic sense.

⁵⁹ *Flowery springs of Capital*

these programmes and operationalise them to achieve results consistent with the aims of the revolution itself. The power of the clash between classes in France and the clarity with which the tasks of the revolution matured meant that the detectors registered the signals well in advance and the magnificent material was produced that gravitated around the Encyclopaedia, the true weapon of demolition of the old state of affairs. When the time came for battle on the streets and in the open field, the soldiers of the revolution had their programme ready and acted as its instruments.

Marx, Engels, Lenin and all the revelators of the future communist and proletarian revolution prepared the programme, but they were not the only actors on the scene of communism in the making, there were also researchers in the physical, biological world, artists and, no less important, the agents of the counter-revolution who provided material for mighty budgets. All of them were not even proletarians, they did not work in factories, yet they were undoubtedly actors in the proletarian revolution.

Soldiers of the Revolution

Who were the militants of the bourgeois revolution? Was it the d'Holbachs, the Voltaires, the Rousseaus, the Diderots, the D'Alemberts? No, because they were already dead by the time of the Bastille. They were the theorists of the bourgeois revolution, but bourgeois they were not. It is here that the donkey-bridge is erected for those who, sick of activism always in search of the Man who makes history, sprint out of the Marxist sphere to align themselves with the old ideologies. The militants of the bourgeois revolution were many, they fought valiantly but they were not bourgeois. They fought the feudal lords who had gone over to the revolution, the only ones capable of commanding military action; they fought the shop assistants, the proletarians of the first factories, the ruined artisans, the soldiers of the disbanded armies, the students, the petty professionals, some civil servants, rarely the peasants, since revolutions are a predominantly urban affair. Bridge of Donkeys was called Pythagoras' theorem, whoever did not understand it could not get ahead in mathematics: it is one thing to give a scientific definition of a mode of production in which the interests of the classes are well defined, it is quite another to vainly search for the exact subdivision of the social strata in order to place them in schemes of action that are assumed to be their own, as if revolutionary in his head can only be the proletarian, and reactionary only the bourgeois, while the shopkeeper should adapt to a middle way.

After all, those who bemoan the so-called passivity of the masses by seeking expedients to remedy it have not crossed the fateful bridge, because the description of the revolution as a struggle between well-defined classes is not invalidated by the practical existence of classes that are very ill-defined and above all very poorly acting, in non-revolutionary times, according to their own distinct interests. The bourgeoisie itself today is shooting itself in the foot by preaching an absurd and impossible liberalist return. So there is no contradiction between the scheme and the actual facts

*'if it is understood that Marxism does not put the fact of conscience and will between the economic determinant and the outbreak of collective action. This is not excluded or even overturned, but merely placed in its place (...) According to Marxist determinism, it is the old forms of production that receive the brunt of the new bursting forces of production.'*⁶⁰

The feudal form came into contradiction with the new emerging forces and was swept away. With the fall of the rule of the monarchy and the feudal nobility, these forces exploded unrestrained and the new form, made possible by the programme of the precursors and the fighting of the militia, was stabilised. The new form did not correspond to the ideal descriptions of the former and the expectations of the latter, but corresponded to the laws of development of the time, a transitional stage towards an even higher form.

The new revolution proceeded from a simplified environment compared to previous eras. Two fundamental classes are left and the proletariat will only be able to fight for itself against the bourgeoisie. The donkey bridge in this case is the tactical conceptions of the proletarian forces in the field. Certainly the coming revolution, like all revolutions, will not do us the pleasure of deploying classes with individuals divided into two ranks rigidly stacked in place as in table football, and thus confusion will be inevitable. It is in the confusion of alignments and weakly defined objectives that defeat finds nourishment, rather than in quantitative power relations.

The elements of victory are not to be invented, but to be gleaned from previous historical experience: no more single fronts with interclass hybrid forces with no clear goals; no more compromises with representative democracy; no more tactical oscillations due to supposed variations in the historical situation; no more programmatic uncertainties and federalism among proletarian parties. The 'historical situation' is defined; it has not changed since 1871, when the Paris Commune was defeated by the united bourgeois armies. Since then: one world party

It is necessary for the militant to distance himself clearly from all conceptions that belittle the party's function in the revolution. It is not a question of deifying the party form, but of realising that we need a revolutionary organ that is representative of the future of the class and thus capable of fighting without yielding in the face of the complex social events of the revolutionary epoch. The party in this is not comparable to the organisations we are used to seeing operating. The party is a living organism and as such survives as a seed for decades and then becomes a lush plant at certain times. Precisely a living organism needs the turnover of cells and militants are cells of the party organism. The more the organism metabolises, the more it is alive, the higher the supply and waste of cells.

As in all complex systems to which mankind has given birth, the individual cell does not have knowledge of the whole. On the contrary, it is the whole that has knowledge of

⁶⁰ Ibid.

itself through the action of the cells. So, in a society in which the actors of the revolution move on the basis of well-defined engines, as we have said, only the party, which is a complex whole, will be able to assess and gather the forces that were dispersed in past centuries. The future Galileo, the future Frederick of Swabia, the future Diderot, all the future conscious or unconscious militants, instead of constituting a strenuous path made up of individual energies hovering between ideals and action, leaps forward or frightening brakes, new knowledge and conservative fires, will finally find a way to see their energies directed towards a single goal, energies that will be summed up instead of perhaps eluting.

One cannot speak of the militant communist - the one in the flesh, conscious of being a tool of the revolution - without speaking of the communist party, of the organisation that makes it so. Without the party that harnesses its energies, the militant communist simply does not exist. The difficulty faced by comrades, but especially the younger generation, is that on the question of the party, an infinity of mystifications and conceptions have been superimposed that have nothing to do with the type of organism we are talking about and need. Depending on what one reads or attends to, the word 'party' becomes a meaningless expression that stands for variable things: from the mass monstrosities spawned by the Third International to small closed sects, from paramilitary nuclei to the very rejection of any centralised organisational function.

Revolutions teach us: once they have taken root, the party of the revolution forms, develops and is surrounded by an area of influence that draws vitality from it as it draws energy from the soil in which it has taken root. As Lenin said, the party should not only be understood in a narrow sense but also in a broad sense, because it cannot exist without the environment from which it sprang. The Manifesto states that the party and its militants are the expression of factual relations. This applies to the great historical movement as it does to the militant's working conditions. If there is counterrevolution, there is no saint who can hold it, de facto relations are the expression of it; it is the rift between comrades, it is the eternal diatribe, it is the proliferation and disappearance of groups and parties. Many people can't stand it, but that is what the situation cooks up for us and there is nothing we can do about it. Even worse would be to deduce from this situation the need for new courses and changes of course, an unfortunately common practice that has led to terrible defeats.

The solution to resist even in the worst of times and to prepare one's forces does not have to be invented, it exists. Nor is it a figment of the communists, but of anyone who has had to fight for the preservation of a future line of their faith, their idea or their class. There have always been larger or smaller groups of men, organised according to rules and disciplined to a common programme. We call it a party, but the nature of these organisms rebels against a simple definition using words from everyday language. Marx uses the word *Gemeinwesen* to refer to a community of men bound by the same goal. In the party there are only communists and nothing else, there are no professors, no workers, no clerks, no intellectuals, or capitalists or peasants and labourers. The programme is common, the intent is common, discipline is a result of this commonality and not an imposition, that's

why the party for us in a certain sense prefigures communist society, that's why within it there are no debates, no confrontations of ideas, no discussions on different theses, that's why in short there is no democracy. It's a bit like when we talk about the anticipations that exist in the factory, in whose internal production cycle there are no goods, no money, no exchange of equivalents, no anarchy. An environment in which there is only activity directed according to a central plan, aimed at a precise result, an accounting according to physical quantities and not values, there are no votes on the pieces to be produced, on the ideas of Titius and Caius, there are no political fractions and splits.

There has always been a great temptation to reverse the relationship between material determinations and the political fact. Material determinations drive some men to unite under the physical pressure of their living conditions, first in immediate organisms and then, with the recognition of the authority of a revolutionary programme, in a political organism in order to work for a battle whose characteristics and future outcome are known. Instead, many think it makes sense to create an organisation that realises the community of men who must adhere and submit to a programme and rules of operation. Any militant with such a view of the party would certainly be a foreign body in the revolutionary movement.

In organisations that reflect such a praxis, the importance of the individual is theorised, but its annihilation is practised. In the true revolutionary party, every militant is an instrument of the revolution. It is obvious that he loses 'freedom' with it. He has no freedom of thought, obviously, because he adheres to a programme. He has no freedom to do what he wants, because he adheres to a collective work of which he is a conditional part. He does not have freedom of processing, because processing is done on the basis of past work in view of future goals. Not even his physical 'person', so idolised by modern body product advertising campaigns, is his free property, since he becomes a conscious part of a whole. *Yet it is precisely in an organism resulting from mature material facts, a mirror of the collective life of the species, that the individuality, the capacity, the energy of the individual are put to good use satisfying both the part and the whole.*⁶¹

Styles of Revolutions

Every revolution disrupts the previous aesthetic and imposes a new style or, as it is perhaps better to say, liberates the new possibilities of aesthetic expression that mature or are in embryo in the old form. The style of the revolution also includes certain forms of thought that are not only art and 'fashion', but also the way of conceiving events and the world around us.

The liberation of productive forces due to the French Revolution visibly exploded in the military field due to the practical need to respond to adversary attacks. Whereas, for

⁶¹ See Marx's beautiful passage in *Extracts from Mill's 'Eléments of political economy' activity, where real work, human* as opposed to the capitalist one, it resolves the contradiction between the individual and the species. Complete Works, Riuniti Ed., vol. III page 247

example, the artillery of dynastic armies was composed of unique pieces, each with its own history, signed by the foundryman, bearing the king's motto and so on, the pieces of the new armies were by necessity anonymous and unadorned, mass-produced and thus with interchangeable parts. A cannon damaged at the shaft was no longer lost but could be rebuilt with the remains of another cannon damaged in bronze. These, which today seem trivialities, are instead important stages in the development of production and had important repercussions in the manufactures and then in the factories of the following era.

The decadent and prissy art of the courts finally faded away, giving way to great compositions full of movement both in the figurative arts and in music, while the way of dressing, of behaving, of living totally changed. The natural sciences exploded and the magical empiricism of alchemy that had permeated research for centuries disappeared forever.

Even at the turn of the First World War, the social movements that led to the European revolutionary period released stylistic forms linked to the new impetus received by the forces of production and, for example, futurism expressed rhythms linked to speed and the machine, industry and a new urbanism. In Russia, the movement propagated in the wake of the revolutionary situation and even attempted to accommodate the new literary expressions by linking them to a theory of the historical evolution of language. The victory of the revolution made the movement enthusiastically adhere to the new social order (even if the counter-revolution, relegating the new forms of expression to a still naive and bombastic sphere did not allow them to fully develop), while in the West futurism ended up being absorbed by the fascist wave.

Even Lenin used futurist language (or is it futurist language that adopted formulas from the revolution?) in some agitation formulas: what is socialism? Soviets plus electrification, big industry plus workers' control. And so Trotsky criticises the inadequacies of the 'comrades on the road':

*'The attempt to eradicate architectural construction from the future leads only to more or less ingenious personal arbitrariness. But the new style is the one that least accords with personal arbitrariness. The writers of Lef themselves rightly point out that the new style is born where the mechanical industry works for an impersonal consumer. The telephone set is a piece of the new style. International sleeping cars, underground staircases and stations, and lifts are all indisputable elements of a new style, as are, on the other hand, metal bridges, covered markets, skyscrapers, and cranes.'*⁶²

We have to ask ourselves if it exists and, if so, what is today the style anticipated by the future revolution, what do the scattered militants express and what do they know how to grasp from the current, 'stylistic' expressions of today. A today in which telephones and

⁶² L. Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution*

subways no longer impress anyone, in which there is no shouting, no cannons, no masses on the move, but the accumulation of productive force continues, in which progressive humanity slaughters its own puppies by starving them or slaughtering them in that sacred institution that is the modern family, not because of famine or extreme danger, but because of an abundance of food, manufactured goods and nonsense of living. A today whose style manifests itself in parliamentary cretinism, in philosophies of doubt, in televised rumblings, in the new mercantilist alchemy of genetic manipulation, in the virtualisation of life, and so on, listing unprecedented monstrosities. We ask ourselves then: where to find the style of a revolution that cannot but be already operative? Who anticipates the future?

*'There can be no doubt: the future is represented for now solely and exclusively by the inexorable advance of the productive forces and its manifestations, by lightness overcoming heaviness, by Capital dispensing with men, showing us that men can dispense with Capital.'*⁶³

All the rest is past, past, past; one sees and hears nothing but past in the newspapers and in the speeches of the bourgeois and the pretend rebels, the latter express the height of 'futurism' with the typical exclamation: *'may the working class one day break the chains that bind it!'* (exclamation mark as a matter of course). Variant in the present tense: Let the working class respond to the employers' attack! (Obviously with exclamation mark). One would like to shout: proletarians of the world, get fed up with this boudoir moralism, don't wait for the new barbarian invasions, empty bellies, atavistic rage, to come, as the saturated bellies fear, to bring fresh blood, physical energy, vitalising blows to this civilisation of zombies! But there we were, adding yet another exclamation mark and contributing to the dying style.

Once we happened to attend an assembly held by very young people in an occupied school: responding to a speaker who wondered what the future of the movement might be (the Panther or some other beast), a boy of less than 20 years old shouted back: I don't give a damn about tomorrow, I want to know what I'm doing today; and he concluded his tirade by proposing (no matter if at the suggestion of tried and tested marpions) to invite a grand old man of the anti-fascist resistance to the occupied school to hold a meeting. The style of these 'avant-gardes' is reminiscent of the aesthetics of Frankenstein's patched-up monster.

Of course, we know, these existentialist manifestations without even the non-conformist pretensions that philosophical and literary existentialism wanted to have, are the result of a material situation. Even when a man is won over to the revolution and becomes its militant, this does not mean that he ceases to be subject to material determinations. The militant has not conquered his position for eternity. It is not strange that there are fluctuations around a current, a school, a nucleus, party or not, just as in Diderot's example of the monks who reciprocate in the convent. Unity in time is guaranteed. Party

⁶³ See *Letter to comrades n. 31 - Dangerous demons*

membership implies a rejection of ideology linked to the moment, existentialism is a deleterious product of a decadent society, incapable of thinking of the future. In this ideology of the fleeting moment, the true antithesis of Marxism,

*'on the one hand, one wants to affirm once again the impossibility of treating the reality that surrounds us, from the cosmic to the social, in general and certain conclusions, of establishing relations of causality and determination susceptible to launching glances and programmes straddling the future. On the other hand, there is still and always the tendency to delude the human individual about his possibility of escaping the determinations of the environment, to bring him back to the plane of initiative and freedom, at a time when as never before he has been physically crushed [by TNT, ed.] and crushed, atomised and mangled alive in the foibe, ideally stuffed and bamboozled with an unprecedented range of lies and deceptions, slammed and subjugated to the daze of printed and sound columns, intoxicated by optical and acoustic illusions, handled and grasped without regard for all sides and for the parts that appear less prehensile [...] Existentialism is the attempt to give political opportunism a philosophical decency. Just as it is the minimum slip for the decency of personal opportunism.'*⁶⁴

The solution? We are always there: to be neither conformists, like the boy and the resistance, nor non-conformists, since mass non-conformism is obviously a new conformism; we are anti-conformists, destroyers and deniers of this social form. Not accepting even one of the characteristics of this society, the young man who is captured by the revolutionary demon issues a challenge to all bogus militants: *'You want to go and vote? Then you are still moving within the bourgeois world. Are you for democracy? Then you cannot be a communist. Do you think in your heart that a world without commodities, money and wage labour is impossible? Then don't talk about revolution. Are you still attached to the sophistry of the ephemeral?'*⁶⁵ *Then turn away, there is plenty of room across the abyss between us.'*

The Immune Defenses of the Militant

WHERE A PERSONALITY IS ATTRIBUTED TO THE REVOLUTION AND THE SEARCH FOR GUARANTEES AND GUARANTORS ON THE BODIES IT GIVES ITSELF IS SHOWN TO BE IN VAIN BECAUSE THE ONLY GUARANTEE IS IN THE PROGRAMME-TACTICAL WELDING

The antibodies against the individualistic and opportunistic diseases of the militant lie not in the person but in the party, and there is an impressive amount of material on this subject. Many wonder, however, what can be the guarantees against falling back into the errors of past organisations. The party defends, with its activity on the basis of the revolutionary programme, the line of the future of a class that will abolish all classes. But the party also defends itself, just as the individual defends (or should defend) his own body.

⁶⁴ "Existentialism", in *Prometheus* n. 11 of 1948.

⁶⁵ See small chapter *Thanks Vladimiro...* in this letter.

Every party in every revolution knows it is surrounded by enemies. Certainly, at times only potential, but at other times capable of destroying its formal manifestations. The parties of previous revolutions paid close attention to external influences and fought them with the use of rules and structures that varied over time. Depending on the situation, these parties had to be more or less closed and their adherents had to be selected according to security rules, clandestine operations were necessary and work, depending on the contingent laws, had to be illegal. There is no need to recall the situation of Christians in Rome, heretics in Christendom, fighters in bourgeois and national revolutions in situations of absolutism and colonialism, communists throughout Europe in the last century, Bolsheviks inside and outside Russia, our current affected by fascism and Stalinism.

In some situations, the organisms representing the revolutionary forces developed in broad daylight, taking root in a society that tolerated them or even ended up using their potential to control the subaltern classes. They developed powerful apparatuses, veritable organisational machines that controlled millions of men. Their degeneration was not, as a rule, felt by their militants who, on the contrary, saw in the powerful outward manifestations a favourable revolutionary sign. Even when we do not reach those limits, questions of organisation must be treated with a severely fixed eye on the Milan Theses, where it is said that abusing formalisms when there is no vital need is always a suspicious and stupid danger.

We are not dealing here with one or the other organisational form of militant groups or the party. When there is a development of the class struggle, when it is necessary to think about social war, the appropriate instruments will arise. The real problem does not lie in devising organisational expedients. It lies in having the awareness that the party, or at any rate the group or groups of revolutionary militants, are matters of the other world compared to this society. In the old parties, the political struggle was understood as a catalogue of the misdeeds of the 'enemies' and this argument was exploited in the eyes of the proletariat to gain votes. No one doubts the effectiveness of propaganda campaigns against the opponent, but this is not the aim of revolutionaries. The study of bourgeois contradictions and bourgeois parties serves to cultivate a healthy anti-capitalist environment, as our current dictated as early as 1912. If this work does not take place, one ends up not realising that the 'enemy' is more internal than external, that it is represented by tactical oscillation, by the misinterpretation of the historical moment, by the spread of professionalism apeed by bourgeois institutions, in short, it manifests itself in everything that is contrary to what we understand by militancy, anonymous, without double-entry, without careers and without material rewards. The death of organicity, in the end, lies in the personalisation of tasks and functions, exactly as happens in bourgeois institutions.

It is a fact that no revolutionary organisation has ever been destroyed by the enemy alone: it is a historical constant that every general defeat is accompanied by internal shortcomings of the revolutionary forces, degenerations, theoretical betrayals, uncertainties about the goal to be achieved and the tactics to be adopted. Revolutions simply cannot be

stopped. When they are stopped, it is because they are only revolts and not revolutions, or they are only attempts that already have the germ of defeat in them. The October Revolution was victorious, but its dual character (anti-autocratic and at the same time anti-capitalist, bourgeois and at the same time proletarian) made it fragile without the contribution of the revolution in the West. The grand capitalist revolution survived, the proletarian and communist revolution was defeated. It was not defeated from outside, as the combined forces of the world bourgeoisie and white reaction had no military effect despite the incredible disproportion of forces. It was defeated because the failed western revolution prevented the revolutionary party's autonomy from the Russian state, and it became its international appendage.

The preservation of the party's forces depends on a collective attitude towards the outside world, which for us is truly external. This applies, as we have seen, both to individuals and to the organism as a whole. If there were a developed party, this would mean a clear variation in the relations between the forces in the field, a moving situation in which one could not act differently from the way the great revolutionary parties that history has presented acted.

But there are no statutory guarantees, no written rules, no particular discipline other than that to the programme, with all the consequences that entails. One does not arrive in the party by punching the clock as in the factory and then go home minding one's own business. If this happens in all the more or less developed organisms that refer to communism, there is nothing to be done, and it is difficult in this case to speak of the Party, because this means that the revolution does not feel it is time to have full-time militants and keeps in vitro a breeding ground that will serve for future developments. We have, without doing it on purpose, given personality to the revolution. Let us take advantage of it and indeed, as Trotsky does, give it body and voice⁶⁶.

It scrutinises the individuals emerging from capitalist standardisation and counts them, measures their potential, selects them, keeps them in training for better opportunities. It does not waste its energies projecting more extras and directors onto the stage than is necessary. It knows its chickens and knows that in an unfavourable situation, when each brain wanders on its own and is not polarised by social ferment, there is a great proliferation of chatter, of 'confrontations', of 'debates', in short a mountain of democratic crap. It keeps on the tightrope, which is uncomfortable to tread, and which for this very reason is itself a factor of selection, only the material strictly necessary to keep historical continuity alive, only what is sufficient for a continuous selection, so that from the disorder and the indistinct noise of all these atoms, coherent structures for elaborations ever closer to necessity may arise.

In this work, the revolution is truly merciless, it grinds individuals and groups, self-styled geniuses and shock troops, it settles and electrifies brains, it ruins livers and

⁶⁶ See *Literature and revolution*

makes the printing presses work in vain for the sole purpose of keeping the tradition of printing oiled when it will serve the masses and not just the exchange between self-proclaimed revolutionary leaders.

In the meantime, human groupings are formed and destroyed that rise above the individual and, because of this quality, provide it with answers first on an immediate level and then on a theoretical level. Because the individual must find in the party not only the oxygen of theory, but also a refuge to defend himself from the unbearability of the current relations. If we are against capitalism, which has reached the limits of inhumanity and selfishness, the party will have to offer the opposite, the antidote, and the sooner it can do so the better. This is not, of course, about predicting an acolyte of good Samaritans. It is a matter of arriving at the negation, deterministically, of the categories of this rotten society. With this in mind, one does not theorise about Eurasian towers or clam closures, but firmly and stubbornly defends the distinctiveness of an orientation that is a practical orientation, if it is true that communism is the real movement that abolishes the present state of affairs. Communists do not conceal their aims, says the Manifesto, and so they do not retreat anywhere, on the contrary, they try in every way to extend their influence wherever possible. If we think about it, this is a tremendous contradiction, which only the revolutionary process can resolve: the fierce defence of difference from capitalist homologation and projection into the future are in direct antithesis to wide-ranging action in the present, where Marxist doctrine cannot by its very nature receive sympathy at first sight. Yet the task of revolutionaries, who refuse to shut themselves up in eburnean towers and literary salons, is precisely to weld their total incompatibility with the present with the knowledge that the current homogenisation of individuals will not be eternal and that the network of contacts will therefore expand.

Certainly here and there in the past immediate communist theorisations have been made and experiments with communist phalansteries have also been made. Engels takes these as facts demonstrating the need for communism and shows its potential for saving vital energy compared to the wasteful capitalist society⁶⁷. Today there are anarchist phenomena of rejection of the capitalist trance, but these are existential escapes from reality, diets and pills for individual delicate stomachs.

The Left's position vis-à-vis the individual will to escape from capitalist anguish is ruthless. We are determinists and deny that there can be an individual solution to a social problem. All our statements, all our outward expressions, our demonstrations, our public meetings, our propaganda, our proselytising do not have the meaning of bourgeois publicity. The communist militant does not sell a product, no matter how fascinating, no matter how much of an expression of human history. Our relations with our fellow man cannot resemble the prize contest, the TV quiz, the interview or something that can be likened to the action or even the lifestyle of the bourgeoisie.

⁶⁷ See F. Engels, *Description of the communist colonies that arose in recent times and still exist*

We individuals are not the authors of change, it is the revolution that directs, we are the instruments of the preservation of its future expression. This is why we do thoughtful work that is based on a very precise method, which follows certain criteria on the basis of a tactic that is historically given and cannot derive from the choices of leaders who may vary it from time to time. Hence our working method. Our actions flow from the scientific result of previous work.

So there is no need for a formal body within the group (or the party) specifically responsible for indicating the behaviour of the individual militant in the different situations that may from time to time be the factory, the school, an assembly of the unemployed, etc.

Coherent action must arise from the methodology that binds comrades in a common and systematic work on past experiences and the forecasting of possible future actions. Only in this way will there be no need for glossaries on the behaviour of comrades 'in specific situations'; only in this way will everyone be aware of the existence of internal and external dangers and be led to cope with them in a completely natural way.

Paradoxically, when one feels the need to create a regulation requiring militants to behave in a certain way, it is because they already do not behave consistently with the programme. And it will always be too late. The statutory rule always comes after the facts have manifested themselves with undesirable consequences, and it is a constant in human history to produce a body of law suited to the situation, from Hammurabi's code to Roman law, from the Torah to bourgeois constitutions. Communism has no constitution, and if Lenin relented in writing one for Soviet Russia, it was to write a manifesto for the revolution, not regulations for the party-state.

Let us connect to a classic polemic between two great revolutionaries through a couple of their texts. These are Lenin's text *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, and Rosa Luxemburg's reply *Questions of Organisation of Russian Social Democracy* to which Lenin replied in turn⁶⁸. In Lenin's text there is a strong emphasis on questions of discipline and centralism; in Luxemburg's a critique of formal discipline and an attempt to explain the need for organic centralism. While Lenin, as usual, is not intimidated by anything and bombs away at the weaknesses in organisation, Luxemburg is concerned with discipline and the almost military-like centralism evoked by Lenin. But while in Lenin there are no theoretical concessions, in Luxemburg's text there are concessions not so much to democracy, as her late epigones would have us believe, but to the individual conscience of the militants and the self-discipline that comes with it. Formally there is more democracy in Lenin's text than in Luxemburg's: there is talk of majorities and minorities, regulations and organisational minutiae. Lenin's text, however, can in no way be used opportunistically except by completely falsifying it. Luxemburg's text, on the other hand, can be used by opportunists

⁶⁸ See Lenin, *One step forward, two steps back*, Complete Works, ed. Reunited, vol. 7; in Lenin's reply to Luxemburg cited later is also the same volume. R. Luxemburg, *Organizational issues etc.*, published with the title *Centralism or democracy?* Ed. Joint Action, 1962.

as it is, since it contains, among many interesting observations in criticism of German social democracy, other observations that can be translated into democratic criticism against centralism.

Luxemburg lucidly anticipates some of the troubles that the party structures of the time will face; she knows that parliamentary tactics brought to perfection 'already close broader horizons'; she knows that opportunism and Marxist theory are incompatible and that their affirmation does not depend on the will of individuals but on social processes, that therefore

*'the articles of a regulation may dominate the life of small sects and private cenacles, but a historical current passes through the meshes of the finest paragraphs'*⁶⁹.

The revolutionary current is also a historical current and, at the moment of social polarisation, every statute is shattered, overtaken by events. Luxemburg records this fact:

*'The unconscious precedes the conscious and the logic of the objective historical process precedes the subjective logic of its protagonists. The function of the governing organs of the Socialist Party has to a large extent a conservative character: as experience teaches us, every time the workers' movement conquers new ground, these organs cultivate it to its very limits; but at the same time they turn it into a bastion against larger processes'*⁷⁰.

Very well said, but 'experience teaches us' that this trouble occurs because the parties of the Second International are democratically functioning parties. Of course, Lenin also declares himself in favour of democratic centralism and insists on it, but with regard to the party the superiority of Lenin's vision lies in its dialectic. He says: the party needs an organisation. The latter is not the party, its principles, its theoretical and human heritage. So the accessories, such as the statute, the commissions, the local committees, the congress itself with its theses and votes, are not the party, they are the forms of its organisation. Luxemburg, Lenin says, considers it wrong to have a penchant for a 'centralism that takes nothing into account', so she thinks

*'that I am defending one organisational system against another. In fact, however, this is not the case. Throughout the book, from the first to the last page, I defend the elementary theses of any system of any conceivable party organisation. My book examines not the question of the difference between this or that organisational system, but the question of how any system should be supported, criticised and corrected.'*⁷¹

⁶⁹ Questions... ect.

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ One step forward etc. Reply to R. Luxemburg

The accessories, on which Lenin dwells, are the contingent part due to the Russian situation and the travails of the party. What must be defended is not so much the 'despotism' of a central committee as the fight against anarchy and individualism, since the latter translates into chatter and democracy. Lenin reminds us that it is one thing to talk about the organisation of labour in a factory, a factor that will also be an instrument of non-capitalist production, and another to talk about factory despotism, a purely capitalist phenomenon. Any human endeavour involving the co-ordinated action of many men to achieve an end is subject to centralised organisation, and this kind of centralisation has nothing to do with self-discipline consciousness or phrases of the kind: it is imposed by the task at hand. Otherwise one simply cannot complete the task, indeed, one cannot even tackle it.

None of the three texts are usable by us today as they stand. Moreover, they did not represent recipes, but arguments for a battle that actually took place, of which they were both results and factors. They can be used together, integrating them and at the same time setting them in opposition, as examples of unresolved problems related to the revolutionary path. Was there then a final solution? As with any problem in science, the answer is: no. There has been, with the contribution of the 'Italian' Communist Left, the addition of a step in knowledge around the nature of the tools available to militants in the revolutionary course.

Row Red, Timeless Compass

WHERE WE DELVE A LITTLE INTO HISTORY TO SAY THAT A SENSE OF PROPORTION IS NEEDED WHEN TALKING ABOUT THE PARTY AND THAT ONE MUST REMAIN FAITHFUL TO A STAINLESS PROGRAMME IN THE FACE OF THE UPS AND DOWNS OF MISERABLE CONTINGENCY

Writing about the militants of the revolution makes more sense in difficult times like the present than when the revolution is pushing whole masses towards its goals. In Lessons from Counter Revolutions we read in fact:

"Marxism is not the doctrine of revolutions, but the doctrine of counter-revolutions: everyone knows how to lead when victory is affirmed, but few know how to do so when defeat arrives, becomes complicated and persists".

It is not easy to define what the militant of the communist revolution is, how he can adhere to the historical programme of the revolution and how he can adhere to the political organism that this programme realises through directing the proletarian struggle to the final goal.

Just as it is not easy to clarify the dynamic that leads to the formation and development of this political organism, which therefore also leads to the forms it can take through the determinations that make it a product rather than a factor in history.

There is no doubt that the counter-revolution, dating back to at least the early 1920s, persists to this day, blending into the normality of an apparently stable social situation. The absence of any revolutionary praxis even makes it difficult to make sense of the very existence of communist militants.

In today's Europe, outside the ordinary politics of bourgeois structures, including those that Lenin once called opportunist but which are now indistinguishable from the rest, we find different, sometimes opposing, almost always harmful positions. To simplify, there are some who, in the name of a supposed orthodoxy, fight against the risks of pollution, locking themselves up in formal bodies (parties) and coming out of them as one would come out of an isolated fortress or, as the Left would biblically put it, out of an ivory tower, to 'do trade union work' or something else. However, the purity and sensitivity that led them to 'create' formal parties outside of any historical determination is not enough to make these parties also useful instruments in the theory/practice binomial, and the activity towards 'the masses' remains an appendage that serves only to give themselves lustre in an activist sense.

There are others who, on the other hand, consider Marxism to be an ideal appeal to be referred to, rather than a theoretical heritage stemming from real struggles, rather than therefore a usable historical experience for those who have felt its call.

Indeed, historical experience is a positive element in the maturity of the labour movement and is constituted by defeats, even the most disastrous, no less than by victories. In unfavourable periods, the movement in general does not break the thread of continuity, but it is less evident among the political events that represent the surface of the historical process. The length of such periods is in relation to the severity of the counterrevolution and the degeneration of doctrine by opportunism. It is therefore not a question of relying on a simple idealistic appeal, but of feeling part of the current that has represented the coherent historical experience.

The revolution will not judge groups or parties by what they say or think they are, but by their history, their actions and the way they pose fundamental questions to everything around them. When the revolution begins to use the tools it needs, it will make clear the red thread that is so difficult to discern today, and real facts will prevail over labels.

This perspective needs to be strongly emphasised to clear the field of the vain pretensions of the revolution and party makers. We have learnt from Marxism and the history of the Left that one does not make revolutions and parties but runs revolutions and parties. This is a reality that had to be reaffirmed as early as '21 against an International that was beginning to oscillate on tactical issues trying to force history onto impracticable tracks. It is not the good party that makes the good tactics, but conversely it is the good tactics that form the good party. Just as the biological organism is formed through what it eats and what it does, so the revolutionary organism is formed through what it assimilates

in theory and what it performs in practice, improving its organic system of muscles, bones, nerves and grey matter, until it involves other organisms in a larger organism, the social organism.

The result that interests us in the context of the discourse we are making is the qualitative shift that occurs when the social metabolism described is directed towards a goal. It is then that we see what the actual instruments of the revolution are, what precedents have been set and what future developments will be. What we call continuity is certainly not an abstract assertion, but a tangible path, a coherence that is demonstrated every day, even if it will only be fully apparent when history is written looking back. Lenin in Zurich was pining because the Revolution seemed unattainable. It was not just a question of the train, which was kindly solved by the German war minister, the fact is that the all-powerful Bolshevik party, steel core etc. etc. was later described as the entity that made the revolution, especially by Stalin and company. The Bolshevik party was able to lead the revolution because as a whole it was consistent in its actions with the heritage it had accepted as the basis for its existence. Trotsky shows in his 1917 thesis that the ongoing revolution could very well not have been directed if the majority of the Central Committee had been listened to at the time.

It is thus from a coherent interweaving of accepted heritage and everyday practice that the organism's potential arises, which is therefore susceptible to achieving higher results and transmitting them. The level of theoretical elaboration depends on the correct practical attitude, just as this in turn is influenced by adherence to the programme. The positive overcoming of the political swamp in which the few revolutionary militants are forced to move will occur when the described interweaving, which forms the genetic programme of every larger movement, is in turn intertwined with a material change in the environment, i.e. in the society that produces and reproduces.

Every revolutionary militant can only adhere to a school of thought and action that came before him, which has roots in past revolutions and is projected into future ones. We seek to militate in continuity with the Marxist school of thought and action. But that is not enough for us. Marxism did not die with Lenin. The battle that was unleashed with the retreat of the world revolution produced fruits that we can draw on because before that moment a current had been produced that was the only one to be in total harmony with the Bolshevik revolution. To describe continuity we sometimes use the image of the relay race passing the baton. It is a good image, because it immediately highlights a fact: in order to pass the baton, there must be a stretch of road in common. This image is also used to illustrate the passing between generations and is even more effective. We have vowed to pick up the tradition of the Communist Left both because we have travelled a stretch in common with it, and because we have experienced a change of relay between generations trying to learn from the lessons of the past. But this is not enough, because even a Trotsky, far greater than we can be, has passed the baton to groups who can claim continuity

through his experience, his writings and his students, and this has not prevented Trotskyism from falling into the categories of bourgeois society.

A very old tradition is that of making bread without yeast, removing a piece of dough that has already risen naturally from the previous one and adding it to the next. It is found throughout the world, at least the bread-consuming world. The act symbolises continuity in a staple food, a bit like eating the same bread over time to be always the same. It is a magic of continuity, common in the symbolism of primordial science, perhaps recalled by the communion of the early Christians. We burn revolutionary fuel and must produce more, different and yet always the same, if continuity is to exist. The priests were exempt from the continuity of bread, perhaps because they were already in direct contact with that of heaven: leavened bread was taboo for them. But it is still a limited example.

Something more is needed, an example that gives a clearer idea, like that of the Red Thread, just to get where one wanted. The rigging of Her Britannic Majesty's ships, it seems from the time of Elizabeth I, was woven with hemp from all over the world in factories located everywhere. Mercantilism was no joke for England, prototype of all modern imperialisms. If hemp and factories were scattered all over the world, all over the *sàrtie*, a red thread ran the length of it and was manufactured in a single royal factory in London. The production of that thread never stopped.

It is known that the British navy is crazy about symbols, even the silliest ones, but this one must have appealed to some unknown militant and we keep it. The red thread is one, always the same for all *sàrtie*, while the relays and loaves of bread can be many and different.

What allowed the Left, like Lenin, to respond correctly to the specific historical situations in which they struggled? Nothing other than the assimilation of the previous heritage, consistent work on it and elaboration on invariants and transformations, which are by no means in opposition but united⁷².

This explains why the 'Italian' Left was able, at the right time, to concretely provide the explanation and at the same time the perspective for the development of phenomena that others did not understand or, worse, did not even perceive. This was the case when it fought against the degeneration of PSI politics in 1912, when it organised itself as a fraction within the old party and adhered to the Bolshevik theses in their entirety, when it coherently constituted the Communist Party in 1921, when it criticised the tactical oscillations of the 3rd International and gave a historical explanation of fascism, when it made a Marxist assessment of the economic and social structure of the USSR. When, finally, he established that, in the midst of the Stalinist counter-revolution, the preservation of the Marxist heritage and its own in order to deliver it unscathed to new generations was practical work, no different from what could be done in factories and local sections.

⁷² See *The Passion and algebra*, Quad. Int. chapter *Three formulas for invariance*

Today we can build on this history, through which not even the very tough Trotsky, the only true ally the Left could have, managed to pass unscathed⁷³. The preservation of the immense theoretical heritage from the devastation that accompanied the Stalinist counter-revolution as well as its 'restoration' is not over and will never end, because Marxism is science, and therefore will proceed with humanity towards knowledge of the world through continuous elaborations and additions in a process that will have no end. Revolutionary militants must know that what the Left has done is not a transitory task. Lenin carried it out and it will have to be carried out again. Communist militants will still have a lot of work to do to combat the effects of the Stalinist counter-revolution for two reasons. First, it was so virulent because, like all opportunisms, it developed within the workers' movement, involved almost all of it including its leading organs (indeed, these first) throughout the world, and could find no antidote in the material development of facts, i.e. the revolution in the West. Second, Stalinism is the child, like all immediatisms and utopias (build communism, build socialism in one country), of its progenitor Proudhon, who, as Marx pointed out, was the cantor and representative of the half-classes and of all those who yearn for a capitalism without the troubles and contradictions it entails. Therefore, until the end of capitalism we will each time find ourselves reckoning with some form of proudhonism, 'resurgent and tenacious', as the Left put it, a phenomenon inseparable from the fact that when the proletariat is not a class for itself, it is a class for the bourgeoisie. However, since it cannot behave in the same way as the bourgeoisie in fact, it assumes in this case the way of thinking of that intermediate and amorphous social stratum which the militant communist, since he will always have it at his feet, must know in all its manifestations, especially those that affect the organisation in which he militates.

Therefore, returning to the observations with which we started, i.e. the process of formation and development of the party, the organised and organic form of revolutionary action, the militant will fight all tendencies that see the revolution and the path to it as a product of the will. Neither the revolution, nor the economic and social conditions that prepare for it, nor the party that will lead it can be the product of the will of men who, in all good faith, would like to see a model they have in their heads realised. The Left has insisted on this point throughout its history and we have the experimental proof that the pursuit of success at all costs, through expedients aimed at transforming reality according to what leaders and steering committees want, has led to failure and the reneging of Marxist foundations:

'We have so many times shouted to those thirsty for the palpable political success of conjuncture, that we are revolutionaries not because we need to live and see, contemporarily, the revolution, but because we live and see it today as an

⁷³ Between the Left and Trotsky there were important disagreements on the question of the united front and on questions of tactics in general, the very questions that will lead to degeneration of the International and the elimination of all the old Bolshevik guard, including Trotsky himself. See the article "The Trotsky question", in *The Communist Left and the Committee of Understanding*, and. Quad. Int.

*'event', for the various countries, for the 'fields' and 'areas' of social evolution into which Marxism classifies the inhabited earth, already susceptible to scientific demonstration. The sure coordinates of the communist revolution are written down as valid solutions of the laws demonstrated in the space-time of History.'*⁷⁴

Activism, False Resource of "Principalism"

WHERE IT IS SHOWN THAT GENUFLECTION BEFORE SACRED SCRIPTURE AND COMMUNIST GOSPELS IS THE OTHER SIDE OF ORIGINAL ACTIVIST SIN AND DOES NOT SAVE THE SINNER'S SOUL BUT SENDS HIM TO HELL WITH PROUDHON

Marxist doctrine is an organic whole, *"an original picture, already perfect, as we repeated a hundred times, over a century before today"*. Nevertheless:

*'We are working in fragments and are not constructing a communist encyclopaedia; otherwise it cannot be, if the condition of our work is the deployment of the enemy society and the decades-long defection of the forces in our camp (...) If we could not stereotype the encyclopaedia when we were too strong, we cannot pretend to do so when we are too weak; the tables in which the texts are cast in metal are reduced to flaps and passages, whose substance is rigid and powerful, but whose contours are sometimes incomplete and discontinuous. The revolution of generations to come will weld together the pieces, which our limited but not fearful efforts connect.'*⁷⁵

We have, in these two excerpts, the definition of revolutionary militancy. On the one hand we have the body of doctrine that arises from the material process as a single whole valid for the entire revolutionary path; on the other we have the undaunted effort to connect the various parts into a great semi-finished product that one day humanity will bring to completion, i.e. weld into a powerful structure, fragments that for now we can only relate to each other, stripping the matter of bourgeois and opportunist rubbish. As stated in *Property and Capital*, revolutionary militancy then consists in being able to preserve in the present the line of the class future; thus the fundamental activity, which is condensed in the term 'party work', is the transmission of the fruitful lessons emerging from the past to present and future generations.

Our theses insist heavily on the concept of transmission, not by chance. The programme, for us, has never been synonymous with a political platform, with banal revolutionary vindictiveness, with an end result divorced from the political path necessary for its realisation. Dialectically, the programme is the political and social projection of the future into the present. We need the concept of transmission to understand that there is no

⁷⁴ A. Bordiga, *Relativity and determinism*

⁷⁵ A. Bordiga, "General Construction of the rough work of our movement", in *Il Programma comunista* n. 8 of 1960

separation between 'revolutionary preparation' and 'revolution', between tactics and programme.

Opposing the oscillations of the International, the Left defended the 'circular' relationship that starts with the programme and, through tactics, returns to the programme. Revolution can and must be foreseen not only in its final outcome but also in its path. So, conservation of the past and prefiguration of the future are not antithetical elements but complement each other in the present action of the revolutionary party. Which, therefore, cannot only be a vehicle for the propaganda of unchanging principles but also an appropriate instrument in the practical struggle to achieve an end. Given the permanence of the social formation in which the principles were formed and found their verification, they cannot be called into question, but neither can they be treated as immanent laws, proceeding from the heads of men or from some doctrinal surrogate of divinity, and thus treated as things in their own right, disconnected from the material life of men. The superstructural element, whether it be the political and ideological apparatus of the ruling class, or the organ of the dominated class - in our case the proletariat - assumes a decisive material weight in influencing events, as it can either resolve or continue the antithesis between the social productive force and the relations of production; an antithesis that, in its most acute phase, becomes a struggle for power. The communist party, a product of the history of the conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, is transformed into a factor of history and directs the proletariat itself, allowing it to be the leading class in social transformation; it represents its interests by fixing them in a programme; it synthesises and unifies the immediate physiological and organisational drives coming from this class.

The party is not 'part of the proletariat', as the theses of the Third International claimed, but an organ of the proletarian revolution; it is not necessarily made up of proletarians alone, but it cannot exist without the proletariat, especially without its material determination to fight against the bourgeoisie. It is in this relationship that the party can involve individuals, no matter whether proletarian or not, and elevate them to the function of operational militants of the revolution, something that, without the historical relationship of each part (social productive force, bourgeois class, proletariat, individuals, superstructures, etc.) with the whole, would be inconceivable.

The organ of the proletariat does not impose itself through an effort of will, it does not suddenly arise from a lightning revelation or a clarifying interpretation of sacred texts. It forms, develops and fulfils its function through harsh and material, catastrophic and brutal selection, to the extent that there is a social maturity that allows for a unified collective consciousness and action among the so-called masses. To the proletariat at the forefront, but also to the transferees of other classes who feel the need to fight in the general and final interest of the proletariat and thus of humanity as a whole. To underestimate this grandiose process, powerfully outlined for example in the Theses of Rome, and to ape its words without adapting to its content is as far removed from revolutionary militancy as one can get.

The revolutionary process proceeds in leaps and bounds: a series of steps that each represent a decisive element that must be maintained and overcome; there is not and cannot be a single, sudden transformation that changes the previous scenarios. The understanding of these passages is the art of insurrection referred to by Lenin; not to be confused, as has often been done, with the art of the coup d'état, Blanquist or otherwise; even Rosa Luxemburg had equivocated, rebelling against Lenin's crystal-clear arguments from the point of view of a 'proletarian democracy'. It is precisely this leapfrogging that makes it possible for the revolution to gradually leave behind the trappings of the past in order to achieve new results, to criticise itself, to dialectically surpass itself as events unfold, as Marx already observed with regard to both '48 and the Paris Commune.

He is a militant of the revolution who contributes to the destruction of the present state of affairs, whatever class he belongs to, but the revolution needs militants who are organised, centralised, disciplined. The party does not come into being without militants, and on the other hand these are not real militants if they do not carry out party activities. Our current has clarified the issue by breaking out of the apparent vicious circle, noting the relationship between the historical party and the formal party. The programme of the proletarian class, invariant in substance, is the very essence of the historical party, understood as a movement of real facts tending towards the overthrow of capitalism. This programme and its completeness are linked to the level of development achieved by the productive forces and the social relations of production. The historical party, for Marx and the Left, is the material movement that in fact leads to polarisation in view of a goal. To put it better, it is the 'repository', the set of theoretical and practical experiences of the communist movement. It is something more than a 'library' or even doctrine: if all the books and all traces of memory were destroyed, Marxism would recast itself from the existing objective conditions. The relationship between the historical party and the formal party is given, once again, by material facts. For more than seventy years, we have been living in a phase dominated by counter-revolution but, dialectically, if there is counter-revolution, there is revolution. Marx, in 1860, refused to recognise the old League of Communists dead and buried as a party and, at the same time, noted the development of the party even though it did not yet have its own formal expression; only four years later the First International would be founded, something Marx had certainly not planned. The bloody defeat of the Paris Commune also led to the breaking up of that first sketch of a formal party which already went far beyond the primitive 'workers' association', but the material determinations of class relations were to have the upper hand and give rise, when the conditions presented themselves again, to a new rapprochement between the historical party and the formal party:

'After the fall of the Paris Commune, it was natural that the organisations of the working class in France should be momentarily broken up; but today they are again beginning to develop (...) The International has only passed its first period of incubation to enter a phase of higher development, in which its original tendencies

*are already partly realised. In the course of this growing development, it will still have to undergo further metamorphoses before the last chapter of its history can be written.*⁷⁶

The formal party, the indispensable organ and instrument of the proletariat for its subjective revolutionary action, is the embodiment of the historical party in physical organisms made up of militants and concrete structures, which arise on the basis of the existing situation. If the formal organism (subject) does not exist today, it is because the conditions (object) do not allow it. Many, however, are confused on this point: separating the objective and subjective factors with a barrier makes no sense; in order to communicate we must use linguistic conventions, describe reality through processes of abstraction as in the sciences, but in practice objective and subjective are interacting, each has an effect on the other, so it is not by chance that we define the party as a product and factor of history. In a text from our current we read:

*'Correct Marxist praxis states that the consciousness of the individual and also of the mass follows action, and that action follows the drive of economic interest. Only in the class party does the consciousness and, in certain phases, the decision to act precede the class clash. But this possibility is organically inseparable from the molecular play of the initial physical and economic drives.'*⁷⁷

At certain moments in the class clash, the polarisation of both proletarian and bourgeois interests takes place, and a clear separation occurs between the classes as actions lead to the clash. It is in this process that the formal organism of the proletariat is formed and develops. It is an encounter between objective and subjective conditions, between a class that spontaneously 'rises to the fight' and the scientific perspective of its becoming through conscious direction. The common denominator of many deviations produced in the history of the workers' movement, including the Left, is the misunderstanding of the profound difference that exists between activism and activity, i.e. between voluntarist 'doing' and the revolutionary praxis established by the Leninist 'systematic plan of action', not to be chosen from among many available, but given by the degree of actual maturity existing in great historical epochs and entire continents, not by the local contingent moment.

Without a thorough theoretical knowledge of the degree of maturity of the productive forces and the economic movement that leads the classes to clash, there can be no conscious direction of the revolutionary forces and thus no coherent tactics. Movements or parties that disregard these fundamental foundations deny themselves any possibility of a future vision of the real movement and can only represent an existentialism tending to deal only with the immediate present. They are and will be led to interpret the movement

⁷⁶ K. Marx: *A about the history of the international workers' association* written by M. Howell, 1878

⁷⁷ *Rome meeting* of 1 April 1951, point 3. Now in *For the organic arrangement of the communist principles*

through what it expresses about itself, and therefore they will be denied any directive function, since their attitude will place them at the tail and not at the head of the forces in motion.

Therefore, in the different historical situations, party militants are not allowed to escape into political expedients: instead, it is imperative that they be consistent with the real possibilities of action, which can be revealed through the most varied manifestations of men. But these are not the only ones to be assessed: they must be evaluated in relation to the material reasons for their unleashing. In this regard, Trotsky's masterly writing on Russian 1917 and the commentary our current made on it in 1924⁷⁸ should be recalled as an example. The subject is the question of the insurrection and the different evaluation of the maturity of the clash, the revolutionary potential and the forces in the field given by Lenin and Zinoviev-Kamenev, a formidable testing ground for the theory-practice binomial. The considerations on militant activity in historically unfavourable situations such as the present are amply developed in our Theses⁷⁹, but it is worth reiterating a few elements. **Marxism is a science, and as such does not treat the social subject differently from how other sciences treat their subject. This points to the question of method. In physics, for example, theory is linked to experimentation. However, since in the social field experimentation is impossible, a series of observables (economic factors, elements within the framework of relations between states, etc.) must be identified in order to obtain certain results. In practice, it is necessary to isolate, from the chaotic set of factors, the fundamental elements, i.e. to search for historical invariants, observe events in their dynamics, connect them in an organic vision on the basis of established doctrine, anticipate material trends, know the objectives to be achieved and the instruments to reach them. This is mainly field research work, around which a school, a political current is formed.**

The theoretical baggage available to militants is the base, the patrimony that synthesises historical memory with experience and critique, which therefore represents the possibility of continuing the path taken and arriving at more powerful critical instruments, at the possibility of practical verification when facts allow it.

This heritage, whose last expression in order of time is the elaboration and experience of the Left, has been and is still claimed by many, so much so as to configure a generic Marxist current. It is obvious that it is necessary for us to enter the thick of this wood not only with the Bordigian flamethrower but with some more powerful disintegrating weapon.

Characters, groups and parties of every stripe wallow, live, suffer or work in this somewhat swampy woods. The coming and going is pathological and causes spasmodic

⁷⁸ See L. Trotsky, *Lessons of October*, PC pamphlet. Int. (Program) 1971 and A. Bordiga, "The Trotsky question"

⁷⁹ Particularly in *Considerations on the organic activity of the party when the general situation is historically unfavorable*

turnover, but examples of tenacity are not excluded. Many have forgotten their original references or no longer care. Some insist on representing a continuity with something or someone: communism, councilism, anarcho-syndicalism, or Marx, Lenin, Mao, Trotsky, Bordiga and more. Ideal continuity, remembrance or transformation into inoffensive icons is another thing, it should be emphasised, from actual continuation from the premises. The effective continuation of the work of a current, let us call it Marxist for the sake of convenience of expression, cannot be an exclusive repetition of memories or theses, but must be an effective continuation of the same work on the basis of invariants that must be well identified, it requires field observations carried out with the previous baggage, in short, it requires analysis according to a precise programme. Programme in this case is not a trivial synonym for operational sequence but is a prior enunciation of the result to be achieved. In order to exist and live, those who set themselves such a programme need to operate with laws, parameters, 'models', just as the brain continuously needs stimuli in order to be able to operate relationships, basically to be able to banally think.

Now, there are a lot of people who churn out resolutions, but without the slightest relationship with the past and the future, which is why they are resolutions and not programmes. These good people, very creative, want to enrich Marxism with new data drawn, it is natural, from new situations because good Marx smells like old 19th century beards to them. In addition to being creative, these people are also very active, indeed, since they basically find the usual things to do, they are very activist, that is, they would like to do but cannot.

Complementary to the activism of these people could not but exist what we could call the false resource of principlism⁸⁰. It is a phenomenon well known to the Left since every political phenomenon gives rise to its counterpart, which is generally called by the same name but with the prefix anti. It was with this kind of analysis that the Left predicted that fascism would give rise to its worst product: anti-fascism. Of course innovative eclecticism remains preponderant, but principlism is no joke either. It works like this: you take an inalienable Marxist proposition that, for convenience, revolutionaries have called a 'principle'; you clothe it with immanent meaning, with an idea given a priori; finally you enforce it as the Word of God, preferably against those who are considered heretics and punishable, at the very least, with anathema. Those who act in this way will never understand that Marxism has no principles just as it has no morals or other categories borrowed from the present society. Trotsky speaks of Their Morals and Ours in a famous booklet⁸¹, but not even a child would think that this concedes that communists have morals. Who can swear that Lenin never spoke not only of democracy and principles but also of morals? We concede nothing to principles and morals, terms that contain in themselves a meaning of immanence, we are only obliged to use a language that has not yet rinsed its clothes in the revolution.

⁸⁰ Pun created by paraphrasing a title of the Milan meeting of 7 September 1952, *False resource of activism*

⁸¹ Ed. De Donato

As proof of our typical assumption that the original strain of all deviant 'isms' lies in the unique ancestor Proudhon, not only can anyone observe the complementary existence of creative-activist eclecticism and mannerist principlism, but also of their union under the same banner. It thus turns out that activism and principlism are not two separate things but the two sides of the same coin. The most ardent formal-partisans of an era that has seen the self-destruction of many formal parties are also the greatest supporters (equally formal) of sacred principles. Well, it is precisely from that side that the worst mannerist activism is observed. Let us exclaim with our text: resurgent and tenacious Proudhonism!⁸².

We argue often and even quite vigorously among ourselves, but we do not like to take part in the batrachomyomachy tournaments that occasionally appear in the internationalist press precisely because we are not particularly outraged that someone says things that we think are nonsense. We find it normal, we deduce it from our texts. It is the effect of a seventy-year-old counterrevolution and in the face of it theoretical and practical weakness cannot be exorcised; we take it as a given and try not to fall for it by the only means available: assimilation of the balance of history and consequent action. Today there is no party activity that can influence events, not even by the big bourgeois parties. The classic 'reversal of praxis' is still a long way off.

Today, the classification of theoretical instruments, the search, even in the bourgeois world, for those elements that confirm the capitulations of the bourgeoisie in the face of Marxism, the non-liberal assimilation of the results of past battles, the reverberation of all this on new militants, on the new generations, here is a practical work, an activity, that corresponds to the tasks of communist militants in a situation that is still unfavourable, and will remain so for a long time. The making and unmaking of groups, of parties, the defections, all the agitation (so little visible to the 'masses') of individuals launched into often unedifying battles, all this is not new in the communist movement and may indeed be useful for the selection of future forces. Bordiga wrote in 1950:

'It is, of course, understandable to everyone that the newly-born Marxist materialism did not suddenly find and record all the social scientific laws, nor did it codify them, not even in monumental works such as Capital, in texts that for the followers and militants of the movement stand as definitive. The research and elaboration continued and continues: it could not fail to give rise to divergences and contrasts, which if they were not called Councils, schisms, heresies, were called Congresses, revisions, political splits. But this does not detract from the fact that the movement as a whole cannot live and win without the backbone of doctrine, crude if

⁸² See *Track of approach and the foundations of revolutionary communism* , ed. Quad. Int. The quoted exclamation is in a subtitle of the second text. See also *Considerations on the organic activity of the party when the situation is historical unfavorable* at point 14 and *Tesi di Milano* at point 6 in volume *In defense of the continuity of the communist program* , available from Quad. Int.

*you like in some parts, which through struggle must be carried intact in its vital trunk to victory.*⁸³

It is not even a question of who will succeed in carrying the backbone of doctrine intact, because no one can decide this, because no one today is driven by forces capable of permitting a true development of Marxist theory foreseen by doctrine and anticipated by our specific theses. The development of a theory does not mean the transformation of one thing into another (a characteristic of change) but steps forward in research, the elaboration of what exists, just as Galileo, tried by the Aristotelians, claimed to be Aristotle's best pupil precisely because he did not stop at the results he had achieved.

Marxist science does not only indicate the necessities of history, which are also imposed on individuals and classes, but it points out the objective laws by which these necessities can and must, at a certain turning point in history, translate into conscious action, into the reversal of praxis, when the proletariat, through its political organ, imposes a direction on events. It is necessary for this science to find fertile ground, to develop vigorously through the collective intelligence of men organically bound by the same programme, in an organised structure that unites them with a single feeling, thinking and operating.

The party of the revolution is born and lives in the strenuous defence of the theory that, as the culmination of all previous knowledge, remains unchanged throughout the phase encompassing bourgeois domination and the dictatorship of the proletariat until the extinction of the state, when the party itself will also become extinct,

*'unless one understands by party - an organ that does not fight against other parties, but carries out the defence of the human species against the dangers of physical nature and its evolutionary and probably catastrophic processes.'*⁸⁴

The Revolution Doesn't Need Ideas but Power

WHERE IT CONCLUDES THAT WEAKNESS WILL NOT BE TRANSFORMED INTO STRENGTH BY THE DESIRES OF MEN OF GOODWILL ALONE, BUT BECAUSE THE MATERIAL MOVEMENT WILL BE WELDED TO THE PARTY'S CENTRALISED PROGRAMME AND ORGANISATION

A few years after the publication of 'What is to be Done?' Lenin made it clear to his critics that the pamphlet was not intended to be a manual for moulding class and party to the will of a particular group of leaders, but rather an instrument of battle against those who did not understand that the revolution needs not only extensive trade-union activity but a political programme and centralised organisation. The motto 'going towards the masses'

⁸³ A. Bordiga, *Chiesa and faith, individual and reason, class and theory*, in *Battaglia Comunista* n. 17 of 6-20 September 1950;

⁸⁴ *Theses of Naples*, point 11

makes no Marxist sense because it is the 'masses' who will go towards the party and demand to be led by it. Today, going towards the masses would mean something like going to sit in front of the television set. What Lenin is explaining is the extraordinary success achieved by that party, and that party alone, which knew how to work with the working class without aligning itself with it, giving itself a centralised, disciplined, professional organisation that was firmly opposed to improvisation and extemporary work. A party that was at the same time closed and open, as totalitarian as the production plan of a workshop, but capable of being sensitive to the generous spontaneity of the proletariat, of grasping its useful aspects for the revolution as well as crushing its negative ones.

*'A fundamental condition of this success was, of course, the fact that the working class, whose flower has created social democracy, is distinguished, through objective economic causes, from all classes in capitalist society by its greater aptitude for organisation. Without this condition, the organisation of professional revolutionaries would have been a toy, an adventure, a vacuous signpost, and the pamphlet 'What is to be Done?' repeatedly emphasises that only when there is a 'revolutionary class spontaneously rising to the struggle' does the organisation it advocates make sense. But the objectively maximised capacity of the proletariat to unite as a class is realised by living people, it is realised not otherwise than in certain forms of organisation.'*⁸⁵

Between belonging to the proletariat, participating in its struggles and even being aware of one's strength as a class, and having a rational knowledge of the laws governing the capitalist mode of production, there is no direct relationship⁸⁶. The material condition experienced by the proletarian can lead him either to temporarily adapt to this society or to instinctively feel part of a specific class and organise himself for the defence or satisfaction of immediate interests. The objective basis from which a process of awareness can develop is also the same one that can lead to interclass passivity.

For a rational consciousness of social being to form in the individual (who may be a proletarian, but also anyone influenced by the contradictory capitalist world), obviously the contribution of the material facts of the individual's everyday life is not sufficient, but historical material factors are needed. These factors can be represented by an important social movement, but also by what has been historically recorded in the past experience of the class, what can be called the class line represented by the party.

While it is true that the historical party never dies, its determinations being linked to a very precise mode of production and very precise class relations, it is also true that its existence is guaranteed by the physical transmission of past experience, of the scraps of knowledge that remain in social memory. Unless we hypothesise a catastrophe that

⁸⁵ Lenin, preface to *Twelve years*

⁸⁶ See for example *Straighten the legs of dogs*, counter-theses and "philosophical" theses

completely erases all memory, but in this case we would witness the reformation ex novo, starting from the contradictions of capitalism, of revolutionary theory; a hypothesis that could lead to the postponement even for long decades of the revolution, but would not avoid it.

Thousands of groups, parties, trade unions, institutions, armed bands, foundations, missions, etc., dedicated to study, propaganda, research and possible action on the basis of Marxist assumptions, have existed and exist throughout the world. Normally, in the judgement of one another, none of these bodies is in the 'right' Marxist line and this is obvious, otherwise they would be united. Those outside the class battles find this scattering absurd and instead it is natural. Even 'ideological' differences, Byzantine nuances and respective fields of action may seem absurdly divided, but both organisational and ideological incoherence is the result of the failed revolution, it is certainly not its cause. So this is necessarily the case.

After all, coherence and incoherence have blurred boundaries: we have known Christians who serenely digested far more massive doses of historical and dialectical materialism than the vast majority of 'comrades' do. There are mystical sects based on propertylessness and practical community life that are more coherent than many idealised and not at all practised communist *gemeinwesen* theorisations.

Thus, there is a real need for communism that is not yet able to manifest itself through an organic, centralised revolutionary activity, a situation already familiar throughout history. Every man who moves towards a productive or social end (which is then the same) is forced to work in an organised manner, so organisation is a necessity, not a mystical principle; what at a certain point becomes a particular necessity, and therefore can be assimilated to an inalienable principle, is organic centralism as it has been configured in the experience of the revolutionary movement especially after the defeat of the Third International.

Many, moving from this necessary presupposition, constitute party-groups from a minimum of aggregation on historical theses or on new theses elaborated along the lines of those, and adopt formal organisational models of the past, to which, for reasons of force majeure, they cannot be faithful. In fact, they are models that presupposed a link with the working class, a situation that is quite different from today, but above all they were part of an irreversible historical course. Democratic centralism, for example, will never again be the basis of revolutionary communist organisation. On the other hand, anti-party forms of aggregation are also being theorised, while past experiences have demonstrated not only their basic inefficiency but also their defeatist scope.

Now, while we deny that 'confrontation' and 'debate', forms of aggregation between organisations, and indiscriminate proselytising aimed at 'indoctrinating' militants once they have joined the ranks, lead to any results, we affirm at the same time that revolutionary

organisation will form and develop using existing material and certainly not by creating new men in test tubes. No one relies more than we do on the new generations, and our optimism leads us to be confident that they will help to sweep away the incentive actors of the current batrachomyomachy. But even the new generations will not prepare themselves exclusively in the library: they will be brought face to face with the unbearability of existence in an increasingly degenerate capitalist world and thus overcome the current extreme weakness resulting from an objective situation that fuels the misunderstanding of the past royal movement. This movement has faced and theoretically resolved battles that remain as indelible experience and

*'this gives [it] the possibility, let us not say the right, [...] to understand better than any other by which road the real, active, and therefore formal party can remain in full adherence to the characteristics of the historical revolutionary party which in potential line has existed at least since 1847, while in praxis it has established itself in great historical gaps through the tragic series of defeats of the revolution.'*⁸⁷

The definition of the party contained in the Theses of the Left and in his other writings is thus not a model to be achieved like those of the utopians, but the result of battles, victories and defeats. In fact, if we do not want to talk about the present day in which we are directly engaged in the application of such theses, the example can be made by resorting to the parallel and in some respects similar history of the 'Italian' Left and Bolshevism in the years before the First World War. Even if in Italy there was no situation of circles and in Russia there was nothing like the old Socialist Party, even if here they were fighting against a degeneration while there they were fighting against a growth infantilism, the opportunist forms were identical and the solutions against them too. It was not for nothing that the Left refused to define Bolshevism as a specifically Asian phenomenon (it was born in Europe) and called it a 'plant of every climate' to emphasise its internationalism that was valid everywhere. It is therefore obvious, at least to us, that one cannot disregard the achievements of Bolshevism and the Left. Only that Bolshevism has run its course and the current we physically refer to is no more.

Beyond the banal rhetoric of those who pick up flags that have fallen in the mud or have been abandoned to the enemy (Togliatti as far as the recent past is concerned, but every flag-collector fallen in every epoch), it is necessary not so much to know how to reproduce the conditions of the time, which is impossible, as to anticipate what are the possible 'transformations under invariants' that we will face in the present epoch. That is, what conditions must be met in order to be faithful to the theses without aping unrepeatable things and also without inventing things outside Marxism.

To criticise 'others' because they are no different from what they are would be puerile, even if it is a rather popular sport. What interests us is to identify which road the revolution will take to change the current situation, because we would like to be there when

⁸⁷ *Considerations...*

it happens and not somewhere else. Having identified that road we would also like to possibly follow it, but we are not of those who, as Bordiga says, believe they have bought the ticket to the future spectacle and claim the right to attend it from the reserved seat. It will depend on us only to a very small extent whether we are there or not.

The fact that we tend to establish a network of connections, to circulate the result of collective work, to give ourselves a centralised organisation, to keep alive a political school as a function of the party, all this does not mean that we want to found a party. The revolution and its party do not need ideals or even ideas, since the programme is already defined, the path also and the instruments have already been described. The revolution needs strength and energy, elements that can only come from the class movement. Any 'constructive' ambition must reckon with this reality, which is constantly reaffirmed by our current.

Lenin placed the newspaper at the heart of the party's organisational problems and also as the framework around which the party was strengthened. As we have already said in our Letter No. 31 Dangerous Demons, today we can speak of the same skeleton even without there being a party even remotely comparable to the one Lenin might have referred to. Quite rightly, every group and every party has a newspaper, a magazine or at least a leaflet, especially today when the problems of the press are infinitely simpler than what the Bolsheviks had to solve. The revolution cannot be invented, and perhaps a revolutionary newspaper cannot be invented either, but the printing of a periodical that collects the work of the comrades is the least that can be done to maintain links and circulate the work, to 'reverberate it', according to the expression used in the Theses of Naples, and to receive further results from it.

So today a press organ that responded to the characteristics described by Lenin and the Left could not be a party organ in the highly active sense of a link between militants and the 'masses', of a political organiser, of a battle organ. When one says that the party and its newspaper are organs of battle, it is obvious that one is using a lexical euphemism today, borrowed from the habit of repeating things one has read about revolutionary periods. Today, there is no battle going on, other than the preservation of a historical heritage, and there is not the faintest trace of the possibility of dust being kicked up. Therefore the organ of the press for now is forced to perform the by no means secondary task of collecting the work and transforming it into further working material on which the ranks of revolutionary militants will also expand numerically. An organ which is open to the widest possible circulation and contributions, but which is closed with regard to the programmatic approach; whose readers and collaborators assume the unique language of all true political schools, the unique attitude towards problems and the way of working; whose sphere of circulation represents a fiercely anti-capitalist environment in which comrades move who stop theorising at every bell tower some kind of specificity.

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